

Public Minutes of a meeting of The National Archives' Board
Date of Meeting: 18 September 2025 at 10:00
Location: The National Archives, Kew and Video Conference (VC)

THE	
NATIONAL	
ARCHIVES	

Present:

Andrew Wathey (AW - Chair) Chair of The National Archives' Board
Nigel Baker (NB) Non-executive Board Member
Sonia Cargan (SC) Non-executive Board Member
Lopa Patel (LP) Non-executive Board Member
Rommel Pereira (RP) Non-executive Board Member (from item 2 onwards)
Emmajane Avery (EJA) Director of Public Engagement and Sector Leadership
Lucy Fletcher (LF) Director for Public Records Access and Government Services
Hannah Lee (HL) Joint Director of People, Inclusion and Change
Gemma Maclagan Ram (GMR) Research and Commercial Development Director
Peter Mills (PM) Interim Director of Finance
Saul Nassé (SN) Chief Executive and Keeper
John Sheridan (JS) Digital Director
Lucy Windmill (LW) Joint Director of People, Inclusion and Change

Also present:

Asha Bagayat (AB) Head of Governance (Minutes)
Programme Manager, Digital Archiving (Item 5)
Claire Collard (CC) Head of Financial Planning, Performance and Analysis (Items 7-9)
Media Manager (Item 4 via VC)
IT Security and Informational Assurance Manager (Item 5)
Service Access Owner (MoD Access) (Item 4)
Juergen Vervoorst (JV) Head of Collection Care (Item 3 via VC)
Sam Whaley (SW) Head of Strategy
Senior Sustainability Manager (Item 3)

1. Welcome & Chair's Remarks, Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1. AW welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially HL and LW as new joint Executive Directors.
- 1.2. In his Chair's remarks, AW provided a verbal update on the launch of an External Board Effectiveness review to be undertaken by Campbell Tickell, who had undertaken the last external review. He noted the timetable and methodology of the review and outlined the commitments of the Board members.
- 1.3. Apologies for lateness was received from RP. There were no further apologies for absence.
- 1.4. AW noted that Northumbria University was mentioned in the Chief Executive's Report. LP declared that following a restructure her outside appointment at NHS Devon was changing and would shortly be made public. There were no further declarations of interest.
- 1.5. At this point, RP joined the meeting.

2. Chief Executive's Report

- 2.1. The Board received a report providing an update on the work and priorities of the Chief Executive and the activities of the Executive Team. As a late item, the Board also received a supplementary report on the new Operating Model for The National Archives, which had been agreed by the Executive Team and was presented to the Board for review and endorsement.
- 2.2. SN provided an update on the permanent recruitment of the Director of People, Inclusion and Change and Director of Finance roles. He was also pleased to announce that the MI5 Exhibition had been extended for two months and that c50k people had already visited it.
- 2.3. The Board received an update on developing the Government's vision for the Archives Sector; noting that the minister had positively received it and Archives Sector Development were currently presenting it to panels of experts ahead of resubmitted it to the Minister for approval. Since the vision for the sector was a key priority of The National Archives' new Corporate Strategy, promotion of the later would be undertaken once the Minister had approved the vision for the sector.
- 2.4. There was a detailed discussion on the proposed new Operating Model, which had been designed to deliver the new Corporate Strategy and was aligned with the strategic priorities. SN set out the operating principles, rational to the revision of Executive Team roles and outlined the next steps, which was to announce the changes to staff on 3 October and begin work on the organisational design piece.
- 2.5. AW invited members to share their reflections and comments on the proposed new Operating Model. Generally, the Board felt the structure was externally identifiable and had greater coherency with the Strategy.
- 2.6. There was a discussion on where overarching responsibility for delivering the Strategy would sit, the need for more joined up thinking and taking an enterprise view for delivery and programme management of the various projects sitting under each priority.
- 2.7. In response to a question on indications of how the proposed changes will affect staff, assurances were provided that the Heads of Departments of the key areas had been spoken to and were onboard and that the model provided opportunity to communicate the new portfolios and Strategy. All agreed that communications and the messaging to staff would be critical.
- 2.8. There was a further discussion on the need to get the Senior Leadership level right who would be key to supporting the delivery of the Strategy. Opportunities for rising stars and future leaders to emerge and using tools such as the Civil Service Aspiring Leaders Programme to build talent in the organisation were noted.
- 2.9. In response to a question on what the major risks and constraints were to delivering the new Strategy, these were noted as: budget, outdated legacy technology and not having all the levers to deliver the ambitions i.e. legislative constraints.

- 2.10. The Board also received a verbal update on relationships with The National Archives Trust and the Northeast Partnership Project, noting that discussions were ongoing and looked forward to receiving more detailed updates at the November meeting.
- 2.11. The Board:
- (i) Welcomed and noted the update;
 - (ii) Generally welcomed the proposed new Operating Model;
 - (iii) Agreed to hold a special Nominations and Governance Committee meeting to further discuss the Operating Model ahead of its formal announcement to staff;
 - (iv) Welcomed support from the NEBMs in communicating the new model to staff; and
 - (v) Looked forward to receiving updates on The National Archives Trust and the Northeast Partnership Project at the November meeting.

Action by: AB

3. Sustainability Update

- 3.1. The Board received a paper outlining the quality of the data at The National Archives and performance against government targets for sustainability. The paper summarised where we were to date, provided an overview of our reporting and compliance requirements, and offered an outlook on what we will be focusing on in 2025/26 with our partner Acclaro.
- 3.2. GMR introduced the item and welcomed the appointment of a Senior Sustainability Manager to lead our work on sustainability and on meeting relevant government compliance requirements, which include net-zero targets, Government's Greening Commitments (GGC), Taskforce for Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD), HM Treasury's Sustainability Reporting Guidance and Public Expenditure Systems (PES).
- 3.3. The Senior Sustainability Manager then gave a presentation on the landscape and future direction of sustainability at The National Archives, including benchmarking and good practice elsewhere and looking at strengthening organisational oversight and establishing clearer internal roles and governance arrangements.
- 3.4. Data sets were currently published on the Transparency page on the website and included the quarterly reports submitted to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). In future this would also include a new quarterly dashboard performance report and any reports required through TCFD. An approval process for these reports will have to be established and the Board was invited to share its views on this.
- 3.5. The Board welcomed the update and noted there were decisions for the Executive Team to make around resourcing and internal management. It also awaited the announcement of the Government's new requirement for carbon delivery and greening commitments which would guide our work and welcomed a further update once we had clarity on this. The Board suggested producing a delivery map and agreed that oversight of the dashboard performance reports and KPIs should be with the Finance and Performance Committee.
- 3.6. In terms of the management of risks for not meeting UK Government regulations, in particular GGC and TCFD, this was currently being managed via the Directorate Risk Register and was within appetite. However, the Board agreed that the Audit and Risk Committee should have

oversight of risks via the Corporate Risk Register, and the Annual Report and Accounts review process.

- 3.7. The Board also noted that the National Audit Office (NAO) had undertaken a review on good practice around sustainability and welcomed a session on this at a future meeting.
- 3.8. There were queries with regards to disclosures within the Annual Report and Accounts and if non-compliance could potentially lead to our accounts being qualified and the potential to offset our carbon-delivery, which PM agreed to raise with NAO and come back with a response out-of-committee.
- 3.9. The Board:
- (i) Received and noted the update;
 - (ii) Welcomed the appointment of a Senior Sustainability Manager (SSM) and endorsed their programme of work and direction of travel as reported;
 - (iii) Requested a response to the questions raised in para 3.8 above out-of-committee;
 - (iv) Suggested holding a session on NAO's review of good practice in sustainability; and
 - (v) Commissioned (i) the Finance and Performance Committee to have detailed oversight of the dashboard performance reports and (ii) the Audit and Risk Committee to maintain oversight of risks and our requirements for disclosures within the Annual Report and Accounts. Both Committees to provide onward assurance to the Board on matters reserved to them.

Action by: GMR/PM/JV/SSM

4. Fees Order and Ministry of Defence (MoD) Backlog Management

- 4.1. LF was pleased to note that a centralised rapid response team had been brought in to help with the backlog, which was a transformative scaling up of the service, but did come at a higher cost compared to doing it inhouse. The service would enable us to track demand and undertake live forecasting.
- 4.2. The Board commended and congratulated the team on the progress made to reduce the backlog and felt the communications plan was well made. There was a discussion about the impact of the announcement upon FOI demand and its closeness to Remembrance Day. However, the Board agreed the date 'felt right and upheld integrity'. Assurances were provided to the Board that lines were being prepared to respond to questions and criticisms, including rapid responses to alternative narratives and wider regimes to access MoD Service personnel records and the public value they offered.
- 4.3. The Board:
- (i) Received and noted the update; and
 - (ii) Endorsed the communications strategy and date of announcement.

5. Update on Legal Data Projects

- 5.1. Pertaining to an action arising from the 10 June meeting, the Board received an update on two funded projects The National Archives was delivering for partners, to improve and enhance our legal data, including for use by Artificial Intelligence (AI). The paper set out the agreements and governance arrangements for the projects and sought to provide the Board with

assurance around delivery and managing risks. The paper also outlined work on a further funded project for the Kickstarter on Legal Data for AI, with the National Data Library (NDL) team at the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). The Board was invited to discuss the risks and opportunities of these projects.

5.2. JS introduced the item and outlined phase 1 of the projects, noting that the funded work was progressing well. He outlined the benefits of the projects which included better data to improve public facing services and improvements to drafting of law.

5.3. Lines of questioning related to capacity and sustainability to deliver and revenue generating opportunities. Assurances were also provided with regards to Intellectual Property rights. There was a discussion on the various partnerships, and a suggestion was made of producing a visual stakeholder and projects map which aligned with capacity and compliance with HM Treasury's Green Book. The Board welcomed ongoing visibility of the projects via the Chief Executive's Report.

5.4. The Board:

- (i) Welcomed and noted the update;
- (ii) Suggested producing a stakeholder and projects map for assurance and oversight; and
- (iii) Welcomed further updates on the projects via the Chief Executive's Report.

Action by: JS

6. Update on Cybersecurity Programme

6.1. The Board was presented with a paper providing an update on the Cybersecurity Programme. The report included an update on the high level of traffic from Bots putting pressure on the system and out-of-hour security concerns. The Board was also pleased to note that our Wiz Cloud-security score had risen to 92% since the report was written.

6.2. Lines of questioning related to the intents of the Bots and possible sources, which was generally noted as hard to judge. Mitigations and active interventions were also noted, which included the reviewing of policies and extending the implementation of multifactor authentication.

6.3. Members shared insights from outside organisations that they were involved in and other Government departments, including the threat level and the mitigations being put in place to manage cybersecurity. Suggestions included testing our organisational resilience in the event of a successful attack and updating the Information Management Training course to cover imposters.

6.4. The Board also welcomed a briefing on understanding the impact of a major loss of service and how we might respond and noted the Executive Team would be running another Business Continuity exercise later in the financial year and would report to the Audit and Risk Committee on the lessons learned.

6.5. The Board:

- (i) Received and noted the update;
- (ii) Welcomed a further update in a year's time and by exception reporting via the Chief Executive Report and the Audit and Risk Committee.

7. Corporate Performance Items

3+9 Management Accounts

7.1. The Board received the 3+9 Financial Forecast which had been presented to the Finance and performance Committee on 11 September. The Accounts presented a potential overspend largely due to a forecasted decrease in income and noted the risks and opportunities of landing on a balanced budget. The Board noted that the Executive Team had agreed to identify potential savings plans to action if the overspend does not unwind as expected and endorsed this approach.

July Management Accounts

7.2. The Board was presented with the July Management Accounts for review following their presentation to the Finance and Performance Committee on 11 September.

Q1 Business Priorities Metrics 2025-26

7.3. The Board received the Q1 Business Priorities Metrics report, which had also been presented to the Finance and Performance Committee on 11 September, and noted the highlights and areas of concern.

7.4. The Board:

- (i) Reviewed and endorsed the 3+9 Management Accounts and the approach to managing the budget;
- (ii) Reviewed and endorsed the July Management Accounts; and
- (iii) Reviewed and endorsed the Q1 business priorities metrics and their RAG ratings.

8. Update from Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)

8.1. RP provided a verbal update from the extraordinary ARC meeting held on 7 July, which considered the Payroll and Risk Management Internal Audit Reports and recommendations to strengthen governance and assurance around these activities, including clarifying the Board's roles and responsibility in relation to the latter. He thanked the Annual Report project team for successfully laying the accounts and the Committee looked forward to receiving the lessons learned report and the NAO Audit timetable for 2025-26 at its October meeting. The Committee also endorsed management's decision to extend the Internal Audit contract by 12 months, endorsed the Register of Interests and Conflicts of Interest Policy and noted that further work was required to tidy up the governance arrangements of policies and ensuring they were reviewed by the right committees.

8.2. As a supplementary item, the Board also received the Corporate Risk Register that had previously been shared with it at the 10 June meeting. PM highlighted that a new risk had been escalated since the Board's last review around revenue.

8.3. The Board:

- (i) Received and thanked RP for the verbal update;
- (ii) Expressed thanks to the Annual Report Project team; and

(iii) Noted and endorsed the escalation of revenue risks on the Corporate Risk Register.

9. Update from Finance and Performance Committee (FPC)

- 9.1. LP provided a verbal update on the meeting held on 11 September, noting that much of the agenda has been covered under items 4 and 7 above. In addition, the Committee had welcomed sight of the Corporate Dashboard and People Matrix and an update on Licensing activities and income.
- 9.2. She recommended meeting with RP and AW to clarify and confirm the balance of work between the sub-committees.
- 9.3. The Board:
 - (i) Received and noted the verbal update; and
 - (ii) Noted that AW would meet with RP and LP to discuss the balance of work between the two sub-committees.

Action by: AW

10. Non Executive Board Member Verbal Updates

- 10.1. Non-executive Board Members (NEBMs) each provided a verbal update on their recent activity, including insights from other organisations.
- 10.2. LP noted attending various digital and technological events and visiting a few exhibitions and shared her reflections on the presentation of several displays.
- 10.3. SC noted attending the Parliamentary Archives Steering Group and having discussions with Andrea Metcalf (former Director of People, Inclusion and Change) and LW around the operating model and organisation design work.
- 10.4. AW noted attending the Discovering Collections Discovering Communities (DCDC) 2025 annual conference in Durham, the Staff Awards ceremony at The National Archives and an event discussing 25 years of the FOIA hosted by the Institute of Government.
- 10.5. All NEBMs noted attending the Board Strategy Day at Lambeth Palace Library.

11. Minutes, Matters Arising and Actions

- 11.1. Subject to a minor amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2025 were approved as a correct record.
- 11.2. The Board agreed the record of out-of-committee business.
- 11.3. The Board reviewed and agreed the Actions Log.
- 11.4. The Board reviewed and noted the Board Commissions to Sub-committees Log.

12. AOB

Forward Agenda

12.1. The Board received and noted the forward agenda.

Reflections from the meeting

12.2. The Board noted the quality of discussions and welcomed the broad representation of staff attending the meeting.

Items for information

12.3. There were no items for information.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 14:20.