

# National Library of Scotland Board Meeting

Date: 28 June 2023

## Participants

**Present:**

* Sir Drummond Bone (Board Chair) - DB
* Ruth Crawford KC (Board Vice Chair) - RC
* Emily Drayson - ED
* Alan Horn - AH
* Alison Kidd – AK
* Lesley McPherson - LM
* Kirsty Lingstadt – KL
* Justin McKenzie Smith – JMS
* Michael Muir - MM
* Robert Kilpatrick - RK
* Robert Wallen - RW

**In attendance:**

* Neil Mackenzie KC, Faculty of Advocates - NM
* Amina Shah, National Librarian - AS
* Anthony Gillespie, Chief Operating Officer - AG
* Ryan Gibson – Trade Union representative - RG
* Kathy Hutton, Board Support & Compliance Officer – KH

## Minutes of meeting

Martha Burns Findlay (MBF), Head of Public Programmes, provided an overview of the process leading up to the recent co-curated exhibition with Waverley Care - 'Blood Sweat and Tears'. To date, the exhibition has attracted strong interest and engagement. Co-curation offers the opportunity for the Library to work collaboratively with communities, promote the work of the Library and enhance collaborative working internally.

The Chair thanked Martha Burns Findlay for the excellent presentation. MBF then left the meeting.

### Chair's Welcome

Sir Drummond Bone (Board Chair) welcomed all to the meeting including Ryan Gibson attending as Trade Union representative and Neil Mackenzie KC as the Faculty of Advocates representative.

### Apologies for Absence

No apologies were noted.

### Declarations of Interests

Declarations are as recorded.

### Horizon scanning

The Board noted:

* 2023/24 utility costs are much higher than anticipated due to market conditions with a continuing upward trend expected.
* The Library remains ambitious to further develop international links and looks forward to publication of the Scottish Government (SG) International Culture Strategy to support this.
* The Library's financial stability remains an area of focus for the Board.

The Board also welcomed the recent visits by Christina McKelvie, Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development, to the Library and looked forward to future collaboration.

### Minutes of meetings

The minutes of 28 March 2023 were approved as a correct record with the following amendments:

* Item 5 to be amended to 'Michael Muir is employed by a Tier 1 supplier on the Crown Commercial Services (CCS) Framework',
* Item 11 (Draft Internal Audit Plan) Correction: 'JCr advised the draft 2023/24 internal audit plan was reviewed by the March Audit Committee.'

### Actions outstanding and matters arising from previous meetings

The Board confirmed their agreement that all actions are now closed.

### National Librarian's Report

Amina Shah highlighted points from the Librarian's report:

* Further streamlining of the Librarian's Report to better highlight key strategic goal activities within each Library department.
* As previously mentioned, the Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development recently toured the 'Blood Sweat and Tears' exhibition and then attended the Sgeul exhibition launch.
* The Library's key SG liaison is retiring in August. The Library would like to extend thanks to David Seers for his engagement with the Library.
* The Library may now be able to join the SG Cloud procurement and will keep the Board updated.
* The Library's main Trade Union, Prospect, is presently carrying out an indicative industrial action ballot. This is due to close shortly.
* The Sgeul dual language exhibition launch welcomed members of the Gaelic community as well as Legal Deposit Librarians. It is hoped to finalise a Memorandum of Understanding with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (National Centre for Gaelic Language and Culture) shortly.
* The Community Walking Group recently visited Greenock to continue to increase community engagement especially as the Library builds up to the Centenary.
* The Library took part in a Carbon Literacy Training Day which covered the science around climate change, and also held a Sustainability Fair.

In relation to the Library Plan Update, AG highlighted:

* Of the 48 targets for 2022/23, 77% were assessed as 'Green' at the financial year end. Significant progress was made across a number of areas e.g. cyber security. Six objectives (13%) were judged to be 'Amber' where good overall progress was made but with some elements of the work to be completed in the first quarter of 2023/24. These are now complete which means that currently the Library is at 90% completion. Five targets were assessed as 'Red' and will be carried forward to next year's planning process.
* Visitor numbers to the exhibitions and Reading Rooms were above original expectations exceeding the annual targets by 138% and 76% respectively.
* For 2022/23 we were aiming for a Percentage Reduction in Hidden Collections of 70%. The actual result was a reduction of 68.24%. This represents almost 1 million new items searchable in the Library’s catalogues since this project began.
* The staff absence rate was higher than planned. This is expected to show slow improvement over the coming year.

The Chair thanked AS and AG for the comprehensive update. The Board noted the report.

### Audit Committee (AC) Update

Ruth Crawford KC (Audit Committee Chair) advised the recent Committee:

* Approved the 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan.
* Reviewed the Strategic Risk Register (SRR), paying particular attention to risks related to the Causewayside collection protection works. The Committee noted that the Crown Commercial Framework did not prove fruitful. The Library has now moved to open tender and is still on schedule.
* Noted the Committee would no longer receive annual Auditing of Collections reports but was assured that the process of tracking missing items and responding accordingly continues to function as before and provide the same assurance.
* Recognised the significant amount of work undertaken by Gill Hamilton, Director of Digital and Service Transformation, and her team especially over the last few months. The Committee felt more assured by this work and looked forward to continued enhancements in this area.
* Noted a report on progress with internal audit plan recommendations, 72% of which have been fully implemented. The remainder are mostly partially complete and relate to the IT General Controls internal audit.

### Governance Committee (GC) Update

Robert Wallen (Governance Committee Chair) advised the Committee:

* Reviewed the draft SG Framework Agreement which defines the relationship between the SG and the Library including roles and responsibilities. The Committee had put forward some suggested changes such as providing further clarity on roles and responsibilities. AG advised the Library continues to liaise with the SG on the suggested changes.

### Staffing & Remuneration (S&R) Chair update

Alison Kidd (S&R Committee Chair) advised the Committee had met with Trade Union representatives in advance of the meeting and found the discussion constructive and valuable to Committee members. The Committee noted:

* An indicative ballot for industrial action related to the 2023/24 pay award proposals was due to close shortly. This may result in a full ballot and potential strike action.
* The Library Leadership Team (LLT) have agreed an approach to considering the reduction of the working week from 37 to 35 hours and is due to begin discussions with the Trade Union.
* New mandatory 'Respect at Work' training is to be rolled out across the Library with significant input from the EDI Officer.
* A significant reduction in work related stress over the year from 12% to 1%. The Committee has asked to continue to be kept appraised of work related stress levels.
* The Equalities Mainstreaming mid-point progress report and had thanked Janet Stewart and those involved in compiling the comprehensive report.

The Chair thanked the Committee Chairs for the useful updates.

Jackie Cromarty (JCr) and Alison Stevenson (ASt) joined the meeting.

### Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

AS advised report BM/23/16 comprises a suite of papers on equalities work being undertaken across the Library and highlighted:

* The EDI Strategy is high level and relates to the Library's current Strategy and EDI Action Plan. The Strategy expresses the Library's ambitions around EDI to both internal and external stakeholders, including funding bodies who often require such statements. This is being shared for assurance that the Board supports the Library's direction of travel. The Board noted the EDI Action Plan is an internal document and will be circulated to the Board.
* The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) Intellectual Freedom Policy, previously discussed at the March Board, remains in draft form. The Library continues to liaise with CILIP on finalising the Policy.
* The Library Values paper was discussed at the November 2022 Board where the Board asked for scenario examples of how the Library would likely respond to some issues.
* The Sensitivity Appraisal Framework provides a structured, transparent and consistent means of assessing the sensitivity of material within collection items and for communicating to staff and the public about the sensitivity status of items. It is important to note the intended purpose of the Framework is to allow transparency in our decision-making process and is not a mechanism for censorship. The Library is the first in the sector to develop work at this level.

Following comprehensive discussion regarding the Sensitivity Appraisal Framework, the Board:

* Welcomed the increased transparency of the decision making process that the Framework seeks to offer and noted this will be applied only where there may be specific issues within any collection.
* Noted there are no circumstances where the Library would close access to collection material because it may contain culturally sensitive information. The only items where access may be restricted is for example where the presence of Personal Data could cause substantial damage or distress if made available or due to legal restrictions. The balance of the Framework is intended to maintain intellectual freedom and once finalised the Library will consider how to embed CILIP Intellectual Freedom Policy within the Framework.
* Noted the Library will monitor use of the Framework over the next 12 months and report back to the Board as appropriate. This will include how decisions are recorded, made by whom, when and how the status of such collection material is highlighted to users.
* Recognised there may be raised public awareness when the Sensitivity Appraisal Framework is made public.
* Noted the illustrative Values case studies will continue to be reviewed as appropriate.

The Chair thanked AS, JCr and ASt for the work to date in these useful documents. The Board noted the paper and that work will continue to refine the suite of papers.

Alison Stevenson left the meeting.

### Board and Board Committee dates 2024

The Board noted calendar invites for the 2024 Board and Committee dates would be issued shortly.

### Strategic Risk Register (SRR)

AG advised:

* The SRR was reviewed in full by May's Audit Committee. The June S&R Committee recently reviewed those risks within their remit.
* S1 (Significant Loss or Damage to the Collections). The Library continues to be outside the current agreed risk appetite for this risk. This continues to be assessed as a 'Moderate' risk overall compared to the agreed optimal risk position of ‘Low’. This assessment is largely the result of the collection protection work required at Causewayside (CB). The tender for this work will be issued shortly with work anticipated to be completed by financial year end. There continue to be a number of controls in place to manage collection protection risks at CB.
* S6 (Major Projects are not Delivered Successfully). This has been rescored to reflect the CB collection protection work due to commence and is now assessed as 'Moderate'. This is not expected to reduce until the CB works project are complete.
* S5 (Failure to Effectively Manage and Engage Staff). The scoring of this risk was discussed at the recent S&R Committee. AK (S&R Committee Chair) advised the Committee recommended the risk be rescored to 'Moderate' due to the increased likelihood of staff industrial action.

The Chair thanked AG for the update. The Board noted the paper and confirmed its agreement to the suggested rating changes. The Board agreed that in increasing S5 to 'Moderate' that this be reviewed following settlement of the 2023/24 staff pay award.

The Board also asked that specific reference to reputational risk relating to EDI be considered for inclusion in Strategic Risk 9 (Failure to Maintain the Library's Reputation).

### Centenary 2025

JCR advised:

* Work will continue over the summer to identify a list of key Centenary projects. The Board will receive an update in September together with a timeline chart. A first draft Communications and Engagement Plan has also been developed and will also be provided to the September Board.
* The Library will be reaching out to its key influencers and would also welcome Board members advising any networks they think appropriate to feed into Centenary planning.

Chair thanked JCr for the update. The Board noted the paper and was re-assured by the progress to date and the intention to further international contacts. Jackie Cromarty left the meeting.

###  Financial Update

The Board took the paper as read with AG highlighting:

* The Library has now prepared the 2022/23 Financial Statements with the draft now submitted to the external auditors. The draft accounts show the Library has ended the year with a decrease of £262k in General Reserves. This was planned and linked to the recent Voluntary Early Exit scheme. The future level of Reserves is in line with the Reserves Policy.
* Income generation was higher than expected overall with Image Sales continuing to show an upward trend.
* Financial management across the Library was good.
* There was a significant increase in Heritage Assets, the bulk of which attributable to the Library's share of the Blavatnik-Honresfield Library.
* Cash Balances at year-end remain healthy.
* While there was a small decrease in endowment fund values over the year, the Library continues to meet its investment objectives over the longer term.
* Audit Committee will receive a full update in August on both the 2022/23 Financial Statements and investment management performance.

The Chair thanked AG for the update. The Board noted their continuing concern over whether the proposed Causewayside collection protection works can be completed from the funds committed to date by SG due to rising construction costs. AG advised within the invitation to tender there is the ability to carry out value engineering. The Library continues to keep the SG updated and would do so as soon as possible if the tender costs received are significantly over the SG funding level. The Board noted the paper.

### Health & Safety report

The Board took the paper as read with AG highlighting:

* One minor incident involving a sub-contractor was recorded in the last reporting quarter.
* The Scottish Fire & Rescue Service (SFRS) is changing the way it will respond to automatic fire alarms from 1 July 2023, that is requiring confirmation before attending. The Library has updated its relevant Standard Operating Procedures to reflect this with supporting training. SRFS have advised they are comfortable with the Library's approach. Dialogue is ongoing with the Library's landlord at Kelvin Hall to seek confirmation of their additional control measures.

The Chair thanked AG for the update. The Board noted their continuing concern about this change in SFRS practice noting that it is a common concern across the Scottish property landscape. The Board noted the report.

### Approved minutes

The Board noted the approved minutes of the Audit Committee of 13 March 2023 and Staffing & Remuneration Committee of 15 March 2023.

###  NLS Foundation minutes

The Board noted the NLS Foundation meeting minutes of 13 February 2023 and that JMS has now joined the Foundation's Board.

###  Date of next meeting:

The Board noted the provisional agenda items for the 28 September 2023.