

# National Library of Scotland Board Meeting

Date: 27 September 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
* 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
* Rob Cawston, Director of Digital & Service Transformation - RCa
* Susanne Munro, Trade Union representative - SM
* Kathy Hutton, Board Support & Compliance Officer – KH
* Jackie Cromarty, Director of Engagement - JCr (part-time)
* Alison Stevenson, Director of Collections, Access & Research – ASt (part-time)

## Minutes of meeting

Graham Hogg (Rare Books Curator) and Helen Vincent (Head of Rare Books) provided an overview of the MacKinnon Collection project. The project, in collaboration with National Galleries Scotland (NGS), has encompassed a variety of activities including an exhibition in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery : [Portrait | National Galleries of Scotland](https://www.nationalgalleries.org/visit/scottish-national-portrait-gallery#:~:text=Visits%20are%20free%20but%20must%20be%20pre%2Dbooked.), a touring exhibition, talks online/in person and an online resource 'Shore to Shore'. The Board noted the importance of collaborative activities in the future of which this provided a transformative example.

The Board also noted that potential merchandising opportunities will be explored alongside NGS in due course. The Chair thanked both for the excellent presentation and they then left the meeting.

### Chair's Welcome

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

### Apologies for Absence

Apologies were noted from Michael Muir.

### Declarations of Interests

Declarations are as recorded in the Board Register of Interests.

### Horizon scanning

The Board agreed their main concern at present is the level of Scottish Government (SG) funding going forward and sustaining the Library's activities including safeguarding the Collections.

### Minutes of meetings

The minutes of 28 June 2023 were approved as a correct record with a correction to replace 'provide' with 'prove' within the Audit Committee update.

### Actions outstanding and matters arising from previous meetings

The Board confirmed their agreement that all actions are closed.

### Chief Executive's Update and Performance Report

Amina Shah highlighted:

* There was no update on funding of the 2023/24 pay award from the recent Library/SG Liaison meeting.
* The next meeting of the Public Body Reform Group covering the culture cluster takes place next week. Public Body Chief Executives and Chief Operating Officers continue to explore ways to work more efficiently and collaboratively. The new Director General of Strategy and External Affairs has asked all Chief Executives to complete a proforma noting the short- and medium-term demand pressures and opportunities for efficiencies by 29 September. Once submitted, feedback will be shared with the Board.
* The Library has reiterated that as well as supporting the objectives as set out in the National Performance Framework, the Library and other cultural heritage bodies also have a responsibility for long term stewardship which does not always fit easily into discussions on reducing funding.
* Consideration and evaluation of moving to a 35 hour working hours is ongoing. This is complex due to the variety of shifts across the Library.
* A survey to establish if there are any RAAC issues within the Library's estate is underway. To date, no instances have been confirmed. One potential issue with the roof at Sighthill requires further investigation. The Causewayside building has still to be investigated although, from building information held, no issue is anticipated. A full report will be provided to SG once complete.
* The Library Leadership Team (LLT) considered topics such as the new strategy, funding and digital engagement at a recent 'Away Day' meeting.
* Recent events in George IV Bridge, including musical ones, continue to attract good audience levels.
* The One Third Digital target has been reached two years in advance of the target date. Consideration of how to highlight this achievement publicly is underway. The Library is one of the cultural organisations leading the way in this area.
* Following the recent Lawnmarket 'pop up shop', a 'Lessons Learned' exercise is underway. The shop also provided an opportunity to signpost people to George IV Bridge.
* A new HR system is due to be launched during 2024 and is an example of where digital transformation can reduce time spent on administrative tasks.
* A BBC Two documentary with David Olusoga was filmed in part in the Library and includes images from our collections, including Ravenscraig Steelworks. '[Union](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0gd25kn/episodes/guide)' will commence broadcast on the night of Monday 2 October.
* The Library is working with colleagues from Cambridge University Library on a peer review of collection security.

Anthony Gillespie advised:

* The Library's funding is a continuing known significant risk if SG funding does not increase in line with pay award increases.
* The 31 targets within the Library Plan are all presently assessed as 'green' which perhaps is a reflection of the more collaborative approach to developing the Library Plan.
* Progress with Key Indicators has been good generally with only one (website usage) assessed as 'Amber'.
* The tender for fire dampers and smoke extract system work at Causewayside is now in the tender evaluation stage with an update due to the November Audit Committee.

The Chair thanked AS and AG for the comprehensive update. Following discussion, the Board noted they would be kept updated on threats/opportunities relating to Artificial Intelligence and that the Library will produce a relevant ethical policy encompassing copyright and legal deposit.

Alison Stevenson joined the meeting.

### Collections Development annual update

ASt advised:

* The Library continues to acquire new collections through purchase, donation and legal deposit resulting in better safeguarding and access to documentation recording the diverse experiences and culture contributions of Scottish people and communities. Recent co-curation projects have reaped the benefit of collecting in related areas.
* A review is underway in Legal Deposit scope/collecting, working alongside other Legal Deposit Libraries (LDLs) to capture any gaps in Scottish material the Library holds.
* The e-resources review continues on a rolling programme taking account of feedback from audiences.
* A small amount of Collection Purchase Fund was used to fund an Assistant Curator role to work on cataloguing across five culturally important author archives of the Scottish 20th century.

The Chair thanked ASt for the comprehensive overview. The Board noted that the Library recognises the preference of donors as to where their collection/archives are placed; remembering our obligation to local/individual communities as well as the nation at large.

Alison Stevenson left the meeting.

### Audit Committee (AC) Update

Lesley McPherson, who chaired the recent Committee, advised the Committee received reports from both the internal and external auditors and were comfortable with the assurance provided from these. The Committee also expressed concern at future funding and potential financial restrictions which may affect Library's activities.

### Governance Committee (GC) Update

Robert Wallen (Governance Committee Chair) advised the Committee reviewed various governance documents. Following legal review, these will be presented to the March 2024 Board.

The Committee noted the new Charities Act had been approved although is not yet in force. Some key changes within the new Act include that OSCR will hold Trustee contact information both publicly and internally whilst the grounds for disqualification of Trustees will be extended.

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

Alison Kidd (S&R Committee Chair) advised the Committee had not met since the last Board meeting. Since the last Committee meeting, there has been no further information on the 2023/24 pay award from SG. The November Committee is due to receive an update on the 35-hour week review and progress with implementation of the new HR system.

### Annual Report & Financial Statements 2022/23

AG provided an overview of the Annual Report and Financial Statements highlighting:

* Audit Scotland (AScot) plans to issue an unqualified audit opinion in respect of the financial statements to end March 2023, noting the appropriate and effective financial management and governance in place within the Library. The key messages within the AScot report are all positive with no new recommendations although the report did reiterate that the Library has not yet renewed its Cyber Essentials accreditation.
* The Governance Statement was reviewed by the Audit Committee with the S&R and Governance Chairs also reviewing relevant sections. The Governance Statement has also been reworked to ensure it gives a fuller picture of Charity/NDPB and Board/Accountable Officer responsibilities.
* As a result of some changes to the Government’s Financial Reporting Manual (FREM) there were some new requirements particularly around the creation of a Remuneration & Staff Report. This report now centralises information that was previously spread across different parts of the financial statements and enhances accessibility.
* The closure of the 2022/23 financial statements has resulted in a decrease in the General Fund Reserve of £262k from £859k to £597k.

The Board asked for thanks to be passed to all Library staff involved in the audit which reflects strong financial control within the Library.

The Board noted the Annual Audit Report from Audit Scotland and approved signing of the Letter of Representation and Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2022/23. The Board also noted the narrow margins relating to the Library's funding and understands the importance of resolving the pay award funding issue which, if not fully funded by SG, puts existing Library activities at risk due to constricted funds.

### Survey overview

RW (Governance Committee Chair) advised the Board Committee self-assessment survey results had recently been reviewed by the Governance Committee. The Board noted the results were broadly reassuring. With the Board's agreement, the Board Chair undertook to review the format of future surveys to allow for more in depth feedback.

### Digital & Service Transformation update & Reflections from Director

Redacted for operating confidentiality.

Jackie Cromarty joined the meeting.

### Centenary 2025

The Board took the paper as read with JCr highlighting:

* The programme chart provides a top-level overview of timescales for the three proposed flagship projects for the Centenary year. These are (1) a national tour of selected collection items (2) an awareness raising campaign around Libraries generally – 'Love Libraries' and (3) 'On the Shelf' initiative to encourage exploration of books.
* Centenary activities are intended to fold into development of the new Library strategy.
* Third-party events such as the Edinburgh City of Literature AGM and the Conference of European Libraries will be key events for stakeholder engagement.
* Civic events are also being considered at this planning stage.
* The Communications & Engagement Plan is an overview and working document on how the Library will communicate with stakeholders.
* Audience related work is underway to understand more about audiences that already engage with the Library and those that do not engage to any extent at this time to support the audience focused approach.

The Chair thanked JCr for the update. The Board noted the report and that good progress has been made to date. During discussion, the Board:

* Asked that consideration be given to more local civic receptions, for example in Glasgow, as well as a possible event in New York although not necessarily during 'Tartan Week'.
* Noted the Library is in discussions with its American Patrons as well as the New York Public Library around providing some collection items on loan which could provide a central focus for any display. An initial meeting with the President of New York Public Library will take place in Edinburgh mid-October.
* Noted the 'Love Libraries' initiative is intended to reach out to communities which may not presently connect with the Library. However, the Library's existing wider activities outwith the Centenary aim to broaden our offering to engage with those who do not presently use the Library.

Chair thanked JCr for the update. Jackie Cromarty left the meeting.

### Financial Update

The Board took the paper as read with AG highlighting:

* The Library is moving towards a balanced budget which has been assisted by a number of initiatives including staff recruitment slowdown where possible, an increase in the interest rate, utility costs savings and a number of unexpected bequests.
* The Trade Union has advised that unless substantive feedback is received from the Deputy First Minister by 5 October, strike action may be considered.
* Work continues on income generation opportunities such as the 'pop up' shop at Lawnmarket. This includes a review of possible income generation uses of Baden Powell House noting this may be limited by funding restrictions.

The Board noted the report.

### Health & Safety report

The Board took the paper as read with AG highlighting:

* Since the last Board meeting, one incident has been reported at Causewayside. There was no injury to staff or the public and the defective item has already been fixed.
* Fire (Life Safety) is now assessed as green, to a large extent due to the Library's process changes in response to the new Scottish Fire & Rescue Services (SFRS) response policy.

The Board noted the report.

### Approved minutes

The Board noted the approved minutes of the Audit Committee of 15 May 2023 and Governance Committee of 9 May 2023.

### NLS Foundation minutes

The Board noted the NLS Foundation meeting minutes of 2 May 2023.

### Date of next meeting:

The Board noted the provisional agenda items for the next Board on 29 November 2023 and then moved to a closed session for Board members only which was not minuted.