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# National Library of Scotland Board Meeting

Date: 25 June 2025

## Participants

**Present:**

* Sir Drummond Bone (Board Chair) - DB
* Donald Davidson KC - DD
* Emily Drayson - ED
* Alan Horn - AH
* Alison Kidd – AK
* Robert Kilpatrick - RK
* Kirsty Lingstadt - KL
* Justin McKenzie Smith – JMS
* Michael Muir - MM
* 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 and Service Transformation - RC
* Kathy Hutton, Board Support and Compliance Officer - KH
* Susanne Munro, Trade Union (TU) Representative – SM

## Minutes of meeting

Graeme Hawley, Head of Published Collections, provided an overview of the Community Walking initiative. This outreach activity has already raised the Library's profile in many towns across Scotland, connecting to organisations and people and helping identify Library resources that match their needs. Local content for the towns visited to date have also been added to the Library's collections. The Chair thanked Graeme for the update. The Board welcomed this innovative initiative to increase engagement outside the central belt.

### Chair's Welcome

The Board Chair welcomed Neil Mackenzie KC representing the Faculty of Advocates and Susanne Munro as the Trade Union representative.

### Apologies for Absence

Apologies were noted from Lesley McPherson.

### Declarations of Interests

Declarations are as recorded in the Board Register of Interests.

### Horizon Scanning

The Board noted the requirement to provide Trustees' information to OSCR is effective from 30 June and when next providing the Annual Report. Revised criteria for automatic disqualification of Trustees by OSCR is also now in place.

The Board also noted the Scottish Government (SG) advert for recruitment of a new Board Chair is live until 14 July.

### Minutes of meetings

The minutes and confidential minutes of 27 March 2025 were approved as a correct record.

### Actions outstanding and matters arising from previous meetings

The Board noted one action is ongoing, the possible ringfencing of budget for Estates compliance. AG advised a specific budget is already in place for this.

### Chief Executive's Update and Performance Report

The Librarian, Amina Shah, spoke to the report highlighting:

* SG has requested the Library to submit 'front line staff' numbers. To date this has not been provided as the Library does not categorise staff in this way. Those who do not have direct contact with Library users play a crucial role in supporting that engagement, maintaining good governance and safeguarding the collections. Following discussion, the Board supported reconfirming to SG the approach that senior management are already approaching workforce planning in line with the Board's instruction. That is taking careful, prudent decisions and reviewing risk and wellbeing when considering backfilling roles.
* Recruitment for a new Board Chair is live until 14 July, this is being undertaken by SG alongside recruitment for Chairs for three other cultural organisations. The Board recorded their concern at this approach which could dilute the focus of finding the right fit for a new Chair and questioned the decision not to have a Board member on the recruitment panel.
* The Culture Cluster storage review has not brought forward any collaborative opportunities to date for the Library. The Board agreed that long term planning does require to begin soon as available space continues to reduce.
* As part of its Centenary year, the Library recently hosted the Conference of European National Librarians. Thanks were noted to the team in the Librarian's Office who led on the organisation of the event.
* The 'Dear Library' exhibition is now open and has received a good range of positive media to date. This is the Library's first large scale exhibition to be co-produced. The Library is appreciative of all the contributing organisations and has noted some challenges around working in this way which should be addressed in future.

AG provide an overview of the Library Plan performance at year end.

* Overall, the status of Key Indicators and targets has remained much as reported to the Board for Quarter 3 with most targets (87%) achieved.
* Good overall progress has been made with the Climate Action Plan but it remains at 'Red'. As experienced by similar organisations, reduction in CO2 emissions has now mainly plateaued with significant reductions becoming harder to achieve. The other target at 'Red' is the Causewayside fire protection project which will be discussed later.

The Chair thanked both for the updates. The Board noted the good overall performance in the Library Plan. Alison Kidd temporarily left the meeting.

### Audit Committee (AC) update

ED (Audit Committee Chair) advised the Committee:

* Welcomed a comprehensive Annual Procurement Report from the new Procurement and Contracts Manager.
* Agreed not to extend one investment manager's contract and to instead scope where the monies could be best deposited for the future subject to Committee approval.
* Reviewed several Internal Audit reports. The follow up report on recommendations from previous audits received an assessment of substantial assurance from the auditors who were satisfied the Library had plans in place to complete the recommendations.
* Noted the Workforce Planning audit also received a substantial assurance finding. This reflects the Library Leadership Team's diligence in reviewing the backfilling of vacancies whilst considering risk and wellbeing.
* Noted the Government Indemnity Scheme (GIS) audit received a Weak level of assurance which was not unexpected. The report noted the Library continues to seek assurance on SG financial support in the event of loss or damage to the collections and specifically items on deposit.
* Noted in the absence of confirmation of GIS financial coverage from SG the Library may be at financial risk, a concern shared by similar organisations in Scotland. This has been added to the Strategic Risk Register. A review process has started for all agreements for collections on deposit in order to clarify who bears the financial risk. This is within the context that the Library has robust checks and procedures in place and makes all reasonable and best efforts to protect all collections.
* Noted that, notwithstanding the GIS audit outcome, the auditors were of the opinion that overall the Library has adequate management controls and systems in place.

### Governance Committee (GC) update

Robert Wallen (Governance Committee Chair) advised there had not been a Governance Committee since the last Board meeting.

###  Staffing and Remuneration (S&R) Committee update (this item was taken following Alison Kidd's return to the meeting)

Alison Kidd (S&R Committee Chair) advised the Committee noted:

* A useful pre-Committee discussion with Trade Union representatives.
* The recent positive Workforce Planning internal audit report.
* An update on the 2025/26 staff pay claim which has subsequently been received with negotiations to commence shortly.
* The overall absence rate is slightly down from the same time last year.
* As part of Workforce Planning, it has been identified that 30% of staff will be in the age range to retire in the next five years. The Organisational Development Partner continues to liaise with managers to understand any risks or opportunities this might present for the future as skill needs change.
* The 35-hour week is now well underway with a review after 12 months in March 2026.

The Chair thanked the Committee Chairs for the valuable updates.

###  2025-2030 Strategy: The Next Chapter

AS advised the draft provided incorporates feedback from a range of consultations and thanked the Board Strategy sub-group and the Board for their valuable input in finetuning the Strategy document.

The Board approved the draft for production further to consideration of the minor amendments discussed. The updated final draft would be shared with staff and the draft production copy produced.

###  Strategic Risk Register

AG provided an overview advising the overall status is similar to that presented to the Board in November:

* The managed 'power down' at Causewayside in April went well with actions ongoing from any lessons learned.
* S2 (Loss of Interruption of Service). An interim access solution is in place within George IV Bridge for access to legal deposit following the British Library cyber incident.
* S1 (Significant Loss or Damage to the Collections) continues to be assessed as moderate. Behind the scenes collections protection work continues in addition to the fire damper works at Causewayside. A common fire detection and alarm system will shortly be in place across all Library buildings in Edinburgh.
* S3 (Failure to Comply with Legal and Statutory Requirements). Martyn's Law, aimed at improving security at public venues, has passed into legislation and required work is underway.

The Board thanked AG for the update. The Board noted the report.

###  2026 meeting dates

The Board noted the proposed 2026 Board and Committee dates.

###  Internal Audit update

KH advised the Audit Committee had agreed the 2025/26 internal audit plan. There is a provisional plan for eight audits during 2026-2028 and Board members are asked to feed in any suggestions for consideration by the Audit Committee.

Alison Kidd rejoined the meeting.

###  Digital Update

RC provided an overview of the update and highlighted:

* The increasing pressure on the costs of core IT services and equipment due to a range of contributing factors including inflationary price rises and increased costs for expanded monitoring and defence tools in response to increasing cyber security threats.
* Alongside maintaining the existing IT estate and keeping systems operational, some larger scale projects are in progress, for example the move to increased Cloud hosting.
* An increase in AI bots 'crawling' cultural and educational websites which can result in a slower experience for users. Where possible, measures are being put in place to try to prevent any unwanted AI bots without impinging on user access.
* The Beta version of the Library's new website is due to launch mid-July following review and rationalisation of content on the existing site to better meet the users' needs.

The Chair thanked RC for the update. The Board looked forward to launch of the new website launch and noted that the Library's AI statement has been widely welcomed in the cultural sector.

Lucy Clement (LC) joined the meeting.

###  Fundraising plan

LC provided an overview advising:

* The 3-year Fundraising Plan has been prepared using the Library's new Strategy as a guide as well as tying in with the Library's Centenary activities.
* Fundraising income has seen a modest increase despite more competition for funds available from charitable trusts and similar organisations.
* The implementation of a new CRM system will need input from fundraising staff but when in place will provide clearer user information.
* A new Code of Fundraising Practice will be in place from November. New data protection legislation will also apply to charities and consideration of how to adopt this will be done.

The Chair thanked LC for the update. The Board noted the importance of having a process already in place through the Board Fundraising Oversight Group in the event of sensitivity around a donation.

Lucy Clement left the meeting. Jackie Cromarty joined the meeting.

###  Centenary update

The Board took the paper as read with JC highlighting:

* The 'Dear Library' exhibition launch the previous week was successful with a good range of media generated.
* Outwith national tour programme activities continue while considering a mechanism for receiving and evaluating feedback.
* The Love Libraries campaign has received good feedback so far. A 'check-in' with partners is underway to see if there are possible enhancements for the remain of the campaign.
* The Beano comic magazine is issuing a Centenary edition in August which will feature George VI Bridge on the cover.

The Chair thanked JC for the update. The Board noted the report and that discussions are underway on ways to increase use of the 'Dear Library' exhibition space by schools and other organisations.

###  Safeguarding

JC advised the Safeguarding Group has reviewed the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures before sharing again with staff.

Training is in place to provide the appropriate understanding of safeguarding for different staff groups, those with high direct contact with public and those with less.

The Chair thanked JC for the update. The Boad noted the report and that RW had reviewed the paper in advance as the Board's safeguarding representative and was comfortable with the measures in place. Jackie Cromarty left the meeting.

### Causewayside project update

AG advised completion of the project is now scheduled for March 2026 with funds carried forward into this financial year.

The need for additional dampers has been identified following more invasive investigation work now the contractor is on site. Discussions on contract variations and the ensuing additional costs are expected to conclude shortly. A significant contingency fund is in place but, due to the complexity of the building, it is possible that additional funds in addition to the contingency may be required.

The Chair thanked AG for the update. The Board noted the report and that the project is a challenging piece of work due to the nature of the building and managing noise and disruption while the building is in full use.

###  Finance update

The Board took the paper as read with AG highlighting:

* A draft set of 2024/25 Annual Accounts are with the External Auditors for review and will be provided to the September Board. The Library has ended the financial year with a small reduction in General Reserves.
* A required 5-year revaluation exercise of the Library's fixed assets has been undertaken which evidenced an increase in value.
* The next Audit Committee will consider recommendations on how to simplify the Reserves held. The aim is to allow the Library to better financially plan for the longer term.

The Chair thanked AG for the update. The Board noted the report and concurred the Library's finances at present seem on a stable footing with good budgetary controls in place.

###  Health & Safety report

AG advised one incident had been recorded since the last report to the Board, appropriate measures were put in place to mitigate a repeat of the incident. AG also advised the Health and Safety Manager had recently retired with the new appointee due to start in July.

### The Board noted the report.

###  Committee minutes

The Board noted the most recent minutes of the Board Committees.

###  NLS Foundation minutes

The Board noted the NLS Foundation meeting minutes of 24 February 2025.

###  Date of next meeting:

The Board noted the provisional agenda items for the next scheduled Board meeting of 17 September 2025.