

# National Library of Scotland Board Meeting

Date: Wednesday 29 June 2022.

## Participants

### Present

- Sir Drummond Bone (Chair) – DB.
- Simon Learoyd (Vice Chair) - SL.
- Helen Durndell (Vice Chair)- HD.
- Elizabeth Carmichael - EC.
- Ruth Crawford QC - RC.
- Alan Horn - AH.
- Robert Wallen - RW.
- Kirsty Lingstadt - KL.
- Lesley McPherson – LMcP.
- Robert Kirkpatrick - RK.
- Alison Kidd - AK.

### National Library of Scotland attendees

- Amina Shah, National Librarian - AS.
- Anthony Gillespie – AG.
- Jackie Cromarty - JCr.
- Kathy Hutton - KH.
- Alistair Bell (part-time) - AB.

## **Opening Presentation**

Alistair Bell, Interim Head of Moving Image and Sound Collections, provided an overview of the 'Unlocking our Sound Heritage' project, which is tasked with digitising at risk audio recordings, cataloguing them and clearing rights for online access and re-use.

Over 3 years the project facilitated engagement activities to raise the profile of sound archives with both public and professional audiences. The project team have preserved access to over 8,000 recordings from 15 different organisations across Scotland which, before the project, were inaccessible due to the fragility of the format and the obsolescence of the playback equipment.

The Chair thanked Alistair Bell for his presentation. The Board noted that much of the practical experience gained by the project team would be retained within the Library.

Elizabeth Carmichael and Robert Wallen joined the meeting via video conference.

### **1. Chair's Welcome**

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

### **2. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were noted from the Union Representative Jan Usher and the Faculty of Advocates.

### **3. Declarations of Interests**

Declarations are as recorded.

#### **4. Horizon Scanning**

The Board noted:

- The Scottish Government (SG) Resource Spending Review, likely meaning the Library budget will need to be very tightly managed over the next few years.
- A further Board member recruitment round due to start September. This will include the need to recruit a Board member with finance experience to join the Audit Committee. Alison Kidd agreed to sit on the Board member selection panel.
- Two Board members due to stand down from the Board in the near future are also Trustees of the NLS Foundation. The Foundation is expected to request two current Board members to replace them.

#### **5. Minutes of Meetings**

The minutes of 30 March 2022 were approved as a correct record.

#### **6. Actions and Matters Arising**

The Board noted the status of the actions and that:

- Discussion on the Library's Centenary would be a standing item through to 2025.
- The Library's items from the successful Honresfield purchase are due to arrive in August.

## **7. Librarian's Report and Library Plan update**

AS highlighted several points from the report.

- The SG Resource Spending Review suggests the Library will enter very challenging financial times over the next few years. The Library Leadership Team (LLT) is presently reviewing Library activities and collating data so is best prepared for any needed actions and challenges.
- Any request for SG funding for refurbishment of GB public spaces is now paused. No funding is anticipated until 2026. The LLT is reviewing a suite of possibilities which might be accomplished within the existing capital budget and will keep the Board apprised of these.
- The Library recently received the latest instalment of the John Murray Archive; the first collection for the Google Books project is due in July; 240 medieval manuscripts from the Alex Graham digitisation have been made available online; good progress has been made with the map transcription project which saw very good volunteer engagement.
- Further work is taking place in understanding the Library's webstats which can fluctuate due to technical reasons. Work is underway on user engagement with the website to understand how the Library's digital engagement offering can be enhanced.

AG highlighted the below from the Library Plan update.

- There have been no significant changes since Q3 across the various categories. Performance is significantly improved on 2020/21 which was largely affected by the COVID pandemic.

- Given the ongoing effect of COVID during 2021/22, it is heartening to see the large proportion of objectives (87%) that have either been fully or substantially completed.
- Excellent progress continues to be made in relation to the Hidden Collections. The indicator at the end of the year exceeded the target for the year.
- Reading Room visits continue to show signs of recovery towards pre-pandemic levels.
- Development income has exceeded its annual target largely as the result of work on the Honresfield campaign.

The Chair thanked AS and AG for the updates. The Board noted there were presently no plans to change the 2022/23 Plan and budget and that if any substantial changes did arise, these will come to the Board for review. The Board noted the report and:

- Requested to receive in sufficient time any proposed significant changes to the budget or Library Plan.
- Noted that, due to budget constraints, the 2023/24 budget and Plan will see the start of more significant changes to Library activities, whilst maintaining the ambition of the Library strategy.
- Noted the fire protection work budget is ringfenced but the Library is also aware of inflationary pressures on building costs.
- Asked for an update in September on how the Library proposes to achieve its goals and priorities whilst streamlining its activities.

## **8. Audit Committee Update**

In addition to the SG Resource Spending review already discussed, SL advised the Audit Committee.

- Agreed the 2022/23 internal audit plan.
- Reviewed the Facilities Management Contract which is now agreed.
- Noted the external audit plan from Audit Scotland. The Annual Report and accounts are due to come to the September Board for approval. SL encouraged Board members to review and comment on the introductory commentary of the accounts when circulated. There are no anticipated difficulties arising from the annual accounts.
- Took comfort from the solid fundraising due diligence process in place.
- Noted the considerable amount of activity being undertaken within digital/IT especially around cyber security, which is a key risk, and significant progress on the Cloud First project. Resourcing pressure remains within the digital/IT area and credit is due to the team for moving the various workstreams forward. The Board will receive a digital update in November.

## **9. Governance Committee Update**

RW advised.

- Two new members had joined the Committee for its first 2022 meeting in June.

- The two main items discussed (Code of Conduct for Board Members and Board Effectiveness Plan) are already on the Board agenda for discussion.

## **10. Staffing & Remuneration Committee Update**

HD advised.

- Noted that focus is needed on both workforce planning/skills audit and that the Librarian will present to the Committee's November meeting, and thereafter annually.
- Received an update on the Library's pay negotiations with a protracted timeline expected this year.
- Requested the Hybrid Working Policy be circulated to Committee members as soon as available.
- Noted the completion of Forward Job Plans/Appraisals was circa 84% and asked for update to the September Board.
- Reviewed the Library Board's draft Mission and Values and recommended this be considered by the Governance and Audit Committees in advance of discussion by the full Board.
- Noted the continued importance of staff wellbeing and the available support, including from the Staff Engagement Group, Trade Unions and the Library supported advice line.

The Chair thanked the Committee Chairs for the valuable updates.

## **11. Board effectiveness action plan**

- JCr advised the plan status had been reviewed by the Governance Committee, at which time all items were recommended for closure except one regarding workplace planning. The remaining open item was subsequently discussed and agreed by the Staffing & Remuneration Committee.

The Board agreed all actions are now considered complete and the action plan closed.

## **12. Strategic risk register**

AG highlighted:

- There have been some significant movements since the last review and the strategic risks have been held as 'Steady' over the period. However, this is a very fluid situation and it is very possible that these could be rescored over the coming weeks/months. The Library's Leadership Team continues to maintain close scrutiny of all risks.
- S1 - Significant Loss or Damage to the Collections: The Library continues to be outside the current agreed risk appetite for this (assessed as a Moderate risk compared to the agreed Low appetite). This is largely due to work required in the Causewayside building to upgrade a number of collection protections systems (sprinklers/smoke extract etc). Work is progressing on the various elements of this work.
- Work has continued on cyber security which will become a separate strategic risk after the next Strategic Risk Register review.
- S4 – Failure To Effectively Manage and Engage Staffing Resource. In addition to the anticipated budget constraints for the next few years, the



environment surrounding the annual pay award has changed significantly over the past six months largely as a result of inflationary pressures and expectations over reductions in the working week.

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

### **13. 2023 Board and Committee Dates**

- The Board noted the dates and that the February Audit Committee will be rescheduled to March to tie in with the anticipated start date of new Board members at the end of February 2023.

### **14. Code of Conduct for Board members**

- JCr advised, following approval of the Model Code by the Scottish Parliament in December, the Library has adapted the Code through referring to 'the Library' rather than 'the public body'. Board members had received supplementary information in support of the new Model Code including advice notes on a number of key themes within the Code.
- The Library's Code of Conduct will now be provided to SG for ministerial approval. Following receipt of approval, the Code will be circulated to Board members along with the annual Register of Interest review.

The Board noted the paper.

### **15. Finance quarterly report**

AG advised:

- The Audit Committee had approved an increase in the Library's general reserves.

- A new external auditor appointment has been advised by the Accounts Commission. Audit Scotland will continue to be the Library's auditors for the next five years however, a different internal team from Audit Scotland will support this.
- The retender of the Investment Manager contract will be issued shortly. Within the requirements, tenderers will be asked to provide details of their approach to responsible investing.
- As discussed early, the Library awaits advice of SG funding from 2023/24. This is later this year as a result of the Spending Review.

The Chair thanked AG for the update. Board noted the report and the challenging environment the Library is likely to face over at least the next five years with a potential real term cut in funding due to inflationary pressures.

## **16. Health and safety report**

AG presented the report to Board for information and advised:

- No incidents or accidents had been reported since the last report to the Board. The general trend for these is presently downwards, likely due in part to some staff continuing to work off site.
- The Health & Safety Manager is working on both online inductions for the Library's buildings and an electronic workflow for health & safety in relation to hybrid working.

The Chair thanked AG for the update and the Board noted the report

## **17. Approved Board Committee minutes**

The Board noted the Audit Committee minutes of 7 February 2022.

## **18. NLS Foundation minutes**

The Board noted the NLS Foundation minutes of 4 February 2022. As discussed earlier, two Board members who sit on the NLS Foundation Board are due to step down from the NLS Foundation Board in the next six months.

## **19. Date of Next Meeting**

- Wednesday 28 September
- The Board noted the proposed September 2022 agenda items with the addition of an update on Forward Job Plan/Appraisals completion rate (as part of the S&R Committee update).

The meeting closed at 15.25.