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# National Library of Scotland Board Meeting

Date: 27 November 2024

## Participants

**Present:**

* Sir Drummond Bone (Board Chair) - DB
* Lesley McPherson (Board Vice-Chair) - LMcP
* Emily Drayson - ED
* Alan Horn - AH
* Alison Kidd – AK
* Robert Kilpatrick - RK
* Kirsty Lingstadt - KL
* Justin McKenzie Smith – JMS
* Robert Wallen – RW

**In attendance:**

* Neil Mackenzie KC, Faculty of Advocates - NM
* Amina Shah, National Librarian - AS
* Anthony Gillespie, Chief Operating Officer – AG
* Janet Stewart, Head of HR - JSt
* Kathy Hutton, Board Support and Compliance Officer - KH
* Susanne Munro, Trade Union (TU) Representative – SM

## Minutes of meeting

In advance of the formal agenda, the Board received an update on Hidden Collections; items that have been accepted into the Library's collections but are not yet discoverable via online catalogues. Where possible, the metadata team employ innovative approaches to make items discoverable sooner. Archives and manuscript collections can present cataloguing challenges but, with much material unique and unpublished, it is a rich source reflecting the social, political and cultural history of Scotland.

The Board welcomed the opportunity to receive further insight into this fascinating area of work. The Chair thanked Carol Campbell (Head of Metadata) and Chris Cassels (Head of Archives and Manuscript Collections) and they left the meeting.

### Chair's Welcome

The Board Chair welcomed all to the meeting, including Neil Mackenzie KC representing the Faculty of Advocates and Susanne Munro as Trade Union 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 the Library's ongoing financial uncertainty remains a concern. This includes whether the Library will receive full funding of the increased National Insurance employer costs from Scottish Government (SG).

### Minutes of meetings

The minutes of 25 September 2024 were approved as a correct record.

### Actions outstanding and matters arising from previous meetings

The Board noted all actions are closed or transferred to the Audit Committee.

### Chief Executive's Update and Performance Report

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

* The Activity Report, provided to the Board for information, highlights the incredible depth of the Library's collections and collaboration among employees across the Library.
* The objectives from the 'Reaching People' Strategy have been surpassed in many instances. During the last quarter, the Library welcomed the highest ever weekly exhibition attendance as well as an increased footfall to George IV Bridge and the third highest web visits since 2015. This provides assurance on the direction of travel being taken towards increasing audiences amidst the level of financial uncertainty the Library is facing.
* The Librarian attended the St Andrew's Book Festival which took place in London; this provided an opportunity to engage with supporters based in the south.
* The Board can expect to receive an update on funding/finances following the expected initial advice of future funding from SG on 4 December.
* Public Sector Reform discussions continue. The Library will shortly provide a report to SG on how we continue to manage and embed reform. The Library's Strategy provides the direction for this. The Library Leadership Team (LLT) continue to consider options for further possible savings balanced against any associated risks.
* Following the British Library cyber incident and due to external dependencies, availability of non-print legal deposit is now expected in January 2025. The Library is conscious of the need to reinstate access as soon as possible and recognises the difficulties faced by the Faculty of Advocates without this.

The Chief Operating Officer, Anthony Gillespie provided an overview of performance against the Library Plan highlighting:

* Generally good progress across most targets. Three targets have an amber status, one being physical storage which is presently being discussed at SG culture cluster level. Good overall progress has been made with the Climate Action Plan but some targets will be carried forward into the new Library Plan. Work has started on the Causewayside fire damper project with completion now scheduled for autumn 2025.
* Good progress has been made across key indicators although staff absence remains at amber. The Library continues to support staff and managers with appropriate mitigation actions recognising that absence can have a financial impact to keep Library services operating effectively.

The Chair thanked both for the updates. The Board asked for thanks to be expressed to all Library staff for the uplift in visitors both onsite and online.

### Audit Committee (AC) update

ED advised the Committee:

* Received investment updates from the Library's two investment managers. The performance of the investment funds will feed into the decision on whether to retender these contracts in May 2025. The Committee approved the Treasury Management and Investment Policy.
* Welcomed the highest assurance finding (strong) for the first two internal audits of the year, risk management and financial controls. The scope for the two upcoming audits on workforce planning and collections protection insurance/indemnity were approved.
* Received reports on a number of other items which are due for discussion later in the Board agenda.

### Governance Committee (GC) update

Robert Wallen (Governance Committee Chair) advised there had been no Committee meeting since the last Board meeting.

### Staffing and Remuneration (S&R) Committee update

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

* Reviewed the draft EDI Policy and received an update on progress to date. Also reviewed the draft Code of Conduct which will return to the Committee in 2025.
* Noted concerns about funding of any pay award, the proposed 35-hour week and increases in employers' National insurance costs.
* Noted that staff absence is higher than the same period last year, especially long term absence. This reflects national absence levels but the Library continues with appropriate mitigation actions to try to address any challenges that absence causes.
* Had another very useful confidential meeting with TU representatives in advance of the main agenda. The issues raised will be passed to the LLT for their awareness.

The Chair thanked the Committee Chairs for the valuable updates.

Alison Stevenson (ASt), Director of Collections, Access and Research joined the meeting.

### Major Loan

ASt advised Board approval is required for the loan of the Mary Queen of Scots letter for display at Perth Museum from January to April 2025. This is part of the centenary outreach programme of proactively making certain items available in Scotland outwith Library buildings. The loan has been approved by the Loans Panel and LLT.

The Board approved the loan and noted that, separately, Perth Museum have requested a loan of the First Folio. Following internal approval, this request will be circulated to the Board for consideration and approval. Alison Stevenson left the meeting.

### Strategic Risk Register (SRR)

AG advised that since the Board last reviewed the SRR, it has been updated for several factors including the start of the Causewayside fire damper project, receipt of Cyber Essentials accreditation and the delay in availability of non-print legal deposit. AG also advised:

* Martyn's Law, a draft bill which proposes certain public venues take steps to reduce the risk of physical harm in the event of a terrorist attack, is proceeding through UK Parliament. In the interim, the Library has started preparatory work.
* There are no suggested changes to risk assessment levels. The Audit Committee did consider whether achieving Cyber Essentials accreditation changed the cyber security position but agreed this did not merit the change.

The Board noted the report and concurred that they were comfortable with the amber risk status for cyber security on the basis that mitigating actions continue to be put in place wherever possible and progress continues with the cyber security plan. The Board noted the reality that it may have to consider adjusting its risk position in light of ever increasing cyber security risks.

Rob Cawston (Director of Digital and Service Transformation) joined the meeting.

### Board Away Day 2025

The Board agreed the best timing for the annual 'Away Day' was the first half of October.

### EDI Policy

JSt advised the Policy has been developed to provide a source of information/reference and underpins the Library's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. The Policy has been reviewed by the Staffing and Remuneration Committee, LLT and TU representatives.

Following discussion, the Board suggested the scope be expanded to reinforce the link through to visitors to the Library and visitors' terms and conditions. A suggestion was to add 'The staff behaviours promoted by this Policy set the context within which the Library provides a welcoming environment for all sections of the community as visitors and users of its services.'

JSt undertook to review this section of the Policy. The Board noted the paper.

### Digital Update

RCa provided an overview of the paper highlighting:

* The website redevelopment project is progressing well with a range of activity completed in the discovery phase.
* The recent accreditation for Cyber Essentials is a huge credit to the IT colleagues involved. The requirements for Cyber Essentials Plus (CEP) involve a higher reporting burden and will likely require significant investment over the next financial years. The requirements for CEP will be used as a framework to continue strengthening the Library's cyber security.
* Planning continues for migrating a range of Library platforms and services to the cloud. The cloud strategy remains the same with the project at mobilisation stage.
* The Library were recently placed in the top three of the FutureScot AI Challenge from a pool of forty entries with a project focussed on automated description of the Moving Image Archive. Alternative project funding and resource is being sought to develop the pilot further.

The Board noted the paper. Rob Cawston left the meeting. Jackie Cromarty (JCr), Director of Engagement joined the meeting.

### Centenary

JCr provided an overview of centenary planning and advised:

* Work is progressing well across all strands of Centenary planning including outreach programming with a number of locations.
* The summer exhibition is well into the development phase with the title 'Dear Library' chosen to celebrate all libraries.
* The 'Love Libraries' campaign will launch on 14 February and include engagement such as asking the public to highlight their favourite library.
* The Centenary media launch on 30 January will link to launch of the annual appeal as well as external consultation for the new strategy.
* Discussions are underway on bringing focus to, and celebrate, the collaboration between the Library and the Faculty of Advocates; most likely in October.

The Chair thanked JCr for the update. During discussion, the Board agreed it would be interested to hear more about what other events could be held in venues the Library is proposing to collaborate with, maximising the spread and breadth of activity across Scotland as much as feasible.

The Board noted the paper. Jackie Cromarty left the meeting.

### Causewayside project update

AG advised:

* The last Audit Committee reviewed the project dashboard at the start of November. The project is progressing well although the programme is delayed by two months as the team have had to deal with differences between the design drawings and what is actually on site. The additional cost is contained within the contingency budget.
* Dust monitoring equipment is now in place and active.
* Building Control visited the site last week with no issues raised, another visit is expected before Christmas.

The Chair thanked AG for the update. The Board noted the paper and agreed they had a good level of comfort from the information provided

### Finance update

The Board took the paper as read with AG highlighting:

* The Library's funds are in surplus however, this is skewed by early payment of October's SG grant in aid and residual funds from a grant award before this is transferred to investment management funds.
* There is still uncertainty about utility cost increases as well as a pressure point for the remainder of the year as a result of increases in IT licence costs and the cost of achieving Cyber Essentials.
* The outcome of a recent benchmarking by SG was that the Library was under the benchmark for four of the six categories. The two areas above the benchmark were procurement and digital. This reflects the Library's investment in strong procurement processes. The digital benchmark is perhaps skewed as the comparators are not undertaking digital delivery to the same level as the Library.

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

### Health and Safety report

The Board took the paper as read noting there had been no reported incidences since the update to the September Board.

### 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 21 August 2024.

### Date of next meeting:

The Board noted the provisional agenda items for the next scheduled Board meeting of 26 March 2025.

Emily Drayson left the meeting.

### Board and Committee Self-Assessment

The Board moved to consider its own self-assurance and noted the output from the discussions that took place at Committee level. During discussion, the Board concurred they were:

* Content with the distinction between the Board and Library management and that the level of communication between them was appropriate.
* Well briefed on the Library's performance and key risks and received information in a timely fashion.
* Received the right balance of information from provided papers and that there is the openness to explore further within meetings where Board members feel appropriate.

The Board agreed the suggested change to the Audit Committee's Terms of Reference as noted in the paper.

The Board moved to a closed session.