

# National Library of Scotland Board Meeting

Date: Wednesday 29 September 2021.

## Participants

### Present:

- Simon Learoyd (Chair – SL).
- Helen Durndell (Vice Chair - HD).
- Ruth Crawford QC (RC).
- Dianne Haley (DH).
- Alan Horn (AH).
- Lesley McPherson (LMcP).
- Adrienne Scullion (AS),
- Melissa Terras (MT),
- Robert Wallen (RW).

### In attendance:

- Stephen O'Rourke QC, Faculty of Advocates (SO'R).
- John Scally (JS).
- Anthony Gillespie (AG).
- Jackie Cromarty (JCr).
- Kathy Hutton (KH).
- Observers: Sir Drummond Bone (DB).
- Amina Shah (ASh).

- Part time: Alison Stevenson (ASt), Ian Symonds (IS).

## **Minutes of meeting**

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

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting including Sir Drummond Bone and Amina Shah, incoming Board Chair and National Librarian/Chief Executive respectively, attending today as observers.

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

Apologies were noted from Noreen Adams. Elizabeth Carmichael would join later in the meeting.

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

Declarations are as recorded.

### **4. Horizon scanning**

John Scally confirmed the Library's café and shop have re-opened. The Library continues its cautious approach in line with Scottish Government requirements as it stands up services, carefully building back resilience and being aware of the welfare of staff after the challenges of the last 18 months.

### **5. Minutes of meetings**

The minutes of 30 June 2021 were approved as a correct record subject to a minor adjustment.

### **6. Actions outstanding and matters arising from previous meetings**

The Board noted the status of the actions.

## 7. National Librarian's Report

JS highlighted several items within the National Librarian's report and advised:

- Two interim appointments had successfully been filled internally - Associate Directors of Collections & Research and Digital.
- The Reading Rooms are open with users adopting a cautious approach while in the buildings. The Library continues regular consultation with Library users.
- The update on future exhibitions is to provide Board members with advance notification of these with a view to increasing Board engagement with curators and programming staff through presentations at Board meetings.
- Schools continue to make use of the Learning Zone and the Library aims to continue to develop its learning outreach.

AG advised a fire on 24 August at a George IV Bridge building approximately 150m from the Library resulted in the Library closing for two days, as the main building was within the security cordon. A 'lessons learned' review has been undertaken and will inform Business Continuity Plans.

JCr advised work continues on developing the Library's reach through a variety of event types – hybrid, online, recording of both online and in person events for wider sharing and video content with curators. There are opportunities to develop more digital Gaelic content through a variety of programmes.

The Chair thanked all for the update and the Librarian's report which continues to highlight the excellent work of staff as the Library continues to step up and indeed expand its services. The Board noted the report.

## 8. Library Plan update

JS advised most items are progressing well, bearing in mind the continuing challenging environment due to the pandemic. Certain projects, such as the digitisation project with Google Books and newspaper digitisation, require a cautious approach and continued review. Google Books will be delayed until the necessary assurances around the security of transportation of material are received. The newspaper digitisation project remains at a very early conceptual scale with many difficult challenges to be considered.

AG highlighted several points:

- The video digitisation project, possible through funding from the NLS Foundation, will shortly begin with the appointment of a project manager.
- Design work on the GB public spaces is expected to start over the coming months.
- The Library has also been successful in securing funding from the Wellcome Trust on the 'Archive of Tomorrow' which aims to provide a useful research resource on content and conversations during the Covid period.
- The Treasures Gallery will not open as scheduled and has now been delayed until March 2022. There has also been a delay in the work on George IV Bridge with an update now deferred to a future Board meeting.

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

- Good progress continues to be made with the Library Plan.

- Some areas of concern remain which the Library continues to try to progress, albeit some are impacted by matters outwith the Library's control.
- A future Board presentation on 'Archive of Tomorrow' to be scheduled at the appropriate time.

## **9. Board matters**

The Chair advised that eight Board members will step down during 2022/23 at the end of their terms. It has been agreed with the Scottish Government that two recruitment rounds for four Board members each will take place. It is expected that four new Board members will be appointed in March 2022 and the other four by end 2022.

The first round of recruitment is underway and the Library's attraction strategy is key to the Board's commitment to working towards a Board make-up that is broadly reflective of Scotland. This includes asking Board members to reach out to their own appropriate networks to identify suitable candidates.

The draft Away Day agenda (23 November) has been reviewed by the Governance Committee. The focus of the day is on three topics: EDI, Strategic Priorities and the Centenary and is designed both to give sufficient time for the Board to debate the issues and agree specific actions intended to move these issues forward. Board members are encouraged to send any comments to Amina Shah.

The Board approved the re-appointment of SL as Audit Committee Chair following stepping down as interim Board Chair and RW as Governance Committee Chair. A review of Committee membership, including the Board Research Advisory Group, will be undertaken by the Board Chair in the Spring following appointment of new Board members. The Board also noted the meeting on 24 November will commence at 10.00.

## **10. Audit Committee update**

DH advised:

- Following the Audit Committee's thorough review of the Annual Report & Financial Statements, the Committee recommended approval of these to the Board.
- Updates to the Treasury Management Investment Policy have been approved, mainly in relation to Environmental, Social and Corporate governance. The investment managers' reporting in line with the policy updates will inform tender documentation when the contract is next put out to tender. The Committee agreed to extend the investment managers' contracts for a year

The Committee agreed to receive Cloud First implementation updates twice a year and will update the Board as appropriate.

## **11. Governance Committee update**

RW advised:

- Governance Committee reviewed a draft action plan following recommendations from the recent external Board evaluation. The incoming Board Chair and Librarian will now review these in advance of presentation to the November Board.
- The Committee had also had sight of the revised draft Scottish Government Model Code of Conduct for Members of Devolved Bodies which awaits parliamentary approval. SL and JCr undertook to discuss with SG the scope of customisation available for the Library when it adopts the Code, with a view to framing it as an engaging document when recruiting for Board members.

## **12. Staffing & Remuneration Committee update**

HD advised the S&R Committee had not met since the last Board meeting but has been advised that the Library continues to work through the security review process.

On behalf of the Board, HD extended thanks to Simon Learoyd for his work as interim Board Chair during the last 15 months, having achieved a great deal during this time especially in light of the complexities caused by the pandemic. The Board agreed the knowledge and experience gained by Simon Learoyd during this time would be invaluable to the incoming Board Chair. SL thanked all for their kind words and for the support from both Board members and Library staff.

The Chair thanked the Committee Chairs for their informative updates. Alison Stevenson joined the meeting.

## **13. Major purchase – Honresfield**

ASt advised that, since discussion at the last Board meeting, the project team had progressed with fundraising and the early stages of engagement planning for this very significant potential acquisition of Scottish literary manuscripts as part of the Friends of the National Libraries.

The Board endorsed in principle the allocation and ownership as agreed by the Scottish Consortium which would now go to the Friends of the National Libraries for approval.

ASt undertook to provide the Board with an update in advance of the November Board.

Alison Stevenson left the meeting.

#### **14. Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Programme (EDI)**

- JCr provided the Board with an update on progress with the EDI outline programme which starts to put in place an overall framework for access and opportunity for staff and audiences, proactively taking forward actions to make the Library as open and welcoming as it can be for all Scottish society.
- JCr advised the next steps are the appointment of an Equalities and Inclusion Officer by the end of November for two years with funding from the NLS Foundation as well as putting the governance structure in place.
- The Chair thanked JCr for the update. The Board noted the large amount of work undertaken to date and due to the importance of this area, it would also be a substantial agenda item at the Board Away Day.
- The Board unanimously agreed support for the direction of travel recognising that there is considerable work still to be done. The Board looked forward to hearing further about the pace, ambition and metrics for the programme, including the essential overall training programme element of this. The Board noted the report.

Ian Symonds joined the meeting.

#### **15. Collections protection**

IS provided an update on the Collections Protection works that are currently being carried out and those identified to be taken forward within the five-year programme. Over the last three to four years, areas have been identified where Library systems would benefit from work to enhance both the protection of life and the collections. Specifically in relation to fire protection, work is underway at Causwayside to deal with sprinkler capacity, smoke extraction



and building compartmentalisation to meet the most urgent issues around fire risk management. Work has continued throughout the pandemic on these issues.

The Board noted the substantial progress made in the last few years to enhance the protection of both life and the collections and received assurance that the issues have been identified with a phased plan in place supported by committed funding from the Scottish Government. The Board noted the report and that the Audit Committee receive regular updates on collections protection.

The Chair thanked IS and asked for thanks to be passed to Library colleagues for the significant enhancement to the management of the estate under Ian's leadership.

Ian Symonds left the meeting. Elizabeth Carmichael joined the meeting.

## **16. Finance report to end June 2021**

The Board took the paper as read.

AG advised at the date of the report, the Library had an overall surplus of £275k which is better than the planned position. The Library continues to have a rolling budget review to respond to the fluid financial position resulting from Covid.

One issue has been an increase in building work costs due to inflation as well as the risk of non-availability of building materials. The Library continues to monitor these as potential risks.

The Board noted the report.

## **17. Health & Safety report**

- AG advised no incidents had been reported in the first quarter of the year. Whilst some training had been delayed while Library staff were not able to access the buildings, this was now moving forward.
- The Board noted the report and unanimously supported the Library's approach to allowing staff time off for Covid vaccination.

The Board also noted that when the Flexible Working Policy goes live, applications for flexible working will include staff and the relevant manager requiring to undertake a H&S training module.

## **18. Approved Board Committee minutes**

The Board noted the Committee minutes.

## **19. NLS Foundation minutes**

The Board noted the NLS Foundation minutes of 4 May 2021.

## **20. Date of next meeting:**

Tuesday 23 November 2021 (Away Day): 10.00 start

Wednesday 24 November 2021: 10.00 start

## **21. A farewell to the National Librarian**

SL led a note of thanks from the Board to John Scally as he retires on 1 October 2021, thanking him for his impact which has been enormous and enduring during his tenure. It was recognised that John Scally had been one of the great National Librarians in the 300 year history of the Library as it made the pivot to addressing the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital age.

JS thanked SL for his comments and noted that the organisation was only able to move forward with the support of the Board, Scottish Government and Library staff. The meeting ended with the Board wishing the Librarian all the best for the future.