

MINUTES OF BOARD OF NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND

Thursday 21 November 2019 at 11:00

Boardroom, National Library of Ireland,
4 Kildare Street, Dublin 2, D02 A322

	Present
Board In person	Paul Shovlin, Chairman; Bob Collins (1-6); Prof Maeve Conrick; James Dorgan; Jack Keyes; Dr Conor Kostick; Eoin McVey; Katherine McSharry (1-9;11); Susan Philips; Jennifer Taaffe (4-13).
Board By videoconferencing.ie	Dr Ciara Breathnach
Apologies	Prof Susan Schreibman
	In attendance
Staff	Dr Sandra Collins, Director (1-9;11;12); Orla Sweeney, Secretary (1-11); Breffni O'Malley, Head of Exhibitions, Learning and Programming (6);
Note: Instances where (1-14) are noted above are inclusive and correspond to the sections of the minutes and not agenda items.	

1. Declarations of interests and procedural matters

The Chairman confirmed that the meeting was quorate and noted the apologies of Prof Susan Schreibman. In response to the Chairman's enquiry, the Board had no interests to declare.

All papers had been circulated in advance of the Board meeting unless otherwise stated.

The Board adopted the agenda.

2. Minutes

2.1 Draft minutes of the Board meeting of 17 October 2019 and their publication



The Board approved the minutes of the Board meeting of 17 October 2019 subject to the said amendment and the publication of the approved minutes with redaction as appropriate.

2.2 Approved minutes of the Board meeting of 19 September 2019 and their publication

The Secretary advised the Board that the approved minutes of the Board meeting of 19 September 2019 contained two errors and Board approval was being sought to amend section 5 of the minutes to note that the Board approved the Executive Report and section 8 to note Ger Wilson as Head of Digital Collections. The Secretary apologised to the Board for the errors.

The Board approved the said amendments to the minutes of the Board meeting of 19 September 2019 and the publication of the approved minutes with redaction as appropriate.

3. Matters arising

3.1 Action table

The Secretary outlined the status of each action as detailed in the table.

The Board noted the matter's arising action table.

3.2 External review of the effectiveness of the Board: Board Improvement Plan

The Secretary outlined the updates as detailed in the plan. The Secretary offered to circulate a schedule for 26 November 2019 to the Board which includes a Board session with Roly Keating, CEO of the British Library; a public lecture by Mr Keating; and a corporate governance workshop hosted by the

Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG) for all boards of national cultural institutions.

The Board noted the updated Board Improvement Plan.

4. Strategic Review: Executive Report

The Director informed the Board of the following matters as detailed in the Executive Report and with an additional verbal briefing: the latter of which is noted here as follows:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

4.4 Reimagining the NLI: The drawdown of capital funding allocated to the NLI for the enabling works under the building programme has been submitted to the DCHG. The project's 2020 budget is being developed. In response to a query from the Board, the Director confirmed that contractors had been paid.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Director also highlighted the following sections of Executive Report: drawdown of funding under the Digitisation Funding Scheme and Seamus Heaney: Listen Now Again operational fund; staffing; the upcoming visit by the CEO of the British Library; and recent engagement with the Head of Libraries Development at the Local Government Management Agency.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Chairman commended the facilities upgrade works being undertaken.

The Board approved the Executive Report.

5. Development Office Report

Katherine McSharry in her role as Deputy Director and Head of Development provided the Board with the following report:

- 5.1 Seamus Heaney: Listen Now Again: Ms McSharry and the Director visited the Irish Arts Centre New York as part of the Centre's 11th annual PoetryFest which coincided with the opening of 'Seamus Heaney: Manuscripts' exhibition, in partnership with the NLI, and the launch of the US publication of *100 Poems*.

In addition to her visit to NY, Ms McSharry visited the exhibition's curator at Emory University, Atlanta and gave a talk. Ms McSharry highlighted further collaboration opportunities between the NLI and Emory University.

The Board received an update on philanthropic developments linked to the exhibition.

- 5.2 Recruitment: The Development Executive will commence their post in January 2020 and their immediate goals were outlined.
- 5.3 Events: 'From Turmoil to Truce', the new exhibition in the National Photographic Archive opened on 19 November 2019.

The NLI Festive Evening will take place on 5 December 2019 with a video to be aired highlighting the NLI's 2019 achievements.

The 2020 Communications Plan is being drafted with a view to encompassing all of the NLI.

The Chairman commended the 'From Turmoil to Truce' exhibition.

The Board noted the Development Office's Report.

6. Strategic Review: Exhibitions, Learning and Programming

Breffni O'Malley, Head of Exhibitions, Learning and Programming delivered a presentation detailing his team's roles; remit; sites; values and goals; current and future exhibitions; learning and programming; events for adults and children; Poetry Aloud; national and regional events; diversity and inclusion; and future projects including those as part of the Reimagining the NLI: Building Programme.

Mr O'Malley answered queries from the Board concerning staffing of the NPA; current Poetry Aloud partnerships; longstanding NLI exhibitions including World War Ireland and WB Yeats: Life and Works; and MoLI.

The Board noted the Strategic Review: Exhibitions, Learning and Programming.

7. Board Committee' Reports

7.1 Readers' Advisory Committee

The Chairperson of the Readers' Advisory Committee briefed the Board on the Committee meeting of 25 October 2019 and advised the Board that the next Committee is scheduled to take place on 13 December 2019.

The Board noted the approved minutes of the Readers' Advisory Committee meeting of 26 July 2019; the briefing on the Committee meeting of 25 October 2019; and the date of the next Committee meeting.

7.2 Committee on Genealogy and Heraldry

The Chairperson of the Committee on Genealogy and Heraldry informed the Board that the Committee is scheduled to meet on 27 November 2019.

The Board noted the date of the next Committee on Genealogy and Heraldry's meeting.

7.3 Audit and Risk Committee

The Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Committee notified the Board that the Committee is scheduled to meet on 28 November 2019.

The Board noted the date of the next Audit and Risk Committee meeting.

8. AOB (agenda item 9)

There was no other business.

Copies of *The Heritage Council Conservation Internship Scheme: 10 years of collaboration between the Heritage Council and Irish cultural institutions* were available at the meeting.

9. Next meeting (agenda item 10)

The Board noted that the next meeting of the Board is scheduled to take place on Friday 13 December 2019 at 11.00am.

10. Private session briefing (non-agenda)

10.1 NLI Board 2020

The Secretary informed the Board that the Chairman's annual end-of-year meeting with the DCHG will include the NLI Board 2020 with specific reference to the Board's term; skills and experience of Board members (with reference to the previous Stateboards.ie booklet for the appointment of NLI Board members); and the present Board members' interest in seeking reappointment to the next Board.

The Board agreed that the Secretary should reiterate the briefing in an email to the Board and the Board members would provide their response by return email to the Chairman and/or the Secretary.

10.2 Annual self-assessment evaluation of the Board and its Committees 2019

The Secretary reminded the Board of their obligation to undertake an annual self-assessment evaluation of the Board and its Committees 2019.

The Board agreed to address this matter in its private session.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

12. Session with Director (agenda item 11)

The Board discussed with the Director the importance and value of supports for the Director and the Leadership Team including coaching and development.

The Board discussed the NLI exhibition programming, and HR and financial management, which is currently and temporarily the direct responsibility of the Director.

The Board expressed support for the Director which she acknowledged with gratitude.

The Board held a session with the Director.

13. Private session (agenda item 12)

Among Board members present there was unanimity in their assessment that the Board was effective and functioned well. It was well balanced in skills, experience and gender. Members agreed that there was an openness to suggestions and that the Executive was responsive to Board members' input.

A number of observations were made by individual members:

- a staff survey on culture, as detailed in the Board Improvement Plan, should be expedited;

- the Director was under a great deal of pressure, particularly given current circumstances of two departments being without functioning 'Heads', to which members were sympathetic. They would like to help the Director where they possibly could. There was general appreciation of the Director's excellent leadership.
- Board members would welcome an opportunity to provide input, where it was practical to so, into the NLI's exhibition policy: this point emerged in the context of exhibitions in the National Photographic Archive.
- A view was also expressed that to attract suitable Board members and academics, fees to Board members should be reinstated.

The three Committee Chairs reported on the effectiveness of their Committees as follows:

- Audit and Risk was deemed effective, benefitting considerably from an external member.
- Readers Advisory was reported to work well, being well satisfied with Executive support; and more rotation of members would be welcome.
- Heraldry and Genealogy was reported to be fairly effective.

It was generally agreed that ideally the Committees would benefit from a statutory redesign to better meet with present day requirements.

The Board held a private session.

The Chairman closed the meeting.