

**NRS Executive Management Board (EMB)  
11 March 2021  
Held via Teams**

**Present:**

Paul Lowe	Chief Executive (Chair)
Linda Sinclair	Director of Corporate Services and Accountable Officer
Laura Lucas	Director of IT Services
Laura Mitchell	Director of Information & Records Services and Deputy Keeper
Pete Whitehouse	Director of Statistical Services,
Carla McHendry	Delivery Director
Angela Sim	NRS Accountant
Shirley Cameron	NRS Business Manager (secretariat)

**Apologies:**

Anne Slater	Deputy SRO Census Programme and NRS Director Operations
-------------	--

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

1.1 Paul Lowe welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted as listed. No new declarations of interest were recorded.

**2. Minutes and Actions**

2.1 The minutes from the meeting held on 4 February 2021 were approved and would be published on the NRS website.

2.2 A review of actions was undertaken. The action tracker would be updated accordingly. Approval was noted to a change of wording for NRS Corporate Risk NRS 8, to widen the scope of the risk.

**Decision - EMB-D126: Approval of action EMB 260 - Reword of risk 8 to remove 'archival' from the risk description.**

2.3 EMB members noted that the following decision had been made in correspondence:

- EMB-D125 - Approval of a business case for Cloud services

**3. Future Ways of Working, Initial EMB Discussion - Carla McHendry**

3.1 As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of staff continued to work from home, with around a fifth of staff continuing to attend sites for essential purposes. It was recognised that the pandemic had brought about profound changes to ways of working and the delivery of services, that present longer-term benefits. There were also likely to be measures required in light of the pandemic that would be longer term. Moving out of lockdown would not simply be about a return to a pre-Covid position. An approach to transition into a future working model is being developed. The approach would ensure alignment with the NRS strategic ambitions, inform and shape our Estates, IT, Green and cultural changes and consider the broader SG and external guidance and approaches.

3.2 The short term approach of moving out of lock down would be evaluated and managed through the NRS Covid Incident Management Team (gold level) supported by the Covid Secure Working group (silver level) With the Wellbeing and Working from Home Group (silver level) to be refocussed as the Wellbeing and Future Working Group to lead on the longer-term future working arrangements. A staff survey is the proposed to capture staff current working practices and preferences for future working – expectations will be carefully managed in terms of timing and the need to ensure business and service needs are met. Engagement with NRS Union representation through the NRS Partnership Board would continue.

3.3 EMB was supportive of the approach to develop plans and agreed the approach. It was noted that there were longer-term aspects to this work that did not fit well in an incident management response approach and we would look to transition this to a separate project over time.

#### **4. NRS Data Linkage Delivery Plan for NRS – Pete Whitehouse**

4.1 The paper was presented to EMB with the purpose to:

- Note the plans for Data Linkage development for 2021-22
- Agree to the NRS bid for additional funding from Research Data Scotland

4.2 The paper provided a background to data linkage, it noted the creation of Research Data Scotland (RDS), a new company being formed to manage and support data linkage in partnership across Scotland. The NRS proposal would build on the existing data linkage service by providing capacity, developing skills and organisational capability relating to data linkage which would benefit the quality and scope of NRS contributions to the service.

4.3 EMB noted their support for the approach in principle to allow the application to proceed. The funding and resourcing mechanisms were discussed and it was agreed that Pete Whitehouse and Linda Sinclair would explore the detail of this further off table.

**Action EMB 273: NRS Data Linkage Delivery Plan for NRS – To discuss funding mechanisms with NRS Finance and Linda Sinclair. Owner: Pete Whitehouse**

#### **5. Communications Quarterly Update – Eleanor Stratford**

5.1 The paper provided an update on recent communication activities, as well as plans for the coming months as follows:

- Evaluation of activities January –February 2021
- Internal communication highlights
- COVID-19 statistics and other key statistics publications
- Update on 2021 communications priorities and recent team changes.

5.2 EMB welcomed the report and noted the contents. The report would be provided on a quarterly basis, going forward.

#### **6. NRS Corporate Risk – New Risk Digital Economy Act Accreditation (DEA) – Laura Mitchell.**

6.1 EMB were invited to approve a new risk to the NRS Corporate Risk Register, relating to the work to secure Digital Economy Act accreditation (DEA). This accreditation was

required for NRS to participate in broader data sharing and data linkage work with additional Government Departments.

6.2 Work to achieve accreditation had been ongoing for some time but previous submissions to ONS who administer the scheme, had not been successful. A project had been established to coordinate activities to create a new submission. The risk being proposed related to securing this accreditation to ensure this was appropriately recorded and managed. The risk would be actively managed by the NRS Information Security Committee.

6.3 EMB were invited to provide comments and following a short discussion, EMB noted their broad endorsement of the risk however some suggestions were proposed and these would be considered. It was agreed that the updated risk would be circulated to EMB in correspondence for approval.

**Action EMB 274: New Risk Digital Economy Act Accreditation (DEA) - To take account of comments and arrange for the revised risk to be circulated to EMB for approval in correspondence. Owner: Laura Mitchell**

## **7. Census 2022 Update – Paul Lowe**

7.1 Paul reported that the programme continued to focus on delivery of the plan to March 2022.

7.2 The outcome of a judicial review in England relating to guidance for the census 2021 was noted.

7.3 A refresh of the programme governance arrangements to strengthen change control was nearing completion. Recruitment activity to strengthen the senior Census Management team capacity and capability was underway. Intense work was also underway to manage down vacancies and to ramp the programme resources up.

## **8. NRS Finance Report – Angela Sim**

### NRS Finance Report

8.1 Angela Sim introduced the report which provided the NRS financial position to the end of period ten 2020-2021.

8.2 In summary, the report noted:

- A projected underspend was reported, primarily as a result of the movement of Census underspend and an increase in underspend in the core NRS budget.
- A summary of the key risks in relation to the financial position was also noted.

## **9. NRS Security**

9.1 An update on Information, IT and Physical security activity was provided by NRS Directors with accountability for each area.

## **10. Business Area Updates**

10.1 Oral updates were provided by each Director. Key themes reported were:

Delivery Directorate - Carla McHendry

- 10.2 Work to support the NRS Digital Economy Act (DEA) accreditation application was continuing with Laura Mitchell.
- 10.3 Development of the NRS strategy with Linda Sinclair was continuing.
- 10.4 Recruitment activity for the Delivery Directorate had commenced.
- 10.5 As equalities champion for EMB, initial evaluation of the approach to present and deliver at a future EMB meeting was underway.
- 10.6 The Wellbeing and Working from Home Group continued to be led by Carla and remained a key focus during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Corporate Services Directorate - Linda Sinclair

- 10.7 Work to support the delivery of Census 2022 in relation to procurement, commercial management and financial management was on-going.
- 10.8 Covid-19 impacts continued to be a priority. NRS Estates continued to manage NRS buildings including supporting accommodation and cleaning to enable safe delivery for NRS business critical services from buildings. The Covid Secure Buildings Working Group had been considering processes to support restart of services when Scottish Government restrictions allowed. Input from NRS HR, Health and Safety, Estates and Business representation continued.
- 10.9 Development of NRS Strategy continued.
- 10.10 Recruitment activity continued to be a focus. The development of a standard report to provide EMB with data was being considered.

Director for Statistical Services - Pete Whitehouse

- 10.11 Key statistical publications during March would include a publication on COVID-19 mortality data by disability and the annual publication of baby names recorded during 2020.
- 10.12 NRS continued to contribute to wider Scottish Government and other stakeholder engagement, notably in relation to population strategy work and ethnicity data.
- 10.13 An SG recruitment board for statisticians was on-going and it was hoped this would allow NRS statistician vacancies to be filled. However there was also a risk of loss of key personnel and this was being managed in conversations with the Chief Statistician.

Director for IT Services - Laura Lucas

- 10.14 A review of the resourcing and budget position in relation to IT and census requirements was ongoing. Recruitment to IT vacancies to support the Census programme and wider NRS was continuing.
- 10.15 Security continued to be a focus for IT Services.

Director for Information & Records Services (IRS) – Laura Mitchell

10.16 Information security activity was continuing.

10.17 Digital Economy Act (DEA) accreditation project activity was continuing , in conjunction with Carla McHendry.

10.18 Activity to accept electronic records created by Registers of Scotland had been on-going. It was highlighted as a good example of collaboration between teams in both organisations. A report to EMB would be welcomed and would be timetabled for a future EMB.

## **11. Procurement approval decisions for EMB**

11.1 No business was proposed.

## **12. For noting – NRS Governance**

12.1 The draft agenda for the NRS Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) on 31 March 2021 was noted. Linda Sinclair thanked all directors for their contributions to papers. The SG Internal Audit plan for 2021-2022 would be circulated to EMB with the ARC papers.

## **13. AOB**

13.1 EMB discussed the possibility of observers at meetings, to aid transparency. It was agreed to explore this option and consider if any rules or guidance would be required to be put in place.

**Action EMB 275: Governance Transparency – to explore the approach for attendance of observers at meetings and consider rules which may be required. Owner: Shirley Cameron**

**14. Date of Next Meeting:** 29 April 2021

**End**