
Annual Business Plan

2020 - 21

Preserving the past | Recording the present | Informing the future



Contents

Foreword.....	3
Our Vision.....	4
Our Values.....	4
Our 2019-20 Business priorities.....	5
Our 2020-21 Annual Business Plan priorities	11

Foreword



I am delighted to introduce the National Records of Scotland (NRS) Business Plan for 2020/21 and provide an update on what we delivered during 2019/20. This plan presents our vision and values for the coming year and our business priorities.

Sadly the COVID-19 global pandemic which continues to develop at the time of writing, poses great public health, economic and wellbeing challenges for society. For NRS this has required us to critically review and recast our plans to ensure the safety of staff and our customers, look at how we can preserve and deliver key services, often in different ways and safeguard our buildings, vital data assets and our National collections.

In the last year, we continued to build on our foundations and deliver a diverse range of high quality public services. Critically, we progressed delivery of our Census Programme with development of key systems and services and we undertook a highly successful live rehearsal to test these arrangements. We continued to produce high quality trusted statistics on a range of issues and worked with a range of stakeholders to support good records management and archiving practice. We have continued to improve our organisational infrastructure and introduced more supportive and people based approaches into our overall delivery. In this report, you will find more information on the achievements of the many different teams within our organisation.

Since March 2020 , our organisation, like others, has had to quickly put in place our business continuity plans to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak. From working closely with local authorities to put in place new arrangements for registration services, closing [in person services](#) and switching to online provision, [publishing weekly mortality statistics](#) and ensuring all our people were able to work in safe environments. Over the coming year, we will continue to support our people and work with partners, customers and stakeholders to manage the transition back to a new normal as smoothly as possible .

I would like to thank colleagues across NRS for their drive, determination and flexibility in facing these unprecedented challenges. Our story from the last 12 months is one of an organisation that continues to build on foundations of trust, sound delivery and professionalism. Our report evidences examples of all of these and increasingly our work to strengthen how we deliver change and to do so more innovatively. It is clear that the year ahead brings with it challenges, uncertainties and opportunities to look critically at how we have done things in the past and how we might make positive changes for the future.

I hope you enjoy finding out more about our work and about our plans to evolve to meet the challenges of the future.



Paul Lowe
Chief Executive
June 2020

Our Vision

- *To preserve the past, record the present and inform the future of public services in Scotland.*
- *Increase our reach and impact and be recognised as an influential leader across our sectors as a trusted, expert and professional organisation.*
- *We put people at the heart of what we do and deliver in accordance with our values*

Our Values

- **Professional:** *Collaborating to share our professional skills and knowledge whilst increasing our skills and expertise*
- **Respectful:** *Listening and respecting different views, learn from others and expand our knowledge and grow together*
- **Accountable:** *Being responsible for what we do, delivering with transparency and clarity of purpose*
- **Customer Focused:** *Knowing our customers to understand their needs, deliver a positive experience and encourage feedback to improve what we do*

About NRS

National Records of Scotland (NRS) is a non-Ministerial department of the Scottish Government, supporting the Registrar General for Scotland and the Keeper of the Records for Scotland. Our work underpins the fabric of Scottish society: telling the story of our nation through the records we hold and the data we gather and produce on behalf of the people of Scotland.

As the official Scottish national archive we are guardians of over 800 years of irreplaceable national documents spanning the 12th to the 21st centuries touching on virtually every aspect of Scottish life. We are the Scottish official source of demographic statistics and administer the census of Scotland's population. We produce information about our population, households, migration, vital events (such as births, deaths and marriages), life expectancy and electoral statistics which help inform policy decisions across central and local Government, and the private and third sectors.

We work in partnership with the Scottish Government and the wider public sector to deliver a national Data Linkage Framework to facilitate ethical research that protects privacy whilst benefiting Scotland and informing national investment priorities. We support Scottish public bodies' compliance with the Public Records Scotland Act 2011 and as expert advisers in information and records management we fulfil a leadership role for the archive sector and work to secure the future of physical and digital records. We make our information as accessible as is reasonably possible, while preserving it for the future and are committed to making more information available over time through digital channels.

Our 2019-20 Business priorities

Last year we published an annual Business Plan for 2019-20 and have delivered the following key priorities:

<i>We said</i>	<i>We did</i>
<p>We will continue to deliver high quality public services to our customers will support and develop the delivery of registration services through local authorities across Scotland, whilst engaging customers and stakeholders on a forward Business Strategy which identifies our key investment priorities for new and enhanced digital services over the coming years.</p>	<p>We welcomed nearly 13,000 visitors to our ScotlandsPeople Centre and responded to over 41,500 customer enquiries relating to the ScotlandsPeople service and our Historical and Legal search rooms. We added over 130,000 birth, marriage and death records, and our Index and Imaging team rescanned over 37,200 images that included birth, death, marriage, death and census entries to improve the quality of digital images for customers. Our Extract Services team provided over 85,500 official certificates from our Statutory, Census and Old Parish Records and handled over 13,500 telephone enquiries. The number of tartans registered on the Scottish Register of Tartans website continued to increase this year with over 358 designs registered.</p> <p>We undertook a range of exhibitions, engaging with 4712 visitors and learners through our various activities. Planning and stakeholder collaboration was undertaken to prepare for the Declaration of Arbroath exhibition in 2020, which unfortunately has been postponed in light of Covid-19. To celebrate the 700th anniversary of the Declaration of Arbroath, NRS conservation team liaised with David Frank, Conservator, on the production of a two facsimiles of the Declaration of Arbroath.</p> <p>Our first large-scale customer survey was held in March-April 19 with 800 responses and more than 50% of our ScotlandsPeople customers. Results highlighted a positive benchmark for service standards. Recommendations for further engagement around our charging policy, website navigation and online branding. We continued delivery of our services with development and implementation of operational KPIs. Preparations were undertaken to prepare for release of 1921 Census in Summer 2021.</p> <p>In light of Covid-19, a significant response at the end of the 2019/20 was the implementation of a range of Registration System changes. NRS worked with the UK and Scottish Governments to put in place emergency legislation to allow for remote registration of deaths. Working with local authorities, guidance was developed and issued to put in place the new arrangements for death registration, temporary suspension of marriages and changes to birth registration.</p>

<i>We said</i>	<i>We did</i>
<p>Working with a range of partners to design and deliver a successful Census for 2021 with lasting benefits for Scotland, we will undertake a Census Rehearsal in Autumn 2019 to inform the delivery of Census 2021, and progress legislative requirements through the Scottish Parliament, whilst meeting digital assurance requirements in delivery.</p>	<p>We have continued to progress delivery of our Census Programme with development of some key systems and services. NRS completed the remaining question development for Scotland's Census 2021 during this year. The Census (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill completed its passage through the Scottish Parliament in the early part of this year and received Royal Assent on 18 July 2019, becoming the Census (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 2019.</p> <p>We also undertook a successful Census Rehearsal in Autumn 2019. The Census Rehearsal 2019 Evaluation Report has been published. This report provides a summary of the key findings of the rehearsal, and outlines the next steps for us to undertake to ensure the successful delivery of the next Census.</p> <p>Work has continued to develop the statistical design for how we will collect census information from the public, including modelling the potential impact of our planned contact with the public to encourage maximum response. We have also published our Statistical Quality Assurance Strategy.</p>

<i>We said</i>	<i>We did</i>
<p>We will deliver high quality statistics by meeting our commitments in the NRS Statistics Plan, in line with UK standards and through enhancement of our statistical services.</p>	<p>We delivered 35 high quality statistical publications over the last year. For the first time we have published statistics on the number of homeless deaths in Scotland. This was complex analysis and required the use of innovative methods. We have had positive feedback from key stakeholders, including the Office for Statistics Regulation, confirming this work has added significant value to the broader themes on housing, homelessness and mortality. We also started publication of a new quarterly migration statistics summary output for Scotland, bringing together all the latest evidence from a range of sources to tell a coherent story on what's happening to migration in Scotland.</p> <p>There has been even more use made of our statistics in terms of informing and shaping public policy and debate. In June, a Ministerial task group was set up to consider Scotland's future population challenges. Its aim is to develop new solutions to address population change. And in September, a taskforce was set up to tackle Scotland's high numbers of drug-related deaths.</p> <p>Through the NHS Central Register (NHSCR), we continue to support our partners in Health, local government and the third sector, with the administration and provision of services to the public. This includes supporting important medical research, enhancing Scottish statistics on population and migration, and further supporting research by linking together multiple administrative datasets whilst preserving privacy. We continue to play a central role developing the data linkage service in Scotland, working with our partners across government, health and academia to further research using Scotland's rich source of administrative data.</p> <p>NRS operate as the Trusted Third Party (TTP) Data Indexing service on behalf of the new Research Data Scotland (RDS). RDS aims to be a new service delivery model for accessing public sector data in Scotland. It will offer safe, secure and cost effective access to data for research, innovation and investment by unlocking the value of these data assets.</p> <p>Responded quickly to code, quality assure, analysis and publish key information on Covid-19 related deaths. We worked closely with colleagues across Government to ensure our official statistics were accessible and informative to people across Scotland.</p>

<i>We said</i>	<i>We did</i>
<p>We will continue to deliver NRS archive services to achieve our forward strategy to protect, preserve and make available our records, investing in future digital delivery through our Digital Preservation priorities and considering long term storage options.</p>	<p>We have continued to grow and strengthen our engagement and collaborative working with NRS stakeholders and the wider archive and record keeping sector across Scotland. We developed and engaged stakeholders on our vision for archives and record keeping functions, underpinning the direction for investment in Digital Archiving and long term storage options.</p> <p>NRS released a revision of the Keeper’s Model Records Management Plan and agreed 15 Records Management Plans (RMP). In addition to routine RMPs, we progressed with the invitation and assessment of the Integration Joint Boards (IJB), agreeing eight plans during the course of the year. We also agreed the plans of four new Scottish Public bodies.</p> <p>We increased the capacity of our digital preservation solution and continued to provide our Web Continuity Service, collecting and preserving websites of Scottish public authorities and providing a service to redirect users to archived pages when encountering broken links on live sites. We continued to supply important record information for the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry and the UK Infected Blood Inquiry investigations by facilitating access to archived records in NRS.</p> <p>We received and listed our regular annual transmissions from the High Court of Justiciary, the Court of Session and the Crown Office. We met our statutory targets on Freedom of Information requests for information.</p> <p>This year we processed 25,275 government records, 52,772 court and legal records and 8,285 private and church records, totaling to 86,332 records being catalogued.</p> <p>We continued to support Scottish Ministers in pursuit of transparency in government, making available Scottish Cabinet papers and government files for public inspection.</p>

<i>We said</i>	<i>We did</i>
<p>We will continue to improve our organisational infrastructure to enhance the way we operate, through maturing our governance, investing in the skills, knowledge, leadership and capacity of our organisation and continuing with the implementation of our Estates Strategy (developing an Asset Management Plan) to ensure our buildings are fit for purpose.</p>	<p>We received a substantial assurance rating in an internal audit of our corporate governance structure, which we have developed further this year. We strengthened our programme and project management governance, through increased oversight of our Executive Management Board for the Census Programme and by the Digital & Strategy Board for our wider portfolio and capital budget approvals.</p> <p>We appointed a new Delivery Director to align programme and project management and delivery for NRS and appointed commercial partners as NRS Programme delivery providers and an external PPM consultant as critical Programme support.</p> <p>We delivered against external Assurance Plans in place to improve our programme management controls. We have continued to strengthen our workforce planning arrangements, following an audit in 2018. Our procurement processes completed the regular PCIP assurance and we received a strong result. We commissioned an independent Health & Safety review which reported in late January 2020. We have been reviewing our Business Continuity framework through the year and this enables swift action and an incident management approach implemented to manage our Covid-19 response.</p> <p>We continued to build our Staff Engagement Network to help shape, inform and strengthen our organisational processes, organisational resilience and risk management. Our Staff engagement index in the 2018 People Survey was 52%. In the 2019 People Survey overall engagement figure rose to 56%.</p> <p>We have continued our ongoing investment in our estate with major works continuing at West Register House to renew stonework, completion of a survey of the iconic Adam Dome in General Register House and planning and undertaking investment activity in Thomas Thomson House together with more minor improvements.</p>

<i>We said</i>	<i>We did</i>
<p>We will continue to progress our long term plan to transition to a single sustainable NRS IT service augmented by increased customer insight to inform our priorities and secure efficient, high quality digital services.</p>	<p>We completed a restructure exercise to ensure we have the right people in the right places with the right technical skills for our future. That restructure has seen IT Programmes, IT Service and IT Architecture functions created together with revised ways of working to enable better outcomes aligned to the overall business strategy. Our Cyber Essentials re-assessment completed with success.</p> <p>Our ambitious COP (Common Operating Platform) programme which focused on consolidation of systems towards a single platform to reduce costs while increasing resilience and performance, is almost complete. This has provided a range of service benefits, enabling change and improvement in our IT function. Performance of public-facing applications has been improved following close co-operation between business and IT staff, which was crucial to the success of this work. This programme has also delivered the environment needed to process Census returns, one of NRS' top priorities for this and future years.</p> <p>In terms of customer facing services, IT Services are working closely with colleagues to design and deliver more modern, customer-tested websites and Search room applications.</p>

Our 2020-21 Annual Business Plan priorities

Our longer term business strategy is being developed for engagement with stakeholders. Its development and engagement has been delayed with Covid-19 but we remain committed to producing a longer term strategy during 2020/21. We will continue to build on our achievements in the last financial year and have approved our Annual Business Plan commitments for the year ahead as below:

<p>In managing the implications of the Covid-19 outbreak facing Scotland and the world, NRS has refocused its delivery priorities for 2020-21 and has concentrated on the impact of the outbreak on our organisation. This has included putting new working arrangements in place, temporary service measures, which are published on our website and publication of weekly statistics of deaths involving Covid-19. For much of 2020, we expect a great deal of our focus to continue to be managing our Covid-19 response and planning to ensure that we can resume core activities as quickly as appropriate once restrictions are lifted.</p>	
<p>In addition, we will also continue to:</p>	
<p>Work with a range of partners to design and deliver the next Census with successful and lasting benefits for Scotland.</p>	<p>Deliver high quality public services to our customers through our online channels and manage the transition to re-open in person and other services in line with Scotland's phased approach to managing Covid-19. In doing so, we will also support the delivery of registration services through local authorities across Scotland. We continue to identify our priorities for new and enhanced digital services over the coming years.</p>
<p>Deliver high quality statistics by meeting our commitments in the NRS Statistics Plan, in line with UK standards and through enhancement of our statistical services. We will continue to work with stakeholders and users to ensure that important high quality evidence on the Covid-19 pandemic is made available. We will increase our efforts to draw value from administrative and survey data, working with academia, government and others to inform and monitor social and economic policies and in doing so bring benefit to people across Scotland.</p>	<p>Deliver NRS archive services by continuing to plan delivery of our forward strategy to protect, preserve and make available our records, investing in digital archiving and planning long term storage, whilst also continuing to grow our engagement with our stakeholders and the wider archive and recordkeeping sector and ensuring that Scotland's response to Covid-19 is reflected in the historical record.</p>
<p>Grow and invest in our people, developing our organisation to enhance the way we operate, through investing in skills, knowledge management, leadership and capacity of our organisation. We will continue to mature our governance to support our people based approaches.</p>	<p>Mature and improve our IT services through investment in our infrastructure, augmented by increased customer insight to inform our priorities and secure efficient, high quality digital services. We will focus on major programmes and improvements including Census, network, hosting and security together with additional Covid-19 and other related improvements.</p>
<p>Improve our programme management, information governance, delivery infrastructure and our estate to ensure our buildings are fit for purpose and support our long term goals.</p>	