



## The National Archives

### Press Release

19 November, 2009

## Fixing the link

### The National Archives Makes Broken Links a Thing of the Past

Broken links will soon be a thing of the past for UK Government websites, as The National Archives launches its Web Continuity project.

The first of its kind anywhere in the world, the project has already enabled millions of people using government websites to find information which would previously have been lost through broken web links.

Officially launching at the House of Lords next month, the initiative links seamlessly with The National Archives' [UK Government Web Archive](#), which regularly captures and preserves 1500 government websites for posterity.

If someone clicks on a link which is no longer live, redirection software being installed by government departments will automatically take them to where the information they need is held in the web archive. Currently, the service is leading to more than six million redirected hits a month.

Dr Amanda Spencer, Head of Web Continuity at The National Archives, said: "When it was first created, the internet was often regarded as ephemeral. Websites weren't viewed as records which needed to be preserved.

"However, as the internet has developed to be the predominate source of government information for most people, this has changed. Today, some information only ever exists online and as the experts in preserving the future of history, we have had to adapt.

"Our web archive holds more than 340 million documents from government websites dating back to 1997, and we now archive all central government websites three times a year. The Web Continuity project is a natural progression of this."

To date six central government departments together with The National Archives have installed the necessary redirection software.

“While broken web links are a problem across the whole of the internet, as pages move, information is taken down and websites change, The National Archives is the first to offer a solution,” said Dr Spencer.

The Web Continuity project is due to be formally launched at the House of Lords on December 2, 2009. Guest speakers will be Rt Hon Michael Wills, Minister of State, Ministry of Justice; Natalie Ceeney, Chief Executive of The National Archives; and Julien Masanès, Director of The European Archive Foundation.

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**For further information, please contact:**

The National Archives Press Office  
T: 020 8392 5277  
[press@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:press@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk)

**The UK Government Web Archive:**

The National Archives' UK Government Web Archive (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/webarchive/>) contains more than 340 million documents drawn from around 2000 websites dating back to 1997. These websites – which will become the raw material of history for future generations - provide a fascinating narrative of the changing machinery of government and hold an invaluable amount of information, from green and white papers, to seminal speeches and key announcements.

The National Archives began its programme of web archiving in 2003, entering into a contract with the Internet Archive which gave access to its pre-existing collection dating back to 1997. Initially around 50 government websites were harvested. Since 2005 the web archiving has been carried out under contract to the European Archive and the number of websites captured has gradually grown. Last November The National Archives began regularly archiving all UK central government websites, meaning that today around 1500 government websites are being archived three times a year.

Users can search for specific named websites using an [A-Z index](#), and the websites have also been categorised by major themes, such as climate change, so people can search by [categories](#).

In addition to its regular harvesting, The National Archives carries out special captures of websites to create themed collections which show how major stories unfold and follow the government's response to them. The collections include the Financial Crisis and Swine Flu and can be found here, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/webarchive/themed-collections.htm>

**About The National Archives:**

The National Archives, [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk), is a government department and an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). As the official archives of the UK government, it cares for, makes available and 'brings alive' a vast collection of over 1000 years of historical records, including the treasured Domesday Book.

Not only safeguarding historical information, The National Archives also manages current digital information and devises new technological solutions for keeping government records readable now and in the future. It provides world class research facilities and expert advice, publishes all UK legislation and official publications, and is a leading advocate for the archive sector.

At the heart of information policy, The National Archives sets standards of best practice that actively promotes and encourages public access to, and the re-use of information, both online or onsite at Kew. This work helps inform today's decisions and ensures that they become tomorrow's permanent record.

The National Archives brings together the Public Record Office, Historical Manuscripts Commission, the Office of Public Sector Information and Her Majesty's Stationery Office. See also [www.opsi.gov.uk](http://www.opsi.gov.uk)