



The National Archives



## Press Release

6 May 2009

### **Government launches consultation on future policy for archival services**

The Government is asking people for their views on its proposed new policy on archives, which it publishes today.

The consultation document, *Archives for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, seeks to build the foundations for a sustainable future for archival services, responding to the challenges of the digital age and the opportunities to make archives accessible to a wider range of people.

The main proposals the Government is seeking views on are:

- Fewer, bigger, better – working towards increased sustainability within the sector through the integration and collaboration of services;
- Strengthened leadership and a more responsive, skilled workforce;
- A co-ordinated response to the growing challenge of managing digital information so that it is accessible now and remains discoverable in the future;
- Comprehensive online access for archive discovery through catalogues and to digitised archive content by citizens at a time and place that suits them;
- Active participation in cultural and learning partnerships promoting a sense of identity and place within the community.

*Archives for the 21<sup>st</sup> century* builds on the progress made following the publication of the last policy on archives in 1999. It reflects the challenges created by the rapidly evolving information and communication world, the need to deliver archives services by more effective and efficient means, and increased public expectation for access to archives' resources.

Michael Wills, Justice Minister with responsibility for The National Archives, said:

“Publicly funded archives have a vital role to play in society: they are the custodians of our collective memory, and an integral part of a healthy and robust democracy. It is crucial that archival services are able to embrace the digital revolution and start addressing the complex challenges this has created.

“I would encourage anyone with an interest in archives to participate in this consultation, and look forward to hearing people’s opinions on our proposals.”

Culture Minister Barbara Follett, said:

“Our archives hold the stories of our past and therefore play a unique role in building understanding and learning for our future. It is important that public archives are easily accessible, whether that is in physical buildings or online, so that the benefit is spread to as wide a range of people as possible.”

Baroness Andrews, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government said:

“Archives play a fundamental role in shaping our sense of individual, community and national identity and place. They make a valuable contribution to local democracy and accountability, and to learning, history and culture within the communities they serve.”

Comments on the policy proposals are welcome from all parties interested in archives including local authorities, universities, individual information professionals, archival organisations and the general public.

The consultation will run for a period of 12 weeks, until 12 August. To take part, go to [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archivesconsultation](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archivesconsultation)

**- Ends -**

For further information, please contact Séverine Gould-Chanroux (The National Archives) on 020 8392 5277 ([severine.gould-chanroux@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:severine.gould-chanroux@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk)) or Sunita Sharma (Museums, Libraries and Archives Council) on 0207 273 8299 ([sunita.sharma@mla.gov.uk](mailto:sunita.sharma@mla.gov.uk)).

#### **Notes to editors**

- As the departments most closely linked with archives, the policy has been developed by The National Archives, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, the Department

for Culture, Media and Communities and Local Government. In Wales, the policy has been supported by the Welsh Assembly Government.

- The implementation of the final policy recommendations will be supported in England by The National Archives and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council ([www.mla.gov.uk](http://www.mla.gov.uk)), and in Wales by The National Archives and CyMAL: Museums Archives and Libraries Wales ([www.wales.gov.uk/cymal](http://www.wales.gov.uk/cymal))
- For further information and to read the document please go to: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archivesconsultation](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archivesconsultation)