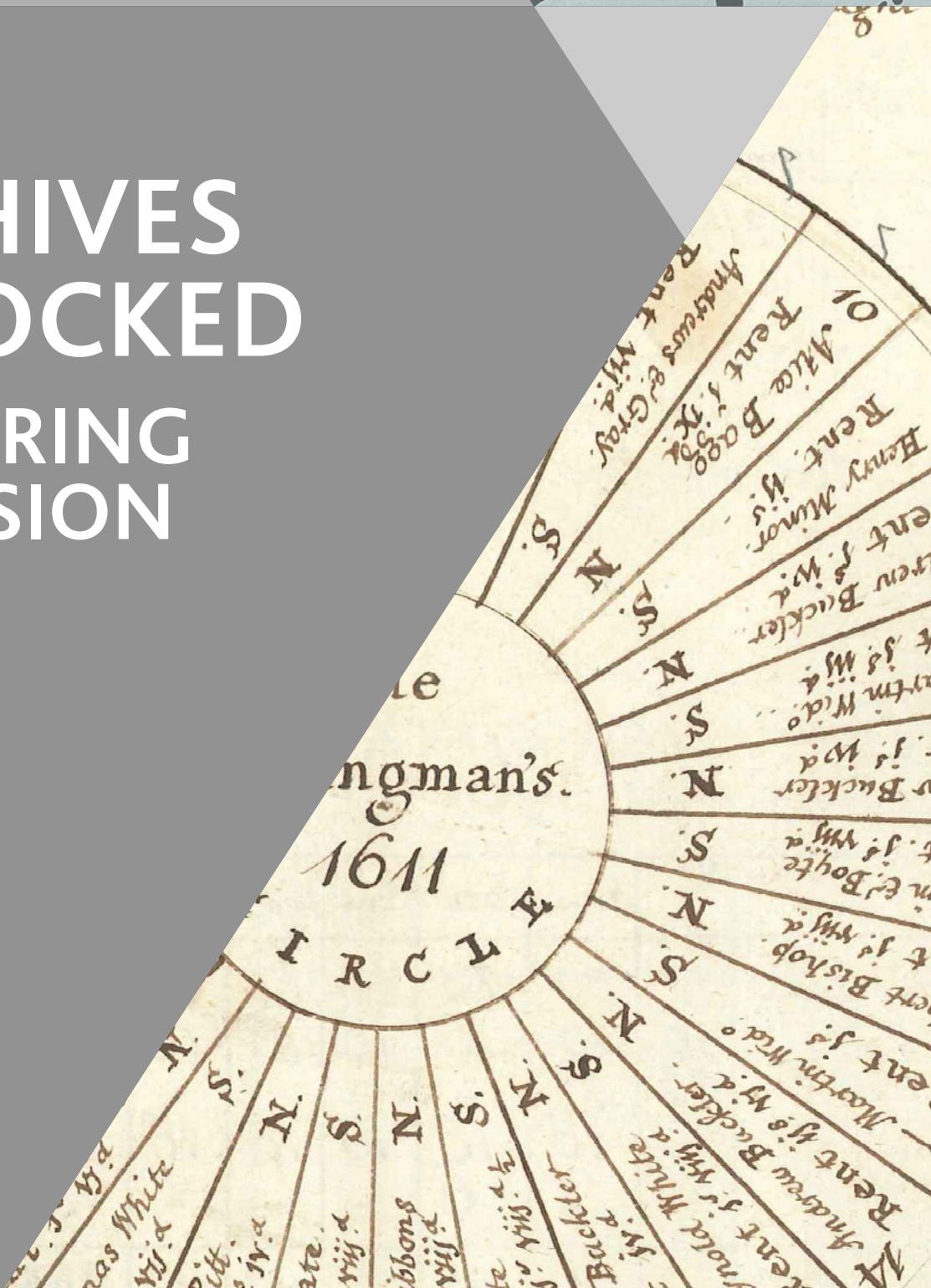




# ARCHIVES UNLOCKED

## DELIVERING THE VISION



# THE VISION

# ARCHIVES

# UNLOCKED

Archives will strengthen society through the trust they inspire, the enrichment they offer and their openness to all. We will be the home of world-leading archives, both digital and physical. People will be able to find and navigate collections, and have confidence that reliable archival evidence exists to support their research. Our collections will reflect all of society, so that, whether an individual, community or organisation, archives can tell us who we are and how we got here.

## THE AMBITIONS AT THE HEART OF THE VISION ARE

### TRUST

people and institutions trust in the authenticity of archive records, and how they are preserved and presented.

### ENRICHMENT

archives enhance and enrich our society intellectually, culturally and economically.

### OPENNESS

archives cultivate an open approach to knowledge and are accessible to all.

## ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document is a companion to *Archives Unlocked* and sets out our plan for making that vision a reality: releasing the potential of archives by achieving our ambitions of trust, enrichment and openness.

This action plan gives an overview of the phases of delivery and a detailed plan for the first two years. This document will be updated annually with both the next phase of future work and progress to date.

Both Archives Unlocked and this action plan are the result of extensive consultation and development work within the archives sector, with our partners and beyond.

# THE VISION

# ARCHIVES

# UNLOCKED

## ABOUT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

The National Archives leads and supports the archives sector in England, and has statutory responsibilities for public records held by archive services in Wales, where we work in collaboration with the Welsh Government. While the vision and action plan are focused on archives in England, we will continue to work with partners in the home nations and internationally, to address the challenges and opportunities of using archives in a digital world within a UK context, and to support research and innovation.

## INTRODUCTION

*Archives Unlocked* recognises the fundamental changes archives are making to attract new audiences and benefit local communities.

It also highlights how digital technologies are creating a paradigm shift in the archival sphere: posing challenges, but also throwing open the doors to greater access and a world of new opportunities.

The National Archives sits at the heart of a rich, national collection of archives that is buoyed by skilled and innovative professionals. As Chief Executive and Keeper, I see first-hand how the archives

sector is innovating, and engaging people with their collections and services, reinforcing why archives matter for individuals and society.

We are proud to lead this dynamic sector, every archive and user is different, and our work and support aims to reflect this kaleidoscope of archival diversity.

However, more needs to be done so that we can sustain the sector for the long term. This action plan embodies this. It sets out what is required to release the power of archives. It combines the sectors needs and wants into a realistic and ambitious plan, outlining practical solutions to be developed jointly through partnership and innovation.

The aims of the action plan cannot be achieved in isolation. Working with partners, stakeholders, investors and individuals, we will have greater potential and influence to accomplish what we need to do. Only together can we meet our aspirations, for the benefit of all of our audiences, both now and in the future.

I am very much looking forward to working together to achieve this ambition.

**JEFF JAMES**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND KEEPER  
THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

# DELIVERING THE VISION

Working with partners to tackle the barriers to success.

**To realise the potential of archives, we will address three vital areas, which both offer opportunity and present challenge: digital, resilience and impact. Alongside developing the capacity of our archives to adapt and thrive, it is essential that we advocate for archives and ensure their value is understood.**

Archives come in many forms with different needs. Whether large or small, continuing collections or legacy, this action plan needs to work for all. Archive users also have different needs, and technology means we can reach them in new ways.

To make the plan happen, The National Archives will be supported by a challenge panel comprising leading organisations within the sector, and partners from the wider cultural, digital and education spheres.

**We need scaleable, flexible, dynamic solutions, so we can:**

Support all users: Whether you are a family historian, academic researcher or community group, a businessperson, lawyer, artist or playwright; whether you access material online or in person; whether you are local or global; you will be supported through world-class archival practice.

Include all archives: Through sharing, co-location, collaborative networks and consortia, all archives will be able to access the skills and infrastructure they need to achieve their goals in the digital world.

The action plan will be delivered in partnership with the whole archives sector, and partners from the wider cultural, digital and education spheres.

## OUR PARTNERS WILL INCLUDE

Archives and Records Association

Arts Council England

Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals

Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association

Digital Preservation Coalition

Heritage Lottery Fund

Jisc

Local Government Association

# BUILDING A SECTOR TO LAST

Through mapping the steps, measuring outcomes and shaping results.

We will focus on these themes

## DIGITAL CAPACITY

Develop the digital capacity of the archives sector, to preserve digital records, and increase discoverability of the paper and digital archive.

## RESILIENCE

Build the sectors resilience to ensure more archives can meet and sustain the Archive Service Accreditation standard, open the sector to new skills and a more diverse workforce, increase income generation capacities, and support innovative service models.

## IMPACT

Demonstrate the impact of archives by developing and expanding audiences, piloting approaches to using data and evidence, and influencing thinking in the IT, commercial and knowledge sectors.

We will deliver the action plan in 3 phases

## PHASE 1 - BUILDING THE PLATFORM

Scope and design the infrastructure that will give archives the capacity, knowledge and development tools for delivering the three themes of the action plan.

## PHASE 2 - DEVELOPING CAPACITY

Design and test new models of delivering world-class archive services, working with partners on research and guidance in order to enable the development of new archive practice.

## PHASE 3 - SHAPING THE FUTURE

Enable services to influence new delivery streams in emerging technologies, policies and strategies, within and beyond the archives sector.

This will have the following outcomes and the results will deliver the ambitions of our vision

**Democracy and society are strengthened** by scrutiny of the archival record, holding institutions and individuals to account.

Archive users have **confidence in the integrity and authenticity of records**, and in the professionals who support their research.

Services **embrace the opportunities of technological change**, ensuring confidence in both digital and physical records.

**Our culture of knowledge and learning expands** through new ways to discover and use archive material.

**Value in businesses grows** through the use of archive material to support change, innovation and efficiency.

Peoples **lives are enhanced** through their engagement with archive collections.

Archives **deliver an excellent user experience**, enabling people to find, access and interpret archive records, whether digital or physical.

**The rich diversity of society is reflected** in our archives collections, users and workers.

Archives are **networked globally** to maintain excellent practice, and open new possibilities for institutions and users.

**TRUST:** people and institutions trust in the authenticity of archive records, and how they are preserved and presented.

**ENRICHMENT:** archives enhance and enrich our society intellectually, culturally and economically.

**OPENNESS:** archives cultivate an open approach to knowledge, and are accessible to all.

# ARCHIVES INNOVATE

Across the country, archives are already developing new approaches to grow digital capacity, engineer resilience and demonstrate impact. Here are a few examples:

## DIGITAL CAPACITY

**Knowsley Archives** has pioneered the use of open digital platforms to reach out to local communities. They set up a Soundcloud page to open up their oral history collections.

**Tate Archives** has digitised more than 52,000 items from its collections of artists archives. This project brings together online material from the Tates archive and art collections, making this one of the richest and most comprehensive resources in Europe.

Digitisation has allowed **Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service** to open a window on the experience of psychiatric patients. The nature of the records made this a complex project. Staff had to develop strategies to deal with sensitive records and the digitisation of large volumes of files. The project developed valuable resource that throws light on a marginalised part of society.

## RESILIENCE

The Royal Voluntary Service was the first archive in the UK to use the crowd-funding website Kickstarter. So far they have raised nearly 30,000 pounds from over 700 backers to fund an ambitious digitisation project.

Norfolk Record Office has developed an entrepreneurial approach to generating more income. This included setting up a charitable arm which would swing into action quickly to raise the funds to buy a major archive at auction.

Hampshire Record Office has trained over 200 people as Archive Ambassadors, providing them with basic archive skills. They are empowered to care for archives in their own communities, expanding the Record Offices reach right across the county.

## IMPACT

**The British Postal Museum and Archive** has supported trafficked women in a project exploring design history. The project focused on rebuilding trust and confidence, and learning new skills.

**Rambert** is Britains national dance company, and its oldest. Constantly refreshing itself by the creation of new dance works, it also celebrates its solid historical foundations through its established archive. The archive is used by researchers, schools, dancers and dance fans, local communities, and the wider public, for both education and inspiration.

**Seven Stories** is the national home of childrens books. It contains an unparalleled archive of manuscripts and illustrations. Exhibitions, lively events and playful activities bring the archive to life, inspiring children as readers and writers.

As Chief Executive and Keeper, I see first-hand how the archives sector is innovating, and engaging people with their collections and services, reinforcing why archives matter for individuals and society.

**JEFF JAMES**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND KEEPER  
THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

# BUILDING THE PLATFORM YEARS ONE AND TWO

We will scope and design the infrastructure that will give archives the capacity, knowledge and development tools for delivering the three themes of the action plan towards realising the vision.

## BUILDING DIGITAL CAPACITY

- Scope a digital capacity building programme for the sector to address digital preservation, discoverability and digitisation.
- Foster expertise and shared solutions through a learning set of local and regional digital preservation projects.
- Increase access to archives through innovation in online catalogues, data collation, analysis and reuse.
- Build partnerships with digital and IT leaders to establish shared standards and models of good practice.
- Develop digital standards within the Archives Service Accreditation Scheme, to support improved management of hybrid and digital collections.

## ENGINEERING RESILIENCE

- Scope a comprehensive workforce development strategy to foster a flexible, skilled and confident workforce.
- Develop digital skills in the archive workforce, through delivery of a national trainee scheme.
- Grow the fundraising capacity of 150 archives through the Fundraising for Archives programme.
- Evaluate different service delivery models for archives and foster innovative approaches.
- Support entrepreneurial approaches to income generation.
- Foster partnerships of archive services to deliver strategic development, supported by an innovation fund.
- Expand reach of the Archive Service Accreditation scheme to support well-managed and accessible collections across the archives sector.
- Develop relationships with funders and wider partners to open up new pathways to funding and resources.

## DEMONSTRATING IMPACT

- Scope an audience development strategy for the archives sector.
- Deliver the Explore Your Archives campaign and evaluate its impact on audiences.
- Pilot improved use of existing data sources including the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and Taking Part.
- Develop a framework for evaluating impact and value of digital access to collections.
- Work with partners to develop targeted advocacy and evidence on the impact of archives.
- Influence the debate within the IT and digital community about the importance of archival processes to the management of digital records.

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