

## **The National Archives' world-leading legislation website opens up to contribution**

The National Archives is announcing a radical new initiative, to provide public, open and free access to up-to-date legislation.

Legislation.gov.uk is the official home for UK legislation and the place where most people go to read the law. When visitors look at legislation online, they expect it to be current, up-to-date and to apply where they live. That is often not the case, especially when legislation is first published. The government has tried to provide up-to-date views of legislation but for decades a completely up-to-date, free, public database of all the law has been beyond reach, largely because of the editorial effort and costs involved.

The Expert Participation Programme, announced today at the [LawTech Camp](#) in central London, is a new initiative to provide public, open and free access to up-to-date legislation. The National Archives is teaming up with trained editors from the private and voluntary sectors to help the government's in-house editorial experts revise legislation on legislation.gov.uk.

John Sheridan, Head of Legislation Services at The National Archives, said: "This project will, in time, transform public access to the law in this country. We are creating a sustainable model for revising legislation, making official, revised UK legislation available to the public for free and without any additional cost to the taxpayer.

"It is vital for people and businesses to know what regulations are current and in-force and what laws they need to comply with. Helping them to find that information quickly and reliably reduces risk and saves time, providing real economic benefit to the UK private sector as well as back to government itself. "

New legislation is published to legislation.gov.uk as soon as it is enacted and is available there, as the authentic, official version, before anywhere else. The National Archives' in-house editorial team applies up to 10,000 complex legislative changes, called 'effects', to the database every year. In the same period, the UK's Parliaments

and Assemblies may make 15,000 new effects. As a result around half of the laws currently visible on the site are not fully up-to-date.

The revolutionary potential of the project is only possible because of the web and some recent technology developments. Legislation.gov.uk is the world's first linked data statute book: a sophisticated platform which more effectively manages the vast amounts of data about each Act and Statutory Instrument.

The underlying Application Programming Interface (API) for the legislation.gov.uk website was created first to allow open and unfettered access to the government's legislative database. Private sector companies, such as the Practical Law Company (PLC), have already signed up to the programme and are now employing people trained by The National Archives to bring legislation.gov.uk up-to-date. Anyone can then re-use the data under the Open Government Licence to create their own commercial products and services. Meanwhile The National Archives retains ultimate responsibility for the accuracy of the content on the site.

One important aim of the project is to provide fully comprehensive coverage, which includes Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, something existing commercial services have thus far been unable to offer.

The Expert Participation Programme is part of a broader strategy that also includes developing new tools and changing in-house processes to increase productivity, making use of smarter technology, such as 'natural language processing' to automatically detect changes in legislation, and obtaining information earlier from government departments drafting new laws.

## **Notes to editors**

### **About Legislation.gov.uk**

Legislation.gov.uk provides a single point of access for legislation covering the entire United Kingdom from 1267 to the present including laws passed by the Old English Parliament (1267 to 1706), the Parliament of Great Britain (1707 to 1800), the Old Scottish Parliament (1424 to 1707), the Old Irish Parliament (1495 to 1800), the Northern Ireland Parliament (1921 to 1972), the Northern Ireland Assembly (2000 to the present), the Welsh Assembly (2008 to the present), Local acts (1857 to the

present) and Church measures (1920 to the present) as well as statutory instruments. The database holds a complete set of records from 1991 to the present and partial records from 1267 to 1991.

The original (as enacted) and revised versions of legislation on [legislation.gov.uk](http://legislation.gov.uk) are published under the authority of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO) in her capacity as the Queen's Printer of Acts of Parliament, Queen's Printer for Scotland and Government Printer of Northern Ireland. This post is currently occupied by Carol Tullo.

### **About The National Archives**

**For the record, for good...** The National Archives is a government department and an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). As the official archive of the UK government and England and Wales, we look after and make available to the public a collection of historical records dating back over 1,000 years, including records as diverse as Domesday Book and MI5 files.

Our 21st-century role is to collect and secure the future of the record, both digital and physical, to preserve it for generations to come, and to make it as accessible as possible. We do this by devising technological solutions to ensure the long-term survival of public records and working to widen access to our collection. The National Archives also advises on information management across government, publishes all UK legislation, manages Crown copyright and leads the archive sector. We work to promote and improve access to public sector information and its re-use.

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)