

Press Release: For immediate release

09.30 BST, Friday 13 July

History: ten years earlier

The Government will move towards releasing records when they are 20 years old instead of 30 from next year, making thousands of historical records public much earlier than previously possible.

From 2013, two years' worth of government records will need to be transferred to The National Archives over a ten-year transition period until a new '20-year rule'* is reached in 2023. After this point, government will revert to transferring a single year's worth of 20 year old records to The National Archives each year.

The announcement, made by written ministerial statement, today follows the completion of [The Review of the 30 Year Rule](#) in 2009 and the then government's decision to introduce a 20-year rule.

Over the next ten years, 20 years' worth of historical records will be transferred to The National Archives in Kew, requiring government to review an estimated 3.3 million records, of which only a small proportion will be selected for permanent preservation. This could result in an extra 45,000 new records transferred and potentially opened to the public each year during the 10 year transition. These government records, created between 1983 and 2003, have the potential to provide new insight into significant events that shaped Britain's recent history and which still resonate today.

Oliver Morley, Chief Executive and Keeper, The National Archives said:

"Releasing government records to the public earlier is a huge step forward and places The National Archives at the very heart of democratic transparency. As a result, we can look forward to more records being released on events within living memory, such as the Gulf Wars and the 9/11 terrorist attacks, providing the official view of events as they unfolded".

From the year-long Miners' Strike in 1983 to Margaret Thatcher's resignation as Prime Minister in 1990, Britain's signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, enabling the creation of the Euro and the September 11 terrorist attacks that initiated the 2001 war in Afghanistan. A [timeline of selected events](#) from the 20-year period indicates the kind of records which could be finding their way to The National Archives over the next ten years.

The move from a 30-year rule represents a major change for government and must be managed in an affordable way. As such, a phased approach will be adopted. The transition beginning in 2013, will apply to the majority of public records transferred to The National Archives and 70 institutions** that act as their own place of deposit, with the exception of records selected for transfer to one of the 116 local authority places of deposit***, where the impact of introducing the change now could outweigh any benefit. The intention is to commence a second 10 year transitional period for these organisations from 2015, subject to the outcome of a full impact and cost assessment.

The National Archives will report annually to the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice on ministerial departments' progress and will publish the data**** it collects on its website.

Ends

Notes to editors

Two staged transition each phased in over ten years

The government has confirmed it will reduce the point at which historical records are made available at The National Archives and other places of deposit from 30 to 20 years. The move to a '20-year rule' represents a major change for the entire public records network and must be managed in an affordable way. As such, a phased approach will be adopted:

- The transition beginning in 2013, will apply to the majority of public records transferred to The National Archives and 70 institutions that act as their own place of deposit.
- The intention is to commence a second 10 year transitional period for 116 local authority places of deposit from 2015, where the impact of introducing the change now could outweigh any benefit. This is subject to the findings of a full impact and cost assessment.
- It is planned to lay secondary legislation, including that to commence the relevant provisions in the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 for the first phase of transition in the autumn.

*What is the '20/30-year rule'?

The '20-year rule', will replace the '30-year rule', which describes the point at which most public records are transferred to The National Archives and when most are released into the public domain.

**Institutions acting as their own place of deposit

70 institutions that are either places of deposit for their own records, such as museums or specialist collecting institutions appointed to receive government records (such as the Imperial War Museum).

***What is a place of deposit?

A place of deposit is an organisation appointed to hold public records outside The National Archives because they offer appropriate access and preservation facilities. They can be a number of different types of organisations, including universities, record offices, museums, local authority archives etc.

****Reporting

Department-level data will be published on The National Archives' website, including volumes of records due for processing each year, numbers of records transferred, and progress against declared transfer plans. The National Archives will collect departmental data and intends to publish a benchmark report on its website later this year (2012).

Freedom of Information Act exemptions

In parallel, a number of exemptions provided by the Freedom of Information Act will reduce in accordance with the first 10-year transition period to reinforce the change in legislation. From 1 January 2014 the maximum duration of the following exemptions will reduce by one year per annum over a ten year period: sections 30 (investigations and proceedings conducted by public authorities); 32 (court records); 33 (audit functions); 35 (formulation and development of government policy); 36 (prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs), except in relation to Northern Ireland and the work of Executive Committee of Northern Ireland Assembly; and 42 (legal professional privilege).

For further information about the changes to the Freedom of Information Act, please contact The Ministry of Justice press office.

Timetable

A timetable of the two-stage transition, with start dates in 2013 and 2015 (for illustrative purposes only), is shown below:

Year	Transferring under current 30-year rule	Transferring under 20-year rule transition CENTRAL GOVERNMENT	Transferring under 20-year rule transition RECORDS OF LOCAL INTEREST
2012	1982	1982 TRANSITION BEGINS	1982 1983
2013	1983	1983 and 1984	
2014	1984	1985 and 1986	1984
2015	1985	1987 and 1988	TRANSITION BEGINS 1985 and 1986
2016	1986	1989 and 1990	1987 and 1988
2017	1987	1991 and 1992	1989 and 1990
2018	1988	1993 and 1994	1991 and 1992
2019	1989	1995 and 1996	1993 and 1994
2020	1990	1997 and 1998	1995 and 1996
2021	1991	1999 and 2000	1997 and 1998
2022	1992	2001 and 2002	1999 and 2000
2023	1993	TRANSITION ENDS 2003	2001 and 2002
2024	1994	2004	2003 and 2004
2025	1995	2005	TRANSITION ENDS 2005

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