

# **Consulting with users**

## Report with recommendations

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## **Introduction**

The National Archives uses a wide range of different methods to consult with users and obtain their feedback. Many of these methods have been put in place by different teams for different reasons, leading to the possibility that while the views of some user groups may be very well represented, the views of other groups may be under represented.

The National Archives as an organisation will always need to change and evolve, and the ways in which the public use our services also change and evolve. Therefore it is necessary to take an overview of the methods in place to consult users, to ensure that they represent the views of our users as fully as possible, and that both users and The National Archives can benefit from the feedback given. It is also necessary to ensure that as many users as possible are aware of the channels available for them to give feedback, and feel that it is worthwhile doing so.

This was highlighted by the results of the online survey undertaken as part of this review, in which 72% of respondents said that they had never given feedback (excluding the survey in which they were taking part). Of this group, 52% said that the main reason that they had never given feedback was because they were not aware of any of the current consultation methods.

## **Overview of current arrangements**

### **Benchmarking**

The National Archives is a unique institution within this country, and thus it would be unwise to attach too much importance to similarities and differences between the methods for consulting users here and at other institutions. Nonetheless, as part of this review it was considered worthwhile to include a brief overview of some other institutions with which we have some similarities.

It is fair to say that The National Archives currently does as much, or more, in terms of consulting with users as any of the other institutions looked at (the British Museum, the British Library, the National Archives of Scotland and English Heritage). However, as will be seen in the report below, The National Archives is far from a position where it can 'rest on its laurels'.

The activities of the National Archives of Scotland the British Library were most similar to those of The National Archives. The British Library carries out, for example, on line and onsite surveys, focus groups on specific issues, and a regular onsite readers' group. The National Archives of Scotland holds an annual review of methods used to consult with users examining on site and online feedback to look for trends, combined with user testing of website features and some meetings and seminars with users. These meetings tend to be held away from Edinburgh in recognition of the fact that remote users outnumber on site users.

## **Consultation with online users**

Online activities and services have become central to The National Archives over the past few years. The ratio of documents downloaded to documents produced on site at Kew during 2009-10 was 221:1, and there were nearly 25,000,000 visits to The National Archives website in the same period.

95% of respondents to the survey stated they used The National Archives website, with 48% using it at least once a month, and 16% using it at least once a year.

It is therefore vital that The National Archives strives to ensure that primarily online users are consulted as fully as primarily on site users, and that their views are given equal weight.

### **Online user advisory panel**

The online user advisory panel is a group consisting of representatives of groups with an interest in online developments at The National Archives, both from a research point of view and from a technical point of view.

This group has been running for some time. At one stage its discussions tended to focus very much on digitisation, and it was felt that there was significant overlap with the monthly user forum. Therefore it was refocused to provide practical advice, feedback and consultation on specific online developments, meeting on an ad hoc basis when new online products were in development and testing those products.

### **User-centred design and product development**

The National Archives uses a user-centred approach to all developments to its website, starting with the needs and goals of the audience and getting feedback throughout the development process. Consultation methods range from formal segmented research carried out by external agencies, to informal testing on site with visitors.

The user-centred development approach ensures that we get feedback from a cross-section of users, or that we can target the user groups that particular products are aimed at.

Results from the online user satisfaction survey indicate the developments to the website resulting from this approach are making positive improvements to online users' experiences.

## **Online satisfaction survey**

The National Archives runs quarterly online satisfaction surveys, each receiving an average of about 500 responses. These surveys are intended to gauge how users feel about their online experience, and attempt to measure whether changes that have been made to the website improve the customer experience.

This survey provides very useful results, but in terms of consulting with users it clearly has limitations, in as much as the survey is focused on general satisfaction, rather than specific issues.

In the survey conducted as part of this review, the online survey has the highest recognition of any of the methods used by The National Archives to gain user feedback, and correlating with that it was also the single most popular of giving feedback: 23% of respondents said that they had taken part in an online survey (excluding the one they were filling in). Over a quarter of respondents (26%) also said that surveys (either online or on site) would be their preferred method of giving feedback.

## **Consultation with on site users**

### **On site satisfaction survey**

The National Archives runs quarterly on site satisfaction surveys, each receiving an average of about 500 responses. These surveys are intended to gauge how users feel about their on-site experience. As with the online survey, it provides very useful results.

23% of respondents to the survey undertaken for this review stated that they were aware of on site surveys, and 9% had taken part in one. This suggests a good degree of recognition, considering that only just over half of respondents (53%) visit The National Archives at Kew, and of that number, 39% visit less than twice a year, making it perfectly possible that they would never visit the site at the time a survey was being carried out.

As noted above, over a quarter of respondents (26%) said that surveys (either online or on site) would be their preferred method of giving feedback.

### **User forum**

The user forum meets monthly for approximately 1 ½ hours and is intended to be a forum for The National Archives to present its plans and ask for feedback, and for users to make suggestions to improve service delivery and bring any issues or concerns with service delivery to the attention of The National Archives.

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The forum is open to all users; in practice its core membership is made up of a group of c.20 regular visitors to the Kew reading rooms. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this group is predominantly (though not exclusively) made up of family historians / genealogical researchers.

According to the survey conducted, 32% of respondents were aware of the user forum as a method of consulting with users, but a far smaller percentage (9%) has actually taken part in one. In recognition terms then, it performed better than the on site surveys, perhaps reflecting the fact that it is publicised on the website. There may then be scope to expand the membership – 15% of respondents to the survey said that they visited The National Archives at least once a month, and 8% said that they visited at least once a week. However, it should also be noted that only 4% of respondents to the survey said that on site forums would be their preferred method of consultation.

In its current form, it should then be borne in mind that although the views expressed at the user forum are important, its membership remains niche. It may also be interesting to note that the National Archives of Scotland has moved away from holding on site meetings with users in Edinburgh, because of the tendency for them to be dominated by regular search room users, with little representation of online users. The British Library also holds a regular readers' group, like the User forum this tends to be made up of a relatively small number of regular readers, and there are concerns over the degree to which it is representative.

As part of this review, four on site focus groups were conducted to gain qualitative information on how users gave feedback, how they felt about the process, and to gather suggestions and ideas. The format and content of the user forum featured heavily in these groups. For a report of the issues raised and suggestions made, please see appendix A. Some of the key themes and suggestions relating specifically to the user forum are summarised below.

The majority of attendees at the focus groups were broadly positive about the current format and content of the user forum. There was broad agreement on the following:

- The opportunity to raise issues directly with senior staff and to see presentations on particular issues is very valuable
- Comments and questions are generally taken seriously
- Proper minute-taking and the circulation of minutes is useful
- The process for getting items on the agenda is good

There were differing views about the strengths and weaknesses of the forum:

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- Some attendees felt that it was positive that anything could be raised at the forum, while others felt that the meetings were too broad and should be focused on specific issues.
- Some felt that it would be valuable to integrate the views of online users more at the forum and/or to report feedback from online users at the forum; others felt that the on site forum should focus on the views and needs of on site users.
- Some felt that there should be process for preventing certain issues coming up over and over again every month; others felt that it was good that the same issues could be raised repeatedly.
- Suggestions were made for different times and days, but there was recognition that no time would suit everyone.

There was also general agreement that it would be useful if there was more time for discussion at the forums. Some attendees felt that this could be best achieved by allowing the forums to run on until they reached a natural conclusion, but others felt that some time limit was necessary. (It should also be noted that from the point of view of staff resource and planning, having no limit on the forums would be impracticable.) But the suggestion was made by several attendees that the format of the meeting regarding discussion of the minutes could be altered to allow more time for discussion.

A number of attendees also cited the benefits of smaller, more focused groups, suggesting that these could take place in addition to the user forum. Examples were given of times in the past when such groups had been effective (see appendix A), and these were further emphasised by written submissions on the subject. It should also be noted that focus groups on specific issues have been found to be effective at the British Library.

Other attendees however pointed out that creating extra groups would only be convenient for users who visit on a very frequent basis; users who also conduct research elsewhere or online would not be represented. This was further emphasised by an email received from a user living outside London who has attended the forum on several occasions, but was not able to travel to the focus groups. He commented: "This Group [the user forum] does seem to have a definite agenda and I think it is important that people from outside the Metropolis are also consulted if you are to be the *National Archives* rather than just the *London Archives*."

### **Recommendations:**

- Revisit the terms of reference of the forum, so that they are brought up to date. In particular, consider the following:
  - whether it is preferable for certain on-going issues to be 'parked';

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- whether the minutes of each meeting could be agreed in advance or whether the minuting process could be made less formal;
  - providing clarification around the scope and processes of future consultations.
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- Create an online forum / email address inviting users to contribute their views and questions. Ensure that these views are raised in the user forum itself and responses minuted.
  - Investigate ways to encourage attendance from a larger and more diverse group of users (for example by advertising the forum more prominently on the website and in the e-newsletter). Note however that according to the survey, only 4% of respondents stated that on site forums would be their preferred method of giving feedback, suggesting that it might be difficult to increase attendance dramatically.
  - Consider setting up a smaller, more focused advisory group to provide input on specific issues at a more strategic level. Should this approach be adopted, steps must be taken to ensure that the group is as representative as possible of our different user communities, and that any resulting demands on staff time are off-set

### **Ad hoc / one to one meetings with senior staff**

#### **Meet the CEO day**

The former CEO of The National Archives, Natalie Ceeney, held an annual 'meet the CEO' day, where she based herself in the reading room at Kew and invited on site visitors to drop in, give her their views and ask questions. These were all noted and responses were provided to all questions. Clearly, the meetings were limited to visitors to the Kew site on a certain day, but they were particularly valuable in providing a platform for users who might not be inclined to speak during a large meeting. In the survey undertaken, one to one contact was marginally more popular as a preferred method of giving feedback as opposed to on site forums (6% versus 4%).

Further, in terms of transparency, there is value beyond the actual feedback gained in the Chief Executive making him occasionally available to members of the public.

#### **Formal meetings with senior staff**

Users have on occasion secured meetings with senior members of staff to discuss specific issues. While these meetings can be productive, they do have significant disadvantages.

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In particular, their nature means that details are not made public, so the vast majority of other potentially interested users do not know what issues have been raised and the outcomes of the discussions. Further, they risk giving undue prominence to a self-selected tiny minority of users, with no means of gauging to what extent they are representative of the majority.

Therefore, while it would seem unwise to recommend that such meetings should never take place, they should certainly remain a rare exception, to take place only if all those involved feel that the usual channels have been exhausted. As outlined above, it should be considered whether setting up a smaller, more focused user advisory group could eliminate the need to have these ad hoc meetings.

### **Consultation with academic users**

Academic users are a key stakeholder group for The National Archives, and steps have been taken in the last 18 months in particular to ensure that their views are represented and that they are engaged in the consultation process.

#### **Academic forum**

A Strategic Academic Stakeholder Forum was set up in late 2009 to ensure that the views of the academic community were represented in a similar way to those of researchers who attended the monthly user forum. This forum was made up of invited academics, representing the leadership of professional historical bodies. This group has since been superseded by a new group set up as a formal sub-committee of the Advisory Council on National Records and Archives, the Forum on Historical Manuscripts and Academic Research. This Forum will meet twice a year with senior management from The National Archives, with discussions to focus on historical manuscripts and historical research, but also to include discussion of strategy and plans at The National Archives. An open recruitment is planned for its membership.

Given the formal recruitment to the sub-committee, it is possible that some members of the academic community may feel less able to contribute than they would have been using the Stakeholder Forum.

This may be reflected in two comments that were made as part of the survey:

- Do feel should be strong representation of academic users in a formal setting. Regret demise of planned consultative committee.
- I have never before been asked to give feedback. However, from the general behaviour of those that run the National Archives it is my impression that they won't be taken on board because I am an academic user and the focus currently would appear to be on other types of users.

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This could be off-set by the inclusion of representatives of the academic community in the new advisory group mentioned above.

### **Research e-newsletter**

The research e-newsletter is a relatively new product sent out to contacts on The National Archives' database of academic users. It updates recipients on research at The National Archives, but also provides the opportunity to alert recipients to planned changes to services and actively invites feedback.

Currently the majority of the recipients are academics from the field of history, but this could be expanded to other academic fields.

### **Conferences and events**

The National Archives also runs various different events and conferences aimed at academic audiences, at which delegates generally have the opportunity to provide feedback on services, for example the Gerald Aylmer seminars.

While valuable, there is often the risk at such events that the feedback is either not captured, or that it does not get directed to the appropriate team with The National Archives.

### **Recommendations:**

- Ensure that the discussions and outputs of the Forum on Historical Manuscripts and Academic Research are publicised to a wide audience, particularly via the research e-newsletter and the user forum
- Run a short satisfaction survey with a future edition of the newsletter to gain feedback from recipients (note that is planned by the Research and Academic Liaison team, but cannot currently be taken forward because of the freeze on marketing activity)
- Raise the profile of the research e-newsletter with teams across The National Archives to ensure that all relevant news is included
- Continue work to improve and extend the academic database, particularly to include academics in non-historical fields (eg information management, sociology)
- Ensure that mechanisms are put in place to capture feedback at conferences, and to ensure that is directed to appropriate teams
- Where appropriate, ensure that action taken as the result of feedback is communicated to delegates.

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## **Diversity / inclusion**

### **User advisory group for social inclusion**

This group was formed initially to advise on how cataloguing could be used to engage with a more diverse group of users, for example by suggestion cataloguing projects and by providing advice on cataloguing descriptions. It was intended to meet on site twice a year. Its scope widened to cover diversity issues within The National Archives generally, not limited to cataloguing. At the same time, its membership narrowed to consist of a few key academics working in the field of diversity. While this still provided very valuable contributions, it did lead to the issues being discussed tending to focus on the interests of those present.

At present, the group is on hold, pending the recommendations of this review.

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure representation from those working in the field of diversity and inclusion on future advisory groups
- Ensure that methods of consulting with users are promoted to a broader representation of people involved in the field of diversity and inclusion (for example charities and community groups)

## **Complaints procedure**

The National Archives has a published complaints procedure: complaints can be made either online via the complaints form or on site using the forms in the reading rooms. These are acknowledged within three working days and responded to fully within ten, where possible. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response, they can escalate the issue, including the option to submit it to an Independent Complaints Reviewer.

In her submission to the annual report 2009/11, the Independent Complaints Reviewer described our response to complaints as 'high calibre' and commended the organisation for accepting her recommendations, including where she asked us to consider improvements / adjustments to existing procedures.

However, while the procedure itself is robust, colleagues raised concerns about the 'Your Views' online form, particularly because it can sometimes be difficult to assess whether an individual's email should be treated as a complaint or not. Also, there were concerns that complaints made by users to the Contact Centre were forwarded on to the Service Quality team in an ad hoc fashion, leading to the possibility that issues could be missed.

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Comments and suggestions received via 'Your Views' are forwarded to the relevant department, and monitored to ensure a response where appropriate. Compliments are recorded by the Complaints team. While generally successful, there was concern that a lot of compliments and comments go unrecorded.

Of users surveyed, 33% said that they were aware of the on site 'Your Views' forms, and 34% said that they were aware of the online comments and complaints form. 10% said that they had used the on site form, and 8% had used the online form.

- Add a 'self-assessment' element to the 'Your Views' form, asking whether the email is a complaint / comment / suggestion – this will bring it into line with the paper form available in the reading rooms
- Standardise a procedure to ensure that complaints received via the Contact Centre are forwarded to the Service Quality team, possibly via a brief form on the intranet
- Provide training in how to handle complaints to a wider group of public-facing staff
- Raise awareness internally of the role of the Complaints team, to encourage colleagues pass on informal comments and compliments
- Put procedures in place to ensure that colleagues running external events at The National Archives pass on feedback evaluations to Service Quality team

### **Feedback from survey**

The survey was on The National Archives' website for a month, and links to it were also sent out via email with the monthly marketing e-newsletter and the research e-newsletter. It was also sent out to the members of the Diversity group, and a link to it was included in the minutes of the user forum.

Around 500 people completed the survey (about average for an online survey) and it appears to have captured a fairly broad section of users. For full details, please see appendix B.

The majority (67%) stated their primary purpose as family history research, but there was a significant minority of academic researchers (12%) and professional researchers (7%).

Both on site and online users were represented, with 95% stating that they used the website, and 53% stating that they had visited Kew.

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There was also a range of heavy and light users and of new and old users, though the majority of respondents stated that they had been using The National Archives' services (either on site or online) for one year or more.

### **Awareness and use of consultation methods**

The survey suggests that there is scope for increasing the number of users who give feedback and take part in consultation processes by increasing levels of awareness: 72% of respondents said that they had not taken part in any user consultation (excluding the survey they were completing), and of them 52% said that the main reason for this was that they were not aware of any consultation methods.

This was reinforced by some responses to the free text question 'What would encourage you to give more feedback to The National Archives?'. A number of responses suggested that more publicity and / or a more direct approach would be useful. Comments included:

- More use of online forums/questionnaires etc
- This sort of proactive approach
- It should be more obviously available
- More frequent surveys and questionnaires
- E-mails requesting feedback, being prompted for feedback
- More publicity on how to do it
- This type of direct approach questionnaire

However, it should be noted that current methods are relatively well-publicised and easy to find: there are 'contact us' and 'have your say' links at the foot of every web page, online surveys are advertised on the website homepage, and there are 'Your Views' forms placed at eight different points all over the public areas of the Kew site. Further, at the foot of every email response from ARK Research Enquiries, there is an invitation to provide feedback and a link to the online contact form.

It is thus worth considering that many users do not look for or notice the channels available until such time as they wish to give feedback. Of the respondents who had not previously given feedback, 38% said that the main reason why not was 'I have never felt the need' or 'I am not a frequent enough user'.

Further, in response to the question asking people whether they agreed that they have enough opportunity to give feedback, 47% neither agreed nor disagreed, while only 15% disagreed.

Nonetheless, there is clearly a need to continue publicising the methods available for giving feedback, and to make sure that they are as easy to use and find as possible.

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- **Recommendation:** run user testing on the website to gather evidence on where users would look for information on how to give feedback and contact The National Archives.

Further interrogation of the survey also reveals some insights into how likely different user groups are to be satisfied with opportunities to give feedback. The responses suggest that the more frequently a person visits The National Archives on site, the less likely they are to agree with the statement 'I have enough opportunity to give feedback'. Of users who visit once a week or more, 28% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement. Of users who visit once a month or more, 30% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement. In comparison, of respondents who stated that they visit The National Archives at least once a year, only 12% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

This seems somewhat counterintuitive, given that of all user groups, frequent on site users have the most opportunities to give feedback. However, it may reflect that frequent visitors have more experience of The National Archives, and therefore have more feedback that they would like to give. Further, it must be balanced by the fact that comparable percentages stated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement – 52% of users who visit The National Archives at least once a week, and 28% of users who The National Archives at least once a month.

### **Beliefs about whether feedback is taken on board**

The majority of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statements 'My feedback is taken on board' and 'My feedback is acted upon' (59% and 65% respectively). But the free text provided some real insight here, suggesting that a significant section of users do not believe that their feedback is taken on board. Comments included:

- Contributions are acknowledged but I have not had any other feedback or any evidence that users' views have been taken into account.
- I am highly cynical about consultations. Policy has usually been decided before consultation takes place. The consultation is then designed to confirm the views of those proposing policy changes.
- I am not aware of the National Archives ever having taken any notice of its users
- My perception is that user consultation is merely an academic exercise and that management priorities/policies will prevail, similar to the recent changes in opening hours and reduced resources
- Despite the thousands of users saying do not close on Mondays and do not charge for parking, the National Archives still did. You don't listen to what the British people are saying.....you don't care, you have taken a national resource and made it into a for profit business.
- Our view are only taken if it suits the management.

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This was reinforced by a number of responses to the question 'What would encourage you to give more feedback?', including:

- A sense that it made a difference
- The expectation that policy and services would result that were actually based on the feedback.
- If I felt what I said was really considered and if possible acted upon.

The on site focus groups conducted also highlighted a belief among some users that feedback was not acted upon, or that key decisions had already been made before users were consulted (see appendix A).

There is then a clear need for The National Archives to publicise the results of consultation and feedback. Crucially, this should include clear reasons why some views and suggestions have not been acted upon; this is crucial to combat any perception that some feedback is simply ignored. Further, it is vital that at the beginning of any consultation process regarding specific plans, it is made absolutely clear which aspects of the plans are fixed, and which are open to discussion.

It should also be noted that a number of respondents reported more positive experiences of consultation, and indeed positive comments about The National Archives in general. Comments included:

- If anything, I'd say I have MORE THAN enough opportunity to give feedback. The service should be prioritised around objective recordkeeping and research needs, present and future - not what a vocal minority of current users think they want.
- I am (very occasionally) mildly irritated by specific problems, but when I am I take them up with a member of the staff on the spot.
- Feedback is taken on board on minor matters but not always on major ones however the discussion and the fact that the meetings are held is valuable.

The following comment was also received as part of an email on the subject of consulting with users:

- Having researched in many archives over the last 30 years, I think we should not forget that the National Archives is the most forward thinking, efficient and friendly repository in the country. Long may that last! The Users' Forum and its predecessors have helped that reputation.

### **Preferred methods of giving feedback**

There was a broad spread of results in response to the question 'What would be your preferred way of giving feedback?', reflecting the diverse user base of The National Archives. Email was the single most popular choice (30%).

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Online feedback forms and online / on site surveys were also popular (25% and 27% respectively).

Forums – whether online or on site – were the least popular (4% and 5% respectively). This may reflect the fact that such forums are likely to be more time consuming than other methods and that they are more likely to take place at set times (this is especially true of an on site forum).

It is also interesting to note that further interrogation of the data reveals that users who stated that they had never previously taken part in previous user consultation, clearly favoured email, online forms and surveys as means of giving feedback. This suggests that expansion / promotion of these methods is most likely to lead to an increase in the numbers of users who give feedback.

### **Conclusions**

The National Archives does much that is excellent in its attempts to consult with users, and has a more structured and pro-active approach than many comparable organisations. Its existing structures do not need a radical overhaul; rather, some relatively minor changes and low-cost innovations could lead to significant improvements.

The National Archives needs to ensure that it is as open and transparent as possible throughout consultation processes. It was clear from the feedback given to the online survey and at the on site focus groups that there is a perception that key decisions are sometimes made before the consultation process is begun, a view which is very damaging to the relationship between The National Archives and its users.

Firstly, the parameters of any consultation must be made clear. In any decision-making process there are likely to be elements that are fixed; which elements these are should be clearly stated and the reasons explained. For major consultation exercises, these should be published online and on site, so that there can be no room for confusion.

Secondly, The National Archives should actively communicate the results of consultation and in particular where it has affected the end product or service. This should also include explanation of why some suggestions were not acted upon. Again, for major consultation exercises these results should be made available on site and online.

Many users are understandably resistant to change. Nonetheless, The National Archives as an organisation will always need to change and adapt, both in response to the changing economic and other external factors, and in response to the changing needs of its users. Consultation methods must adapt to reflect this. In particular, consultation must take into account the needs of The National Archives' online users – a group which currently tends

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not to be as vocal as those users who visit the site. More can be done to promote existing online channels, and new methods can be developed that work alongside on site consultation, rather than these groups always being treated as separate entities.

In the past, The National Archives has tended towards having separate feedback channels for separate groups of users – leading to number of different forums dominated by users with particular interests and agendas, all operating with little or no knowledge of each other. Further, the members of staff who organise and attend these groups have also tended to be separate, making it difficult for anyone to have an overview of user feedback.

Going forward, The National Archives should bring together its channels of consulting with users. This is not to say that there should only be one or two methods of giving feedback available; on the contrary, The National Archives should continue to recognise that different people are comfortable giving feedback in different ways, and take this into account. Rather, it means that views and information should be proactively shared between these groups, both by presenting it where appropriate to users, and by information-sharing among the staff involved. By making both staff and users aware of the diversity of views and perspectives, The National Archives can ensure that new or changed products and services offer the maximum benefit (or where appropriate, minimum detriment).

Further, given the need for change, and the desire to have robust and effective consultation processes, The National Archives should consider setting up a strategic user advisory group, representative of a broad spectrum of users and able to contribute at an earlier stage and a more strategic level.

It is also important for The National Archives to be brave: if a particular channel does not appear to be working, it should be reviewed, and if necessary changed or abolished, rather than being allowed to remain in place simply to preserve the status quo.

The National Archives has a very broad user base, including many people who are willing to give constructive feedback and keen to engage in consultation processes. The diverse knowledge, ideas and enthusiasm of these users is a powerful resource that can help The National Archives stay great, and it should not be overlooked or underappreciated. It is therefore imperative to ensure that the lines of communication between The National Archives and all its users remain open, and that open, transparent consultation remains a high priority in changing times.

Overall, The National Archives should develop and improve methods of consulting with users, focusing on the following areas:

1. Increasing awareness of the methods for consultation
2. Increasing representation from online users
3. Allowing for user representation at a more strategic level

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4. Decreasing the apparent fragmentation between different user groups
5. Ensuring greater clarity around the consultation process

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