

OPERATIONAL SELECTION POLICY OSP 51

RECORDS OF ROYAL MAIL AND ITS PREDECESSORS

1969-2006

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1. Authority

1.1 The National Archives (TNA) announced in its Acquisition and Disposition Policy Statement (February 2000) its intention of developing Operational Selection Policies (OSPs) across the government. These apply the collection themes described in the Policy to the records of individual departments and agencies subject to the Public Records Acts.

1.2 The records of the Post Office and of Royal Mail are Public Records by virtue of the Post Office Act 1969 Sections 16 (2)(b) and 75 (1) (see Annex 1).

1.3 OSPs are intended to be working tools for those involved in the selection of public records. This policy may, therefore, be reviewed and revised in the light of comments received from the users of the records, archives professionals, TNA, Royal Mail, or as a result of newly discovered information. There is no formal cycle of review but we would welcome comments at any time. The extent of any review and revision exercise will be determined according to the nature of the comments received.

1.4 In addition to TNA's Acquisition and Disposition Strategy (March 2007), The Royal Mail Archive also takes its guidance from the British Postal Museum & Archive's (BPMA) Acquisition and Disposition Policy. This is available at:

<http://www.postalheritage.org.uk/aboutus/organisation/policies/>

1.5 If you have any comments about this policy, please contact Vicky Parkinson, Head of Archives and Records Management at:

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2. Scope

2.1 This OSP provides guidance for the selection of records for permanent retention, which were created or received by Royal Mail and its predecessors, from 1969, when the Post Office was nationalised, to 2006 when the United Kingdom (UK) letters market was opened up to full competition. All records identified by this OSP as being of historical importance will be kept in The Royal Mail Archive, a designated place of deposit.

- 2.2 Until 1969, Royal Mail's predecessor, the Post Office, was a government department, and its expenditure was controlled by the Treasury. Therefore it was subject to the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967. Subsequent Acts of Parliament relating to the Post Office and its successors have ensured that the records created by the body are still public records.
- 2.3 Central government records relating to Royal Mail and its predecessors will not be covered by this OSP, although this OSP may aid departments when developing their own OSPs.
- 2.4 The Post Office was responsible for telecommunications in the UK until that side of the business became a separate public corporation in 1981, trading as British Telecom. In 1984, British Telecom was privatised and, since 1991, has traded as BT. Records relating solely to telecommunication matters are not covered by this OSP: these records were largely transferred to BT between 1991 and 1998.

However, where records exist that relate to both postal and telecommunication matters, this OSP will apply. This is because these records were not transferred to BT but remained in the custody of The Royal Mail Archive.

- 2.5 Girobank was sold to the Alliance & Leicester Building Society in 1990: this OSP does not cover records created or received by Girobank.
- 2.6 This OSP is not an exhaustive statement of all records that will be selected for permanent preservation but it is intended to provide clear direction to those who are making review decisions.
- 2.7 This OSP is intended to cover all formats of record from paper and electronic records through to photographic and audio-visual e.g. files, publications, sound recordings, audio and video cassettes, DVDs, maps, plans, posters, e-mails, databases.

3. Responsibilities of Royal Mail and its predecessors, 1969-2006

Between 1969 and 2006, the organisation now known as Royal Mail, experienced sweeping changes to its functions, structure and nomenclature.

In 1969, following the Post Office Act of that year, the General Post Office (as it was then known) ceased to be a branch of government and became a nationalised industry, established as a public corporation. The 'General' was dropped and it was known simply as the 'Post Office'. It was overseen by the newly created Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications whose Minister reported to Parliament.

The Act also resulted in the creation of an ombudsman, the Post Office Users' National Council (POUNC).

At this time, it was responsible for inland and overseas letter and post services, telecommunications, Girobank and post office counter services. It also enjoyed a monopoly on the UK letters market.

By 2006, it all looked very different. In 2001, in the light of the Postal Services Act the year before, the Post Office became a public limited company wholly owned by the government. It also changed its name to Consignia. In 2002, the name was changed to Royal Mail. The businesses remained unaffected by this change in name.

The Postal Services Act also established a new regulatory regime with the creation of the Postal Services Commission (PostComm), an independent postal regulator and a new user representative body, Postwatch replacing POUNC.

In 2006, Royal Mail's main businesses consisted of Post Office Ltd, Royal Mail Letters and Parcelforce Worldwide. The telecommunications side of the business had become a separate public corporation in 1981, while Girobank was sold in 1990.

2006 marked the end, after 350 years, of Royal Mail's monopoly of the UK letters market with the introduction, on 1 January, of full competition into that market. Licensed operators were now able to collect and deliver any type of mail, from single letters to bulk mailings. The market had gradually been opened up since 2003 when other postal operators were allowed to compete for bulk mailings of 4,000 items or more. Despite the introduction of competition, Royal Mail was and still is required to provide a universal postal service for First and Second Class mail with one collection and one delivery guaranteed each working day at a uniform price throughout the UK.

The post office network, despite its vital role in providing access to government services and maintaining rural communities, faced and still faces an uncertain future as it lost revenue through, primarily, the withdrawal of government business and developments in technology. Many post offices ran at a loss, forcing them to close. Although the post office network tried to replace lost revenue with the introduction of new services, the network, increasingly, had to rely on government subsidies to sustain it.

4. Records appraisal in Royal Mail

- 4.1 Many of the records of Royal Mail and its predecessors were, until 1987, registered into file series using alpha-numeric codes e.g. MKD/L/0022. These codes referred (if only loosely) to departments. In

1988, the referencing was changed to a running numeric code that had no association with a department e.g. 000099.

At present, The Royal Mail Archive follows the 'Grigg system' to appraise these registered files. This system is used by TNA in partnership with most government departments although it is now under review. Files are reviewed five years after they were closed (a process known as 'First Review') to see if they have any continuing administrative value to Royal Mail or might be of historic value in the future. Assuming that the files have survived First Review, they are reviewed once more (a process known as 'Second Review') 25 years after they were created to see if they should be selected for permanent preservation.

4.2 With the advent of electronic records, Royal Mail is gradually moving away from the paper based file registry system described above. Staff at The British Postal Museum & Archive, Royal Mail's corporate heritage function, will work with Royal Mail to ensure that electronic records deemed to be of historic importance are selected for permanent retention.

4.3 Some records, such as those relating to certain boards and committees, posters and a number of publications, have been identified for permanent preservation and are transferred to The Royal Mail Archive at the earliest opportunity.

4.4 The Royal Mail Archive also receives some records on an ad-hoc basis e.g. because staff are moving offices and have discovered records that should be selected for permanent preservation.

5. Relevant collection themes in The National Archives' Acquisition and Disposition Strategy

The Acquisition and Disposition Strategy (March 2007) outlines those themes which will assist staff to appraise and select records for permanent retention in The Royal Mail Archive. Of these themes, the following are of potential relevance to the work of Royal Mail and its predecessors:

3.1 Policy and administrative processes of the state: the formulation of policy and its execution;

3.1.2 External relations and defence;

3.1.3 Administration of justice and the maintenance of internal security including immigration and citizenship;

3.1.4 Regulation and support of economic activity by government, including industry, services, agriculture,

transport, energy, trade, and employment and productivity;

3.1.5 Formulation and delivery of social and cultural policies, including the benefit system, health, sport, education and the arts;

3.1.6 Reform of the state's organisational structure, including constitutional arrangements and changes in the machinery of central and local government;

3.2 Interaction of the state with its citizens and its impact on and documentation of the physical environment;

3.2.1 The economic, social and demographic condition of the UK, as documented by the state's dealings with individuals, communities and organisations outside its own formal boundaries;

3.2.2 The impact of the state on the physical environment and the documentation of the physical environment by government.

6. Royal Mail and its predecessors' functions and activities, 1969-2006

The functions and activities listed below led to the creation of records that will be considered for permanent retention in The Royal Mail Archive:

6.1 Boards and committees

6.1.1 Relevant TNA theme

The activities below relates to the following theme outlined in TNA's Acquisition and Disposition Strategy:

3.1 Policy and administrative processes of the state: the formulation of policy and its execution.

6.1.2 Governing boards, committees and executive teams

Between 1969 and 2006, a number of boards, committees and executive teams participated in the governance of Royal Mail and its predecessors, Consignia and the Post Office, the most senior of these being what is now known as the Royal Mail Holdings Board. This Board was set up in 1934 and was originally known as the Post Office Board. It was responsible for setting policy and strategy and monitoring performance. It was briefly renamed the Consignia Board in 2001 before becoming the Royal Mail Holdings Board in 2002.

Other important boards, committees and executive teams involved in the governance of Royal Mail and its predecessors, Consignia and the Post Office, include the Post Office Management Board, which was created in 1969 to oversee the day to day running of the Post Office and disbanded in 1980, and the Group Executive Team (GET).

The GET is responsible for developing and monitoring strategy, annual operating plans and budgets for the Royal Mail Holdings Board's approval. It also reviews operational activities and agrees policy if it has not been set aside for the Royal Mail Holdings Board to consider. The GET was originally established in 1980 as the Chairman's Executive Committee before becoming the Post Office Executive Committee (POEC) in 1992. It was renamed the Executive Board and then the Management Board prior to becoming the Group Executive Team in 2006.

GET reports to the Royal Mail Holdings Board, while the Post Office Management Board reported to the Post Office Board, the predecessor to the Royal Mail Holdings Board.

Other examples of Royal Mail Holdings Board committees include the following: Audit Committee; Investment Board (formerly known as the Major Project Expenditure Committee or MaPEC); Investment Committee; Mergers and Acquisitions Board; Pensions Committee.

6.1.2.1 Records that will be selected for permanent preservation

The official records of boards, committees and executive teams usually adhere to a particular format and consist of the agenda and minutes of meetings, papers circulated prior to or during the meetings, and reports, perhaps documenting the outcomes of an investigation that a committee had been tasked to carry out.

Due to the role they play in setting the policy and strategy of Royal Mail and its predecessors, Consignia and the Post Office, the records of the Royal Mail Holdings Board, its boards, committees and executive teams and all their predecessor bodies will be selected for permanent preservation. This also applies to the records of the boards, committees and executive teams of Royal Mail Letters, Post Office Ltd and Parcelforce Worldwide.

6.1.3 Non governing committees, project and programme boards

Non governing committees, project and programme boards can be found throughout Royal Mail and its predecessors, Consignia and the Post Office. They oversee specific matters, investigate short term issues or manage projects and programmes.

6.1.3.1 Records that will be selected for permanent preservation

Whether the records of non governing committees or project and programme board should be selected is a decision that should be made on a case by case basis. Non governing committees or project and programme boards are usually set up to research a particular subject or to oversee the running of a particular project, programme or product.

Factors to take into account when considering whether or not to keep the records of a project or programme board include the risk, impact and innovative nature of the project or programme being undertaken together with the amount of money being spent on it and how it is being financed.

The deliberations of committees set up to investigate local or short term issues will be reflected in records of more senior levels and are unlikely to be appropriate for permanent preservation.

For the records of the Stamp Advisory Committee see Section 6.10.

Routine administrative, financial and other housekeeping records will not be selected for permanent preservation, and should be destroyed in accordance with the relevant retention schedule.

6.2 Collection and delivery

6.2.1 Relevant TNA themes

The activities below relate to the following themes outlined in TNA's Acquisition and Disposition Strategy:

3.1.4 Regulation and support of economic activity of government, including industry, services, agriculture, transport, energy, trade, and employment and productivity;

3.2.1 The economic, social and demographic condition of the UK, as documented by the state's dealings with individuals, communities and organisations outside its own formal boundaries.

6.2.2 Letters and packets

Royal Mail Letters collects, sorts and delivers letters and packets within the United Kingdom (UK) and overseas. It was established as a separate business within the Post Office in 1986 as part of a major reorganisation.

For most of the period covered by this OSP, the Post Office maintained its monopoly on the collection and delivery of letters. In 1969, around

30 million letters per day were being posted. After a fall in the amount of mail being posted in the 1970s, the 1980s saw an increase so that, by 1986, 42 million letters were being posted daily to 23 million addresses. By 2006, this had almost doubled with around 84 million letters a day being posted to 27 million addresses.

During this period, the collection and delivery of mail underwent a number of major changes. One of the most important of these happened just before 1969, with the launch of the two tier letter service, also known as first class and second class, on 16 September 1968. Other changes include the withdrawal of Bank Holiday collections in 1975, the withdrawal of Sunday collections in 1976 and their reinstatement in 1989, and increases, from time to time, in postal rates.

However, almost all of the significant changes to the collection and delivery of mail happened after 2001 when the Post Office Corporation became a public limited company. These were: promising that first delivery would arrive by 9 30am (something that was later dropped due to the strain it placed on operations), the introduction of single daily delivery in 2004 and the opening up of the UK letters market in 2006, thereby ending a monopoly that had existed since 1636.

2006 also saw the introduction of 'Pricing in Proportion', whereby the cost of posting an item was calculated according to its physical size, thickness and weight (prior to the introduction of 'Pricing in Proportion', postage rates were based on the weight of an item so the heavier it was the more it cost to post).

The change from government department to that of public corporation in 1969 marked the beginning of the launch of a range of services aimed primarily at business users, who posted the majority of mail. Examples include Datapost, launched in 1970 as an overnight, door to door service aimed initially at moving computer data and other urgent packages, Intelpost in 1980, the world's first public international facsimile transmission service, which was initially introduced between Toronto and London, and Edipost in the early 1990s, the world's first national commercial service for converting electronic messages to paper for delivery by first class post.

6.2.2.1 Records that will be selected for permanent preservation

Records relating to significant changes to the collection and delivery of mail, as outlined above will be selected, due to the impact they have had on the way in which Royal Mail Letters operated and the impact that they have had on the general public.

Records relating to the launch of new services, such as Datapost and Intelpost will also be selected.

6.2.3 Parcels

Parcelforce Worldwide provides a collection and delivery service for urgent parcels and packages within the United Kingdom and throughout the world. Unlike Royal Mail Letters, it has never had a monopoly and operates in direct competition with other parcel carriers.

From the establishment of the service in 1883, the process of collecting, sorting and delivering parcels changed very little until the launch, in the late 1960s, of the Parcel Post Plan (PPP) aimed at mechanising the sorting process. By the mid 1980s, parcel sorting had been concentrated on 34 large centres from the previous system of 1200 small local sorting offices. See Section 6.2.4.2 for more details about the PPP and parcels mechanisation.

The early 1970s saw a fall in the number of parcels being carried, so much so that the Post Office considered withdrawing the service. However, cost cuts, a more realistic pricing structure, collaboration with the unions and better marketing saw the service make a profit and increase its share of the market.

In 1983, it was decided to increase the maximum weight of parcels it would deliver from under 10kg (22lbs) to 22.5kgs (50lbs). In 1986, as a result of a major restructure within the Post Office, the parcel service became a separate business known as Royal Mail Parcels.

The mid 1980s also saw the launch of a number of new services, such as Tynerider, which offered overnight delivery in the North East of England and to the Cumbrian coast, Trakback, a proof of delivery service that utilised barcodes to enable to customers to confirm that their parcel had been delivered, and SuperService, which guaranteed delivery in 48 hours.

The 1990s heralded a number of restructures and further attempts by the business to renovate its collection and delivery system so that it could compete more effectively with other parcel carrier businesses. In 1990, Royal Mail Parcels was renamed Parcelforce. In 1997, Parcelforce was re-branded as Parcelforce Worldwide. The government also considered privatising Parcelforce but this idea was eventually dropped.

This period also saw efforts by Parcelforce to become more competitive culminating in Project Apollo, which saw the business move away from loss making services, close many of its delivery

centres and all its distribution centres apart from Coventry, which had opened in 2001.

6.2.3.1 Records that will be selected for permanent preservation

Records that document the problems the service faced in the 1970s and its recovery will be selected as will records relating to the launch of new services. Records will also be kept that document the restructuring programmes it went through and Parcelforce's reaction to its proposed privatisation. Records will also be kept that document Parcelforce's efforts to become more competitive by renovating its collection and delivery system.

6.2.4 Technology

The collection, sorting, cancellation and delivery of mail have traditionally been very labour intensive. While this is still the case with regard to the collection and delivery of mail, the widespread mechanisation and automation of letter and parcel handling equipment, which began in earnest in the 1970s, transformed the sorting and cancelling elements of this process.

In the late 1960s the Post Office introduced a programme aimed at restructuring the postal service. The programme was set out in the 'Letter Post Plan' and the 'Parcel Post Plan' and aimed at maximising benefits that mechanisation could offer in terms of efficiency, cost savings and benefits to the customer. Both plans were underway by the early 1970s and included the completion of national postcoding and the concentration and extensive mechanisation of mail handling.

6.2.4.1 Letter mechanisation and automation

The Letter Post Plan (LPP) proposed that traffic should be concentrated at a large number of prospective, interlinked Mechanised Letter Offices (MLOs) to be built and finished by the early 1980s. This was because it was more economic to concentrate sorting in a smaller number of offices. The role of other processing offices was to be reduced. However, implementation of the LPP was delayed during the 1970s due to the withdrawal of union co-operation in some areas, the search for suitable sites, construction delays, the high cost of machinery, operational problems and some alteration in the location of MLO sites. By 1974, letter code-sort equipment had only been installed in 15 offices. During that year the target of building 120 MLOs was reduced to 80.

By the end of 1981, 47 MLOs were operational. The LPP was virtually complete by the end of 1985. By then considerable developments had taken place in the design and production of mechanised letter handling

equipment. Most MLOs equipped from the early 1980s were provided with second generation code-sort installations and modifications were produced to improve the performance of first generation equipment.

From the mid 1980s, the Post Office concentrated on developing more advanced sorting systems, particularly the application of Optical Character Recognition (OCR). The early 1990s saw the introduction of the MTT system (Machine de Tri à Tasseurs or Mail Transport System), which sorts mail, and the Culler Facer Cancellor, which culls, faces and cancels the mail, while the mid 1990s heralded the arrival of the Integrated Mail Processor (IMP), which does everything from segregate and face the mail to read addresses, cancel and pre-sort the mail.

Other important developments include: the introduction of the Flats Sorting Machines (which are capable of sorting oversize envelopes), sequence sorting machines (which sort mail into postmen's and women's delivery walks) and Address Interpretation (whereby difficult to read addresses are sent to Mail Data Entry Centres (MDECs) to be deciphered. Prior to this, such addresses were deciphered in an Automated Processing Centre (APC)).

6.2.4.1.1 Records that will be selected for permanent preservation

Records relating to the research, development, field trials and implementation of letter handling equipment will be selected as will records relating to the building of MLOs.

Records relating to the LPP and that document the withdrawal and reinstatement of union support for mechanisation will be selected.

Records that document the changes in working conditions of staff that would have come about as a result of mechanisation will also be selected.

6.2.4.2 Parcel mechanisation and automation

Circulation of parcel traffic was reorganised under the Parcel Post Plan (PPP), the biggest restructuring programme since the service was introduced in the 1880s. It projected the concentration of all outward parcel sorting work at about 30 major mechanised centres, called Parcel Concentration Offices (PCOs), linked by direct transport routes. Parcels would be conveyed within each concentration area by road and between centres by rail, including freightliner.

A major element in the Plan was to replace manually handled mail bags and wicker baskets with containers of various sizes for use within and between PCOs. Standard wheeled containers were designed for

use in road, rail and freightliner transportation. An extensive building programme was initiated to replace many of the existing parcel offices which were over 60 years old and unsuitable for the installation of machinery. By 1974, 12 PCOs were already in operation, although not all were fully functional. The remainder were scheduled to be opened by 1978-1979. Progress and extension of existing PCOs continued during the 1980s.

In the very early days of postal mechanisation belt conveyors and chutes were the only mechanical aids to parcel handling. During the post-war period, and particularly after the introduction of the Post Office's Parcel Post Plan in 1967, a variety of band and chain conveyors, rising conveyors, glacis fixtures, parcel containers, container transporters, tilt band and tilt tray parcel sorting machines and other mechanical devices were installed in parcel sorting offices. Mechanical equipment and the construction of a number of Parcel Concentration Offices during the 1970s was designed to increase cost effectiveness, end the use of mail bags and wicker baskets, limit manual handling of heavy loads, reduce the rate of parcel damage and improve safety and the working environment for staff.

6.2.4.2.1 Records that will be selected for permanent preservation

Records relating to the research, development, field trials and implementation of parcel handling equipment will be selected as will records relating to the building of PCOs.

Records relating to the PPP will be selected as will records that document the changes in the working conditions of staff that would have come about as a result of mechanisation.

6.2.4.3 Postcodes

Major advances in postcoding took place between 1959 and 1974 when the Post Office developed a system of postcodes to facilitate the mechanical sorting of letters. Initial experiments involving address coding by the public and the use of code-sort machinery took place in Norwich from 1959. After limited success, a revised alphanumeric system of postcodes was introduced in October 1966. By the end of 1974 the whole of the United Kingdom had been allocated postcodes and Norwich was recoded.

Implementation of the postcode system was fundamental to the Post Office's Letter Post Plan and Mechanised Letter Office scheme. Automatic coding and sorting machinery was not normally brought into use in an office until a year or two after postal codes had been introduced in that area. The new code-sort machines, introduced in the

late 1960s and early 1970s, employed single operators who typed the postcode on the letter onto a keyboard; this was then translated into machine readable form and printed on the envelope as a series of phosphor dots. Subsequent outward and inward sorting operations involved machine reading of this code.

6.2.4.3.1 Records that will be selected for permanent preservation

Records that show how postcodes were allocated will be selected as will records that document how the Post Office set about persuading businesses and the general public to use postcodes.

Records will also be selected that document growing public awareness of postcodes and the social impact that they had.

6.3 Employer/employee relations

In 1971, the Post Office employed 414, 824 people (excluding subpostmasters) or about one in fifty of the UK's working population. At the time, it was the biggest single assembly of labour in Europe. Even though this figure had more than halved by 2006, it was and still is one of the biggest and most labour intensive industries in the UK. This has made good relations between the business and its staff essential to its success, an issue that it has been grappling with throughout the period covered by this OSP.

6.3.1 TNA themes

The activities below relate to the following themes outlined in TNA's Acquisition and Disposition Strategy:

3.1.5 Formulation and delivery of social and cultural policies, including the benefit system, health, sport, education and the arts;

3.2.1 The economic, social and demographic condition of the UK, as documented by the state's dealings with individuals, communities and organisations outside its own formal boundaries.

6.3.2 Industrial relations

As such a large employer the Post Office and its successor, Royal Mail, has always had to be concerned with issues of Industrial Relations, and it has dealt with representative bodies of staff, such as Trade Unions, since the nineteenth century. When the Post Office Corporation was established in 1969 this was against the backdrop of national controversy in the field of industrial relations, in particular following Employment Secretary Barbara Castle's abortive attempt at reform, 'In Place of Strife'. The Conservative government's Industrial

Relations Act in 1971 substantially changed the background again, but this was overturned later in the 1970s and, in the Post Office, an experiment with 'industrial democracy' took place. By the 1980s Conservative reforms to industrial relations laws had been introduced and the incidence of strike action, official and unofficial, fell back from earlier highs in the 1970s.

Events of particular significance since 1969 include the large scale, long lasting national strike in the Post Office in 1971 – which was in fact about several issues but not least the Post Office's mechanisation plans – and other official and unofficial strike action, such as the 1996 official national strikes and the 1976 unofficial action in support of workers at the Grunwick processing laboratory. Sympathy strike action could also cause crippling damage to postal services, particularly when in support of railwaymen who were involved in moving the mail in the 1960s and 1970s. The 1978-79 experiment in Industrial Democracy was a key moment, as were later attempts to progress industrial relations between the trade unions and the Post Office (principally with the Union of Communication Workers, the name for the Union of Post Office Workers from 1980. It was renamed the Communication Workers Union in 1993).

Major causes of industrial relations difficulties for the Post Office in this period have been listed as: discipline; pay; overtime; staffing levels; working environment; withdrawal of concessions; attendance at union meetings; economy measures; casual labour; bonus schemes.

6.3.2.1 Records that will be selected for permanent preservation

Records relating to the impact of strike action on services, negotiations with trade unions at a local and national level, and Post Office policy and operations in relation to its Trade Union discussions and agreements will be selected, with particular emphasis on records relating to the major events described above

6.3.3 Recruitment, grading, pay and conditions

It is not appropriate in this Operational Selection Policy (OSP) to cover all the issues relating to recruitment, grading, pay and conditions that the Post Office and its successors have experienced between 1969 and 2006. However, apart from the fight by staff for more pay, a shorter working week and better working conditions, the most important/recurring themes in this period include:

Changes to the grading of jobs – in 1969, the Post Office Corporation inherited a Civil Service job structure. 385,000 staff were spread across 230 different grades. The early 1970s were spent

rationalising this. For example, four thousand senior managers throughout the Post Office were reorganised into a new senior salary structure with 100 separate grades being replaced by ten bands.

Other examples of important grading changes include: the replacement of Telegram Boys with Postal Cadets in 1980 and the abolition of Postman Higher Grade (PHG) at the turn of the 21st century. Although PHGs kept their grade, new entrants were known as Operational Postal Grades (OPGs).

Recruitment problems – during the 1970s, the Post Office experienced problems recruiting staff due, in part, to low pay and unsociable hours, which led to a decline in the quality of service and low morale amongst existing staff. Although recruitment problems eased in the early 1980s, they returned in the mid 1980s. When the Post Office introduced a pay supplement in difficult to recruit areas to try to combat the problem, it led to a national strike in 1988.

Moves by the Post Office and its successors to reward the productivity of staff with bonuses – from 1980, bonuses in return for rises in productivity began to come in. One major example of this trend in recent years would be the Share in Success payout to staff following the success of the Renewal Plan in 2004. Staff were promised a payout of £800 if Royal Mail hit its profit target of £400 million. In fact, the target was exceeded leading to a payout of £1,034.

Equal opportunities – equal opportunities in the Post Office came to the fore during the 1980s and this has continued into the present day. Examples include: moves to employ more people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, women and part timers, the introduction of career breaks, job sharing, school term time working, the launch of a Disability Advice Centre in 1993, and the implementation of programmes to tackle issues like bullying and harassment.

6.3.3.1 Records that will be selected for permanent preservation

The following records will be selected for permanent retention:

- Those that document major changes to the grading of jobs;
- Those that document problems in recruiting staff and solutions to the problem;
- Those that document the introduction and success or failure of productivity schemes;
- Those that relate to initiatives by the Post Office and its successors to implement equal opportunities;

- Those that document pay negotiations, pay scales and changes to working hours;
- Personnel manuals;
- Personnel policies.

6.3.4 Internal communications, training and development

6.3.4.1 Internal communications

Initiatives to improve communications between managers and their staff took off in the 1980s. Although there had always been staff magazines, like *Courier*, to keep staff informed about what was going on, the 1980s saw the launch of initiatives, such as staff briefings and staff surveys, aimed at improving internal communications further. In 1987, Royal Mail Letters launched a programme of monthly team briefings aimed at informing staff about local and national topics. These briefings were also launched in Royal Mail Parcels. Staff briefings were a forerunner to the 'work time learning' sessions, which were launched in the Post Office at the beginning of the 21st century, and consist of weekly half hour sessions where managers and staff get together to discuss important issues. Around the same time as staff briefings began, Royal Mail Letters and Royal Mail Parcels began to hold regular staff surveys which asked staff for their opinions on various subjects.

6.3.4.1.1 Records that will be selected for permanent preservation

The following will be selected for permanent preservation:

- Reports into the state of internal communications within the Post Office and its successors;
- Those that document the results of staff surveys and how the individual businesses responded to them;
- Those that document the introduction of major initiatives such as staff briefings, staff surveys and 'work time learning';
- Staff magazines like *Courier* and the *Post Office Gazette*;
- Internal communications policies.

6.3.4.2 Training and development

The period between 1969 and 2006 saw an increased emphasis on the training and development of staff. This began in the 1970s with initiatives such as the opening of a postal management college at Rugby and the introduction of new training techniques. The early

1980s saw the Post Office launch the Postal Cadet scheme for 16 and 17 year olds and participate in the government's Youth Training Scheme (YTS). By the late 1980s, Royal Mail Letters was formalising its training with the introduction of training managers in its postal districts. The early 1990s saw staff across the Post Office being encouraged to study for relevant qualifications. For example, Counters introduced national vocational qualifications, while Parcelforce made a joint City and Guilds qualification a requirement for new delivery drivers.

6.3.4.2.1 Records that will be considered for permanent retention

The following records will be considered for permanent retention:

- Those that document significant initiatives or shifts in policy in training and development e.g. decision to encourage staff to study for relevant qualifications, setting up of the YTS and the Postal Cadet scheme;
- Training relating to important events e.g. decimalisation;
- Training videos;
- Training policies.

6.3.5 Pensions

One of the key employment questions that Royal Mail and its predecessor, the Post Office, has had to face over the period from 1969 until 2006 has been that of pension provision for its staff. Throughout this time the Post Office has offered an occupational pension for staff of all grades, of varying kinds. The Post Office Staff Superannuation Scheme was the name taken from 1969 when a separate scheme to the main civil service pension, which had been nominally used up to that point, was established; other names and incarnations have followed. Since then, principal considerations have been:

- The deficits that have existed at various times in the funding of the scheme (and in particular the inherent deficit in 1969 when the transfers from the civil service scheme took place, and negotiations with central government over the pensions deficit since 2001), and how they were to be dealt with;
- How the Pension Scheme was to be split when the Posts and Telecomms sides of the organisation split in 1981;

- Changes to the benefits that the scheme has offered and staff concern (even as far as taking strike action) over changes to benefits;
- Regular reviews of the performance of the scheme by Coopers and Lybrand (in the 1970s) and others;
- Changes to trustee board membership and the involvement of the trade unions;
- The effect of the introduction of what became the State Earning Related Pensions Scheme (SERPS) in 1978.

6.3.5.1 Records that will be selected for permanent preservation

Records related to the principal considerations of the pensions scheme, listed above, will be selected for permanent preservation.

6.3.6 Staff records

Royal Mail is a major employer in the UK. Staff are one of the most critical assets of any company. Employment records reflect the individual experiences of members of staff. Taken as a whole they can also be a key resource for tracking social and economic trends i.e. the impact of mechanisation on the number of staff employed and the impact of economic fluctuations (recession or booming economy) on pay rates and numbers employed.

6.3.6.1 Records that will be selected for permanent preservation

Records that relate to the following will be selected:

- Key points in the employment of individuals (i.e. appointment or retirement);
- Overall employment trends, such as the number of staff employed and rates of pay will also be selected;
- Policy decisions about terms and conditions of employment;
- Those that set out the staff structure in Royal Mail and its predecessors.

6.4 Environment

6.4.1 TNA themes

The activities below relates to the following theme outlined in TNA's Acquisition and Disposition Strategy:

3.2.2 The impact of the state on the physical environment and the documentation of the physical environment by government.

6.4.2 Background

As one of the largest employers in the country with a considerable property portfolio and a very large fleet of vehicles, the Post Office's impact on the environment was always going to be a sizeable one. Beginning in the late 1980s, it began to develop initiatives to minimise the harmful effects its activities had on the environment. Initiatives ranged from launching vehicles with environmentally friendly features, experimenting with bio-fuels and switching to lead-free petrol to minimising the impact of new buildings and cutting energy use in existing buildings.

6.4.3 Records that will be selected for permanent preservation

Records relating to the Post Office's and its successors' efforts to minimise the impact their operations had on the environment will be selected.

6.5 Equipment, fixtures and fittings

6.5.1 TNA themes

The activities below relate to the following themes outlined in TNA's Acquisition and Disposition Strategy:

3.1.4 Regulation and support of economic activity by government, including industry, services, agriculture, transport, energy, trade, and employment and productivity;

3.1.5 Formulation and delivery of social and cultural policies, including the benefit system, health, sport, education and the arts.

6.5.2 Equipment

A variety of equipment was and is used to process, handle and deliver the mail. Manual equipment, for example, ranges from sorting frames, mail processing tables and drop bags to mail bags, Yorks and delivery pouches. However, the most iconic and instantly recognisable of all the equipment used to process, handle and deliver the mail is the letter box.

Since 1969, a number of new letter boxes have been added to the existing range. These include the 'K' type box, designed in 1980 for use in modern housing estates or similar developments, the business box, designed in 1994 for franked mail and located in business parks, industrial estates or some high streets, and the indoor box, also designed in 1994 for use in secure locations.

6.5.2.1 Records that will be selected for permanent preservation

The following records will be selected for permanent preservation:

- Those that document the design of, experiments in, and trials and roll out of new letter boxes, including models that did not make it into production;
- Those that document changes in letter box policy;
- Guidelines for the livery, design and technical aspects of letter boxes.

6.5.2.2 Records that will be considered for permanent preservation

The following records will be considered for permanent preservation:

- Those that show the different types of mail processing, handling or delivery equipment used e.g. photographs, equipment catalogues;
- Those that document the design, trials and introduction of mail processing, handling or delivery equipment specifically designed for Royal Mail Letters and its predecessors;
- Those that document the introduction of equipment that was not specifically designed for Royal Mail Letters and its predecessors but that still played an important part in the mail processing, handling and delivery process e.g. introduction of MATES (Mail All Purpose Trailer Equipment) and YORKS (caged trollies used to transport sacks or trays of mail), introduction of circular sorting frames.

6.5.3 Fixtures and fittings

Between 1969 and 2006, the interiors of post offices underwent a number of changes to take account of developments in fixtures and fittings, innovations such as the introduction of the single queue and the security screen, and rebranding exercises. A variety of fixtures and fittings were required to fit out and furnish post offices. These ranged from counters, desks and chairs through to signage, security screens and queue barriers. With the exception of fixtures, such as signage and security screens, most of the fixtures and fittings that could be

found in post offices were not custom made for them but were bought 'off the shelf'.

6.5.3.1 Records that will be considered for permanent preservation

The following records will be considered for permanent preservation:

- Those that show the different types of fixtures and fittings used in post offices e.g. photographs, furniture catalogues;
- Those that document the design, trials and installation of fixtures and fittings specifically made for post offices e.g. security screens, signage.

6.5.4 Uniforms

Between 1969 and 2006, a number of changes were made to the uniforms issued to employees. These changes ranged from completely new uniforms being issued to staff to improvements or alterations being made to existing uniforms or the introduction of new pieces of kit.

In 1969, the Post Office broke with tradition and, instead of the usual dark blue, issued postmen with grey uniforms. The uniform also no longer carried the traditional red piping that had, until then, maintained a link with the first scarlet uniform issued in 1793. Postwomen received their new grey uniforms the following year. This break with tradition did not last long as, in 1986, postmen and postwomen were issued with dark blue uniforms.

The 1980s saw the Post Office trying to issue uniforms that could cater for every kind of condition that the weather could throw at its postmen and postwomen. In 1980, the Post Office introduced lightweight uniforms for use in warm weather. However, it was not until 1986 that the Post Office issued postmen and women with its first all weather, all purpose year round uniform. Items included thermal coats, waterproof suits and pullovers.

This was all part of a trend that was emerging to try and make uniforms that could cater for the needs of all Post Office employees. For example, the new uniform issued to counter employees in 1992 included a sari and a maternity dress. Uniforms also became more practical and informal. For example, women were given culottes in 1991 while, in 1992, postmen were given permission to wear their own shorts when the temperature reached 26C. The new uniform issued to postmen and postwomen between 1999 and 2001 included winter and summer caps.

6.5.4.1 Records that will be considered for permanent preservation

The following records will be considered for permanent preservation:

- Those that document the reasons behind the redesign of uniforms or the introduction of new pieces of kit;
- Those that document the design, trials and rollout of new uniforms and pieces of kit;
- Those that document staff attitudes towards uniforms;
- Those that document consultation with the unions over the introduction of new uniforms and dress codes.

6.6 Financial Management

6.6.1 TNA themes

The activities below relates to the following themes outlined in TNA's Acquisition and Disposition Strategy:

3.1.1 Management of government revenues and expenditure.

6.6.2 Background

From 1969 the Public Corporation of the Post Office was split into two businesses, Posts and Telecomms, and accounting for these businesses was done separately. In 1981 the Telecomms business became a separate Public Corporation, eventually to be privatised. Right up until the Postal Services Act 2000 came into force, there were clear links between the government and the Post Office in financial terms since the Corporation arrangements by and large persisted; when the Act was implemented in 2001 the company became a PLC with a single shareholder (the UK government) and more conventional company financial arrangements applied.

The Post Office's accounting functions have always carried out the conventional activities associated with a finance function. These have included financial accounting, management accounting, forecasting and control. For the period since 1969 the majority of these functions have been based outside of London, and in particular a centre in Chesterfield, Derbyshire, was purpose-built for housing accounting work.

6.6.3 Records that will be selected for permanent retention

The area of financial management is a complex one and a lot of records are created to document activity. The majority of these can be confidentially destroyed after statutory and business retention periods

have elapsed. However, the financing and performance of the Post Office and its successor, Royal Mail, have been issues of significant public import since 1969, and the policy decisions made relating to finance should be properly documented and appropriate records selected. Budgets and budget planning, accounting, procurement and statistics are among potential areas of significance.

Records associated with the framework and structure of accounting and finance, major financial planning, major exceptions and issues, and the changes made to systems (in particular with the change to the organisation brought about by the Postal Services Act 2000) will be selected. Records documenting the high-level outturn of accounting, and high level budgeting, forecasting and planning, will be selected. Financial management records for major projects will be selected.

Published annual accounts are available in printed form in The Royal Mail Archive.

6.7 Information technology

6.7.1 TNA themes

The activities below relates to the following themes outlined in TNA's Acquisition and Disposition Strategy:

3.1.5 Formulation and delivery of social and cultural policies, including the benefit system, health, sports, education and the arts.

6.7.2 Background

From the launch of ERNIE (the machine used to pick winning Premium Bond numbers) in 1957 to the roll out of Horizon (a counter automation programme) in 2001 and Royal Mail's decision in 2002 to outsource its IT department to the PRISM alliance (a consortium consisting of BT, the Computer Science Corporation of America and Xansa) in a deal that involved millions of pounds, it is difficult to think of an area of postal operations that has not been transformed by the advent of computers.

Although the Post Office and its successor, Royal Mail, embraced IT, it has also proved problematic. Royal Mail Letters and Parcelforce Worldwide face stiff competition from telephones, e-mails and faxes, while Post Office Ltd has found itself vulnerable to technologies such as automatic banking transactions, plastic cards and cash dispensing machines, as evidenced by the government's decision to pay welfare benefits directly into bank accounts from 2003.

6.7.3 Letters and parcels

Both Royal Mail Letters, Parcelforce Worldwide and their predecessors have used automation alongside mechanisation to make the process of sorting letters and parcels quicker and more efficient. For example, the 1970s saw the introduction of first and second generation code sorting desks. Code sort desk operators would key in postcodes, which computers would convert into phosphor dots for sorting machines to read and then sort into the appropriate boxes. The 1980s heralded the arrival of Optical Character Recognition machines, which could automatically read typed and printed postcodes and add the right phosphor dots for the sorting machines to read. By the mid 1990s, advances in technology meant that hand-written postcodes could also be read.

For a more detailed examination of the role technology has played in the sorting process, see Section 6.2.4.

Computers also assisted in the collection and delivery processes. Innovations included using computers to assist in the planning of new postmen's walks where new buildings or other developments had had an impact on delivery patterns, and bar-coding post boxes and business collections so that staff could make a computerised record of each collection and so improve service reliability.

The Post Office also took advantage of computers to launch a host of new services aimed primarily at its business users. Examples include Intelpost, the world's first public international facsimile service, which was launched in 1980 between London and Toronto, Electronic post in the early 1980s, whereby mailings were transmitted electronically, printed out and then enveloped and introduced into the system for delivery, and Parcelforce's SuperService in the late 1980s, which used a £30 million computer controlled network to guarantee a 48 hour delivery service.

6.7.3.1 Records that will selected for permanent preservation

Records that document the development and installation or launch of collection and delivery related IT systems or services designed for or by the Post Office and its successors will be selected.

6.7.4 Counters

The automation of the Counters business was a gradual one that began in the 1980s and continued through the 1990s. Developments included the introduction of electronic cash registers, a computerised cash management system, EFTPOS (Electronic Funds Transfer at Point of Sale) and the roll out of Horizon.

6.7.4.1 Records that will selected for permanent preservation

Records that document the development and installation or launch of Counter IT systems or services designed for or by the Post Office and its successors will be selected.

6.8 Marketing

6.8.1 Relevant TNA themes

The activities below relate to the following themes outlined in TNA's Acquisition and Disposition Strategy:

3.1.4 Regulation and support of economic activity by government, including industry, services, agriculture, transport, energy, trade, and employment and productivity.

6.8.2 Advertising

Between 1969 and 2006, the Post Office and its successors ran a huge number of advertising campaigns. These were chiefly aimed at:

- Encouraging customers to do something more efficiently e.g. use postcodes or address mail properly;
- Encouraging customers to buy products e.g. travel insurance or holiday money;
- Encouraging customers, particularly business ones, to use its services e.g. Datapost, direct mail;
- Encouraging customers to send more mail e.g. greetings cards;
- Informing customers about products and services e.g. latest recommended posting times for mail.

It has utilised various means to do this from television, radio and the national press to posters, leaflets and competitions.

6.8.2.1 Records that will be considered for permanent preservation

The following will be considered for permanent preservation:

- Records that document the planning of campaigns, their implementation and success or failure;
- Material arising from major campaigns e.g. leaflets, posters, television and radio commercials.

6.8.3 Corporate identity

6.8.3.1 Royal Cypher

A Royal Cypher consists of the initials of a sovereign's name and title. Permission to use the Royal Cypher and the accompanying St Edward's Crown is granted by the Lord Chamberlain's office as a mark of special esteem to Royal Mail and its predecessors. The Royal Cypher and St Edward's crown can only be applied to post boxes and vehicles (except in Scotland where, since 1953, a Scottish crown has been used). Each successive reign has brought a new Royal Cypher. Since Queen Elizabeth II ascended the throne in 1952, there have been few changes to her cypher, 'EIIR'.

6.8.3.1.1 Records that will be considered for permanent preservation

Records that document any changes or new uses to the Royal Cypher will be considered for permanent preservation.

6.8.3.2 Branding

Between 1969 and 2006, the Post Office and its successors used a variety of logos to identify the organisation as a whole, its business units and the services it offered. Examples of these include the corporate logo adopted in the early 1970s to symbolise the newly nationalised Post Office, which consisted of 'The Post Office' spelt out in yellow double line lettering, and Royal Mail's cruciform logo, introduced in 1990, which consists of a cross shaped device comprising St Edward's Crown with the words, 'Royal Mail' in yellow double line lettering below it. The cruciform logo also comes in Welsh and Scottish versions.

6.8.3.2.1 Records that will be considered for permanent preservation

The following records will be considered for permanent preservation:

- Those that document the reasons behind the introduction of new logos;
- Designs for new logos, both successful and unsuccessful;
- Those that document the rollout of new logos;
- Those that document significant changes to existing logos;
- Guidelines for the use of logos.

6.8.4 Market research

Between 1969 and 2006, the Post Office and its successors commissioned market research to find out what people thought of it as an organisation, how they used its products and services and what they thought of those products and services. Such research can give researchers an excellent insight into how the Post Office and its successors were perceived and how attitudes towards the organisation have changed over the years.

6.8.4.1 Records that will be considered for permanent preservation

The following records will be considered for permanent selection:

- Those that document attitudes towards the Post Office and its successors;
- Those that throw light on British society as a whole;
- Those that document how products and services were used.

6.8.5 Public relations

Some form of public relations, that is promoting good relations between the organisation and the general public, has been practised since the 1920s with a Public Relations Department being formally established in 1934. Activities carried out by public relations include producing press releases, compiling publications such as the *Post Office Guide* and organising external events. By the 1990s, the department had become known as Communication Services.

6.8.5.1 Records that will be considered for permanent preservation

Press releases and publications such as the *Post Office Guide* will be considered for permanent preservation.

6.9 Papers of senior directors

6.9.1 Relevant TNA themes

The activities below relates to the following theme outlined in TNA's Acquisition and Disposition Strategy:

- 3.1 Policy and administrative processes of the state: the formulation of policy and its execution.

6.9.2 Background and records that will be selected for permanent preservation

The Royal Mail Archive is keen to acquire the records of senior directors. Such records can provide evidence of high level decision

making which cannot be found amongst more official records. For example, the minutes of meetings will document that a decision has been made but, generally speaking, do not document the processes that led up to that decision. The Royal Mail Archive aims to ensure that records which document why major decisions were made and how those decisions were implemented are kept permanently.

The Royal Mail Archive is interested in those records created by a senior director in the discharge of their function as a Royal Mail, Consignia or Post Office employee. The Archive is not interested in the records that a senior director may have created in a personal capacity e.g. as a member of a sports club or residents' association.

The records of senior directors will be taken at the end of a senior director's working life cycle. An element of self selection is involved in this in that The Royal Mail Archive will be taking records that the director concerned considers to be important. As is standard practice with all records held in The Royal Mail Archive, the records will be kept under a thirty year closure period or for longer if necessary e.g. if the material contains personal data or for security reasons.

6.10 Philately

6.10.1 Relevant TNA themes

The activities below relates to the following theme outlined in TNA's Acquisition and Disposition Strategy:

3.1.5 Formulation and delivery of social and cultural policies, including the benefit system, health, sport, education and the arts.

6.10.2 Background

There has been an interest in the study of stamps since they were first created and the areas of stamp design, the efficacy of particular stamps, the link between politics and stamp issues and security/fraud prevention have been among paramount special interests.

The Post Office and its successors have been responsible for the manufacture of Postage Stamps since 1914 and in 1962 a formal Stamp Advisory Committee was set up to play a role in advising on the design and issue of in particular new special stamps. The decision was taken to increase the number of special stamps (often called 'commemoratives') issued and from 1964 numbers rose. Roughly eight sets of special stamps were planned and issued each year up until the Millennium sets of 1999-2001, when numbers increased. The definitive stamp was revamped in 1967 as the 'Machin Head' was established as *the* iconic image for the 'everyday' stamp. Efforts to

produce a new design for definitive stamps in the early 1980s were unsuccessful and it was decided to continue with the use of the 'Machin Head' as *the* iconic image for the 'everyday' stamp.

Services for philatelists have developed with Tallents House in Edinburgh acting as a centre from which products are marketed and dispatched by the Post Office. Stamp production has also developed, with the introduction of phosphor coated stamps in 1976, the introduction of the first Miniature Sheet (a special product) in 1978, and the introduction of Greetings Stamps in 1989 along with the first stamps with Non-Value Indicators (those showing '1st Class' or '2nd class' rather than a money amount). More recently there has been the introduction of computer-printed labels at Post Office counters and the ability to produce postage labels over the internet.

6.10.3 Records that will be selected for permanent preservation

Records related to the discussions and deliberations of the Stamp Advisory Committee, the design and manufacture of stamps and external relations regarding this, the security of stamps, and the issue of stamps will be selected. Particular care will be taken to select records related to trials and innovation in stamps and philately, whether successful or unsuccessful. This is in addition to all stamp artwork (both adopted and unadopted) which will be retained along with appropriate proofs, trials and related correspondence and papers. Records related to Royal Mail and its predecessors' relations with the philatelic world may also be selected.

6.11 Planning

6.11.1 Relevant TNA themes

The activities below relates to the following themes outlined in TNA's Acquisition and Disposition Strategy:

3.1 Policy and administrative processes of the state: the formulation of policy and its execution

6.11.2 Background

For the Post Office, the concept of long term planning came to the fore when it ceased to be a government department and became a nationalised industry in 1969. It had to act like a business and also justify its actions to the government. This can be seen with the creation of a Corporate Planning Unit in the years prior to the Post Office becoming a public corporation. With the creation of that unit, the Post Office always had a department in one form or another specifically devoted to long term planning.

In the 1970s, despite the Post Office trying to plan five or ten years ahead, it tended to concentrate on the short term problems it faced, such as price and wage restraints. During this period, each of the businesses also tended to produce plans independently of each other rather than considering what would benefit the Post Office as a whole. The 1980s and 1990s saw a shift with the Board using the corporate plan to set out its long term strategy for the Post Office and the businesses taking their direction from the Board.

The Post Office produced a variety of documents, such as capital plans, business plans and environmental reviews, all of which were geared towards planning the future direction of the Post Office. The most important of these was the corporate plan, which set out the Board's plans for the following five years and formed the basis for the government to approve and monitor what the Post Office did. It made the Post Office accountable to the government as the latter had to approve the plan. Both sides used it as a basis to negotiate future targets and access to future capital.

In fact, the strategic plan that Royal Mail produces still has to be approved by the government and, until recently, its funding package was reliant upon it.

6.11.3 Records that will be selected for permanent retention

Records relating to the proposed future direction of Royal Mail and its predecessors, such as corporate plans and business plans, will be selected.

6.12 Post Office counters operations and services

6.12.1 Relevant TNA themes

The activities below relates to the following themes outlined in TNA's Acquisition and Disposition Strategy:

3.1.5 Formulation and delivery of social and cultural policies, including the benefit system, health, sport, education and the arts;

3.2.1 The economic, social and demographic condition of the UK, as documented by the state's dealings with individuals, communities and organisations outside its own formal boundaries.

6.12.2 Background

Traditionally, post offices, which can be found on high streets and in a variety of urban and rural locations throughout the United Kingdom, have, primarily, provided products and services to the public on behalf

of the government. They were the conduit through which the government distributed pensions, social security benefits, emergency payments such as butter tokens and discounts on electricity bills, and official documentation such as the British Visitors' Passports. Post offices still form the largest retail network in the United Kingdom. They did and do play an extremely important role in the social and economic life of the United Kingdom. This is particularly the case with regard to rural sub post offices, which are often the only means of keeping the sole shop in a village from closing.

The main problem facing post offices between 1969 and 2006, the period covered by this OSP, was that the maintenance of the network was dependent upon the government continuing to use it to pay out social security benefits and pensions. Post offices were also under threat from developments in technology, which meant that pensions, for example, could be paid directly into bank accounts instead of through post offices.

In 1980, the government announced that it was changing arrangements for the payment of social security benefits. This led to a reduction in the volume of business being transacted through post offices and heralded the beginning of the withdrawal of government business from post offices.

During the 1980s and early 1990s, post offices tried to make up for this lost revenue in a number of ways. Following the British Telecommunications Act in 1981, the post office network was allowed to provide services for a wider range of public bodies. An early example of this was the agreement made with British Rail, which enabled application forms for railcards for the disabled to be obtained from and certified at most post office counters.

It expanded its retail activities by, for example, opening postshops within main post offices. Each shop sold a range of writing paper, greetings cards, packaging materials and philatelic items. The first four, at Ashford, Kent, Stevenage, Epsom and Bedford, opened in March 1984. Smaller post offices were provided with browser units with which to display merchandise.

It also increased the range of products and services it could offer to the public. Examples of products and services introduced during this period vary from the installation of photocopiers and photo booths in the early 1980s to the launch of BonusPrint in 1984 (customers could pay at the counter for film developing and printing and see their prints arrive by post a few days later) and the sale of theatre tokens for London's West End theatres in the late 1980s.

In 1983, a major review of the network, the first since the 1940s, found that there were too many post offices in urban areas. It was decided that some of these post offices, subject to consultation, would close over the following three years. A guarantee was given that 95% of the existing network would be maintained until April 1987.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a number of Crown offices were converted to agency (i.e. sub-post office) status to save money and some post offices were franchised (post offices operating within existing businesses). The first franchised post office opened in 1990 in Sainsbury's Savacentre, Colliers Wood, London.

Although rural post offices were unaffected by the closures brought about by the review of the network in 1983, it was not unusual for them to close through lack of business. By the late 1980s, 100 a year were closing because of this. The solution was to re-open some of them on a part-time basis. 1, 144 post offices were operating on a part-time basis at this time.

Despite all its efforts, by the early 1990s, the post office network was still facing significant problems one of most pressing being that it was still heavily reliant on government business. Although the network dealt with up to 160 different transactions, just ten of those transactions accounted for 75% of their business. It was also vulnerable to technology, with the advent of such developments as automatic banking transactions, plastic cards and cash dispensing machines encroaching on its business. More than 40% of new pensions were now paid through banks and building societies through automated credit transfers. It was also susceptible to changes in policy as a company or government department, for example, could always decide to take the services they had contracted out to post offices away.

During the 1990s and into the 21st century, the post office network grappled with ways of replacing the revenue it had lost through the withdrawal of government business and developments in technology. It took full advantage of the wider powers it had been given by the government in 1987 and 1994 to develop new products and services. Examples of such products and services included the launch, in 1994, of its Bureau de Change business, home insurance in 2002 and the Post Office HomePhone in 2005.

It was also repositioning itself from a benefits based business to one that would focus on banking and information services, with post offices becoming 'community banking hubs'. In March 1999, a deal was signed with Lloyd's TSB to allow those customers with personal cheque accounts to deposit and withdraw money from post offices in England and Wales. This was one of a number of agreements reached

with banks to handle some of their banking transactions. Agreement was also reached with several banks and building societies, including Barclays, Lloyd's TSB, Royal Bank of Scotland and Nationwide, to make their basic bank accounts available through post offices. This was fully launched in 2003 along with the Post Office Card Account, which allowed customers to continue having their benefits paid over the counter in cash. Further developments included the launch of a 'two in one' credit card in 2005 and a new instant saver account in 2006.

From 2003, the government decided to pay benefits directly into bank accounts. This had a significant impact on the network with benefits payments accounting for over 40% of some post offices' income. There were too many post offices chasing too little business. The decision was made to close up to 3,000 post offices in urban areas. This decision formed part of the Network Reinvention Programme, whose aim was to make the urban post office network more viable by reducing overprovision and creating more modern branches. After consultation, 2,500 post offices were closed.

The rural post office network had been making a substantial loss since the late 1980s. At that time it was losing between £20 and £30 million a year. The majority of rural post offices did and do cost more to run than the income they generate leading to questions about their long term viability. In May 2003, the government received approval from the European Commission to release £450 million from Royal Mail's reserves of historic profits to support some rural post offices, which would otherwise have had to close because they were not commercially viable.

Between 2005 and 2006, the post office network lost £111 million as it struggled to replace the income it had lost through the withdrawal of benefits payments. The post office network faced and still faces an uncertain future as Royal Mail and the government consider how to make it a financially viable business.

6.12.3 Records that will be considered for permanent preservation:

The following records will be considered for selection:

- Those that relate to government policy towards the post office network and Royal Mail and its predecessors' strategies for replacing the revenue generated by government business
- Those that relate to the closure of post offices e.g. Network Reinvention Programme;
- Those that relate to the introduction of new products and services or the withdrawal of existing ones;

- Reviews of the post office network e.g. review of the post office network, 1983; Monopolies and Commission's report, June 1988, government review of the post office network, Jun 2000.

6.13 Postal Services and Post Offices Abroad

6.13.1 Relevant TNA themes

The activities below relates to the following theme outlined in TNA's Acquisition and Disposition Strategy:

3.1.2 External relations and defence

6.13.2 Background

Royal Mail provides a range of services for the overseas market both for individuals and businesses, in mail (air and surface), express mail and logistics. Overseas is generally defined as any country outside Great Britain and Northern Ireland except the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and the Irish Republic.

Between 1969 and 2006, the period covered by this OSP, Royal Mail and its predecessors adapted to a changing and increasingly competitive international mail market through introducing new services and acquiring or partnering overseas postal companies.

From the 1990s onwards Royal Mail and its predecessors expanded their overseas involvement through acquisition, alliance and partnership. It established Royal Mail Inc. in the United States in mid-1990s. General Logistics Systems (GLS), founded in 1999, is its European parcels business based in the Netherlands and operating in over 30 countries. Spring, a joint venture with TNT and Singapore Post to handle cross-border mail, was started in the early 2000s.

Meanwhile the British Postal Consultancy Service, set up in 1965 to advise overseas administrations on mechanised sorting offices, expanded both its remit and client base. In 1998, 200 consultants were working on 60 projects in 40 countries compared to a handful of projects in 1969.

Key developments in services and technology included: an international Datapost service (transatlantic via Concord in 1977-78); Intelpost (the world's first international facsimile transmission service) between London and North America in 1980; Swiftair (a fast, assured mail service to specific destinations) in 1980 (this was replaced by Airsure).

In 1983-84 the Post Office had a total income of £2776m of which £289m or approximately 10% was for overseas services. Outward

overseas letter traffic had declined from peak levels in the mid-1970s to about 476m in 1983-84. That said, partly through Royal Mail's expanding logistics business, the five years following 1999 saw the share of its revenue earned abroad increase from 4.1% to 9.5%.

6.13.3 Records that will be considered for permanent preservation

The following records will be considered for selection:

- Those concerning overseas investments, acquisitions and partnership agreements;
- Those relating to the development of the new services described above;
- Those concerning dealings with the Universal Postal Union, the international body which coordinates postal policies between member nations.

6.14 Property Management

6.14.1 Relevant TNA themes

The activities below relates to the following theme outlined in TNA's Acquisition and Disposition Strategy:

3.2.2 The impact of the state on the physical environment and the documentation of the physical environment by government

6.14.2 Background

In 2006, Royal Mail's property portfolio consisted of around 2,700 properties. These included post offices, sorting offices, research centres, headquarters buildings and distribution hubs. In recent years efforts have been made to streamline Royal Mail's estate through the consolidation of services and the closure and selling off of buildings that are no longer required.

Between 1969 and 2006, numerous building projects took place e.g. the building of Mechanised Letter Offices (MLOs) and Parcel Concentration Offices (PCOs) under the Letter Post and Parcel Plans throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, the building and opening of mail centres and distribution hubs, such as Parcelforce's centre at Coventry (2001) and Royal Mail Letters' Heathrow Worldwide Distribution Centre (2001), and the selective closure of Crown post offices.

6.14.3 Records that will be considered for selection

Records that will be considered for selection include:

- Those that document the building of MLOs, PCOs, mail centres, distribution hubs and other significant buildings;
- Those that document Royal Mail's policy towards its property portfolio;
- Lists of properties.

6.15 Regulation

6.15.1 Relevant TNA themes

The activities below relates to the following theme outlined in TNA's Acquisition and Disposition Strategy:

- 3.1.4 Regulation and support of economic activity by government, including industry, services, agriculture, transport, energy, trade, and employment and productivity.

6.15.2 Background

There was a substantial change in the regulatory framework for the Post Office business after it became a PLC with the implementation of the Postal Services Act 2000. At the same time as this changed the organisation forever, it created a regulator, the Postal Services Commission (PostComm). PostComm regulates and enforces the Universal Service, acts as a check on Royal Mail and licenses other postal operators.

In 1969 it was decided to establish a Users Council. This was called the Post Office Users National Council (POUNC). Its aim was to represent at national level the interests of the users of Post Office services, to ensure the existence of adequate consultative arrangements at local level, to receive proposals from the Postmaster General, and to make recommendations to him about the services. These powers were established under the 1969 Post Office Act. POUNC was an independent statutory body, funded by the Department of Trade and Industry. From its establishment the Post Office provided a secretary and premises. The work of the council arose from matters put before it by the Post Office, public, and local advisory committees.

In 2001, POUNC was replaced by Postwatch. Postwatch, which was initially called the Consumer Council for Postal Services, was established to promote the interests of users of postal services within the framework of the Postal Services Act 2000. Postwatch was responsible for monitoring postal service standards and acted as a focus for consumer issues and complaints. It was consulted on key decisions including changes to postal licences. It also, in conjunction

with Postcomm, monitored and advised on the network of Post Office branches.

In October 2008, Postwatch merged with energywatch and the Welsh, Scottish and National Consumer Councils to create Consumer Focus, an organisation established to support the rights of consumers in England, Scotland, Wales and, for post, Northern Ireland.

6.15.3 Records that will be selected for permanent preservation

The following records will be selected:

- Those concerning Royal Mail relations with PostComm and Postwatch, in particular those taking place at a high level or involving contentious issues;
- Those relating to formal documents submitted to PostComm and the processes within the business that lay behind these;
- Those relating to formal information requests from PostComm and standards and regulation inspection.

Equivalent records of standards assessment and formal and informal government regulation from before the implementation of the Postal Services Act 2000 will also be selected.

6.16 Reorganisation

6.16.1 Relevant TNA themes

The activities below relate to the following theme outlined in TNA's Acquisition and Disposition Strategy:

3.1.6 Reform of the state's organisational structure, including constitutional arrangements and changes in the machinery of central and local government.

6.16.2 Background

Between 1969 and 2006, the Post Office and its successors underwent an enormous number of organisational changes, so much so that those working for the Post Office in 1969 would have had difficulty recognising the organisation in 2006.

The following comprises an overview of these events although it is by no means exhaustive such were the number and variety of upheavals that the Post Office and its successors experienced during this period:

In 1969, under the Post Office Act passed in the same year, the General Post Office ceased to be a government department and

became a nationalised industry, established as a public corporation. It was renamed the Post Office and split into two divisions, Posts and Telecommunications, which became distinct businesses.

By 1976, Postal Headquarters, which had undergone a major reorganisation in 1971, comprised six departments: Postal Marketing; Postal Mechanisation and Building; Postal Operations; Postal Finance and Management Services; Postal Pay and Grading; Postal Personnel. Central Headquarters, created in 1969, also consisted of six departments: The Chairman's Office; The Secretary's Office; The Solicitor's Office; Public Relations Department; Finance and Corporate Planning; Personnel and Industrial Relations. The United Kingdom was arranged into ten regional areas with each regional headquarters responsible for managing postal and counter operations in its area. It did this in accordance with instructions laid down by Postal Headquarters.

In 1981, the telecommunications side of the business became a separate public corporation, trading as British Telecom. In 1984, British Telecom was privatised and, since 1991, has traded as BT. Following this split, the Post Office was reorganised into two businesses, Royal Mail and Counters, referred to jointly as Posts. Central Headquarters was disbanded with some of its work disappearing while the rest was shared out between Postal Headquarters, Telecomms Headquarters and National Girobank.

In 1985, National Girobank became a wholly owned subsidiary of the Post Office, Girobank plc. It had originally opened in 1968 with the aim of offering a current account banking service to anyone over the age of 16 and resident in the UK, the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands. Prior to 1985, it had operated as a separate business within the Post Office. It continued to trade under the name, 'National Girobank' until 1987 when it became known as 'Girobank'. In June 1988, the government announced that it wanted to privatise Girobank. In 1989, the Alliance & Leicester Building Society entered into closed negotiations as the preferred bidder to buy Girobank. In July 1990, Girobank became part of the Alliance & Leicester.

In 1986, postal operations were restructured into three separate businesses: Royal Mail Letters, Royal Mail Parcels and Post Office Counters. Although these three businesses had their own Managing Directors and headquarters functions, what was now the Post Office group of businesses retained a headquarters function for group policy. Additionally this 'Group' function continued to provide the rest of the businesses with services and support. The 142 head post offices that existed in the ten regions were replaced by separate district offices for

each of the businesses. Royal Mail Letters had 64 district offices while Post Office Counters had 32 and Royal Mail Parcels had 12. Scotland and Wales were provided with postal boards in Edinburgh and Cardiff respectively to ensure that their interests were properly represented. The postal business in Northern Ireland was also restructured although the Northern Ireland Postal Board continued to have a Chairman to deal with the political situation there.

In October 1987, Post Office Counters began trading as a limited company and wholly owned subsidiary of the Post Office and was known as Post Office Counters Ltd. In 1993, a new structure was introduced with the district offices being replaced by seven regions. In October 2001, Post Office Ltd was created.

In 1990, Royal Mail Parcels was renamed Parcelforce and underwent a restructuring programme not long afterwards. In 1997, Parcelforce was re-branded as Parcelforce Worldwide.

In 1992, Royal Mail Letters was reorganised with its district offices being replaced by nine geographical divisions. A small headquarters was to be dedicated to strategy while a central services department would provide common or specialist services to Royal Mail Letters.

In March 2001, under the Postal Services Act passed in 2000, the Post Office Corporation became a public limited company wholly owned by the government. At the same time, it changed its name to Consignia as part of an attempt to position the company globally. Post Office Ltd, Royal Mail Letters and Parcelforce Worldwide remained unaffected by this change of name. In November 2002, Consignia Holdings plc changed its name to Royal Mail Holdings plc and Consignia plc became Royal Mail Group plc.

6.16.3 Records that will be selected for permanent preservation

Records that document major organisational change within the Post Office and its successors will be selected.

6.17 Security

6.17.1 Relevant TNA themes

The activities below relates to the following theme outlined in TNA's Acquisition and Disposition Strategy:

3.1.3 Administration of justice and the maintenance of internal security including immigration and citizenship.

6.17.2 Background

Group Security (and its predecessor, the Post Office Investigation Department) is responsible for understanding, measuring and reducing the security risks faced by the organisation. Its role is central in protecting revenue, maintaining public confidence in the mail and post office networks and defending the organisation and its staff against crime and terrorism.

Its responsibilities include: giving advice on how people, buildings, vehicles, mail, parcels and cash can be protected, conducting checks to improve compliance with security standards and carrying out investigations into criminal activity against the organisation.

Between 1969 and 2006, key security related themes that have affected Royal Mail and its predecessors include:

- Terrorism e.g. letter bombs;
- Troubles in Northern Ireland and the effect they had on the Post Office and its staff;
- Robberies and burglaries in post offices, which were particularly prevalent during the 1970s.

6.17.3 Records that will be considered for permanent preservation

The following records will be considered for permanent preservation:

- Those that document the effect that terrorism has had on Royal Mail and its predecessors;
- Those that document the effect that the Troubles in Northern Ireland had on the Post Office and its staff;
- Those relating to robberies and burglaries, the organisation's responses to this threat and the impact on staff;
- Those that document criminal investigations involving new or significant crimes.

6.18 Transport

6.18.1 Relevant TNA themes

The activities below relates to the following theme outlined in TNA's Acquisition and Disposition Strategy:

3.1.4 Regulation and support of economic activity by government, including industry, services, agriculture, transport, energy, trade, and employment and productivity.

6.18.2 Introduction

Responsibility for the collection, transportation and delivery of letters, packets and parcels lies with Royal Mail's vast and complex transport network. Between 1969 and 2006, various different modes of transport were utilised to move mail from bicycles, mopeds and vans to aeroplanes, mail rail and travelling post offices (TPOs). This period was characterised by the drive to find ever quicker, reliable and more cost efficient ways of transporting mail around the country. This period also saw a decline in the use of rail to move mail around the country in preference for road and air transport.

6.18.3 Air

Between 1969 and 2006, more use was made of aeroplanes to ferry mail around the country. The Post Office had begun to use increasing numbers of scheduled inland flights to transport mail after World War II. In 1961, a direct air mail service was introduced from London to Glasgow, Edinburgh and Belfast.

1979 saw the establishment of a new inland network centred on Speke airport (now known as Liverpool John Lennon airport), Liverpool, which became the hub of nightly flights to and from what were, initially, five provincial centres although this number later grew. These centres were known as the 'Spokes of Speke'. In 1982, following the success of Speke airport, a second air hub was established at East Midlands airport, Derby, with the aim of linking air, rail and road transport. In 1992, these hubs, which had become both complex and congested, were replaced by more direct routes between airports. These more direct routes were collectively known as 'Skynet'. By the late 1990s, Skynet involved 25 airports handling three million items daily.

6.18.3.1 Records that will be selected for permanent preservation

Records relating to the establishment of Skynet and of hubs at Speke and East Midlands airports will be kept as will the setting up or closing down of other inland air routes.

6.18.4 Rail

The period between 1969 and 2006 saw a decline in the use of trains to move mail in favour of road and air transport. For example, during the mid 1980s, Royal Mail Parcels transferred the majority of parcels to road transport (more than 80% now went by road). In the early 1990s,

Royal Mail Letters, under a scheme named Roadrunner, transferred all Saturday movement of letters and packets from rail to road.

In the late 1990s, this trend of moving the transportation of mail from rail to road slowed with the construction, by Royal Mail Letters, of a £150 million purpose built road-rail interchange centred on Willesden, North London. It linked a series of provincial hubs with a fleet of 16 new mail trains. However, this reversal was short lived. In 2003, as part of a transport review, the rail element of Royal Mail Letters' transport network was removed due to economic considerations.

This decision hit Mail Rail. Mail Rail opened in 1927 to transport mail underground between railway stations and sorting offices in London. It was originally known as the Post Office Underground Railway but its name was changed in 1987 to mark its 60th anniversary. The service was suspended with the last train running on 30 May 2003. It had simply become too expensive to run. By 2002, it was five times more expensive to move mail by Mail Rail than by road.

The decision also hit the travelling post offices (TPOs), in which mail was sorted while trains were on the move. The last TPO ran on 9 January 2004, ending a way of sorting mail that had been in existence since 1838.

6.18.4.1 Records that will be selected for permanent retention

General

Records that document the changing relationship between the Post Office and its successors and the railway companies will be selected e.g. negotiation of contracts, construction of Railnet and reasons behind the removal of the rail element from Royal Mail Letters' transport network.

Mail Rail

Records that should be selected include those that document:

- The design and production of 34 new trains in 1981 replacing trains that had been use since 1930, the rebuilding of three trains in 1987 and any other significant alterations to the train stock;
- The introduction of a new centralised computer controlled system in 1993, which replaced the electro-mechanical system installed in 1927, and any other significant alterations to the train control equipment, such as the modification, in 1987, that meant that trains could be diverted in the event of another train breaking down;
- The suspension of the service and alternative plans for its use.

TPOs

Records that should be selected include those that document:

- The decision, in 1968, to sort first class mail only in TPOs;
- The alterations to services in 1988, the first major changes to the TPO service since World War II;
- The design, field trials and production of new TPOs and any significant alterations to the design of TPOs;
- The reasons behind the decision to cease use of TPOs.

6.18.5 Road

Royal Mail's reliance on road transport to move mail is reflected in the size of its fleet – it has one of the biggest in Europe. During the early 1990s, Royal Mail Letters had 28,000 vehicles in operation while Parcelforce had 7,000. In 2006, at 36,000, Royal Mail Letters had the largest fleet of bicycles in the UK.

This period has seen the introduction of new types of vehicles as well as changes to the design of vehicles already in existence. For example, postbuses, which combine the collection and delivery of mail and the transportation of passengers and are a vital link to isolated communities, were introduced in 1967. The number of routes grew swiftly in the 1970s and, by 2005, there were 166 postbus routes. There have also been experiments with innovative technology, such as electric vehicles.

6.18.5.1 Records that will be selected for permanent preservation

Records that should be selected include those that document:

- The design, field trials and production of new vehicles. The Royal Mail Archive is also interested in selecting records relating to the design and field trials of unsuccessful vehicles, particularly if it relates to the use of new technology;
- The reasons behind the introduction or withdrawal of postbus routes;
- The increasing reliance on road transport to move mail and any major changes to the network e.g. split of the road fleet between Royal Mail Letters and Royal Mail Parcels in the mid 1980s, Transport Review of 2003.

6.19 War and Civil Emergencies

6.19.1 Relevant TNA themes

The activities below relate to the following themes outlined in TNA's Acquisition and Disposition Strategy:

3.1.2 External relations and defence;

3.2.1 The economic, social and demographic condition of the UK, as documented by the state's dealings with individuals, communities and organisations outside its own formal boundaries.

6.19.2 War

Members of the armed forces serving abroad can send and receive mail using the service provided by Royal Mail and its predecessors, through its HM Forces Mail Service, and the British Forces Post Office (BFPO), which is a separate organisation. Royal Mail gives the BFPO mail to deliver to troops stationed abroad, while the BFPO gives the Post Office mail to deliver from the troops to addresses in the United Kingdom.

Mail sent overseas was and still is vulnerable to disruption from war, coup d'états, the imposition of sanctions and volatile political situations. The Falklands War, the Gulf War and the sanctions against South Africa are all good examples of this.

The Post Office had contingency plans in place should the United Kingdom ever be invaded or subject to a nuclear attack.

6.19.2.1 Records that will be selected for permanent preservation

The following records will be selected:

- Those that document issues relating to the collection and delivery of mail to and from members of the armed forces, such as the demand to send letters and packages to troops abroad free of charge and the establishment of new BFPO addresses;
- Those relating to the disruption of mail due to the events outlined above will be selected;
- Contingency plans, as set out in the Post Office War Plan, will be selected.

6.19.3 Civil Emergencies

From Royal Mail and its predecessors' point of view, a civil emergency can be defined as an event that disrupts normal postal services to such an extent that it becomes noticeable to customers. Such events are caused by factors outside of the organisation's control or through industrial action by its staff. They are different from the usual run of operational difficulties, such as technical faults, planned road works or shortages of staff, which are faced on a daily basis. Such events range from adverse weather conditions, like the gales in October 1987, and natural disasters, such as flooding, to the situation in Northern Ireland, the fuel crisis in the 1970s and industrial action by railway or power workers.

6.19.3.1 Records that will be selected for permanent preservation

Given the size and complexity of its operations, it is not surprising that Royal Mail and its predecessors are and were so vulnerable to such events. As they have a significant impact not only on it but on those using its services records will be selected that illustrate how services were affected and how Royal Mail and its predecessors reacted. Contingency plans that show how such situations were to be dealt with will also be selected.

6.20 Associations and societies

For associations and societies set up by staff to obtain better pay and working conditions, see Section 6.3.2 on industrial relations.

6.20.1 Relevant TNA themes

The activities below relates to the following theme outlined in TNA's Acquisition and Disposition Strategy:

3.1.5 Formulation and delivery of social and cultural policies, including the benefit system, health, sport, education and the arts;

3.2.1 The economic, social and demographic condition of the UK, as documented by the state's dealings with individuals, communities and organisations outside its own formal boundaries.

6.20.2 Post Office Recreation Council and Royal Mail Sports Foundation

The Post Office had a strong and long tradition of supporting the sporting, social and cultural activities that went on amongst its staff. This was partly because postmen needed to be fit in order to carry out their duties and partly because the Post Office thought that such activities added to the quality of life of its staff.

However, prior to 1969, there was no body to co-ordinate all these activities. Therefore, in April 1971, the Post Office Recreation Council (PORC) was set up to promote, encourage and co-ordinate all forms of recreational activity. It sponsored national events, participated in international events and provided financial assistance to clubs. Clubs qualified for financial help by affiliating to one of fourteen regional or departmental associations who in turn were affiliated to PORC.

Following the split between the Post Office and British Telecommunications in 1981, the PORC was renamed The British Telecommunications and Post Office Recreation Council (BTPORC). It acted as the focal point for recreational activities in both businesses. In 1987, this arrangement ended and the Council changed its name back to the Post Office Recreation Council.

It continued to co-ordinate activities until April 2002 when it became the Royal Mail Sports Foundation. The Foundation provides grants for the provision of equipment, trophies and training.

6.20.2.1 Records that will be selected for permanent preservation

The Royal Mail Archive is keen to select records relating to the Royal Mail Sports Foundation and its predecessor body, the PORC, which show why they were set up and how each body supported (or in the case of the former, continues to support) the recreational activities of staff.

6.20.3 Clubs

In 1971, there were 551 clubs with a membership of 131,281 within the Post Office. By the end of 1978, this number had risen to 673 with a membership of 203,353. This was despite the number of employees falling from 430,196 to 420,156 in the same period. Sports played ranged from bowls, billiards and badminton through to snooker, squash and swimming. Staff not interested in sports could pursue interests such as art (through the Post Office Art Club of Great Britain), drama or photography. Sorting and delivery offices often had sports and social clubs - Mount Pleasant Sports and Social Club is a good example of this. Many of these clubs would have been run on a voluntary basis and obviously formed an important part of life in the Post Office. Such clubs still exist today in Royal Mail.

6.20.3.1 Records that will be selected for permanent preservation

Records created or received by the Post Office Art Club of Great Britain will be kept. The Royal Mail Archive is also keen to preserve the records of other sports and social clubs in order to document the

role they played in the Post Office and in the lives of its employees, and if this role has changed or remained the same in Royal Mail.

6.20.4 Charitable societies

A number of charitable societies were set up to offer financial assistance to Post Office employees and their families:

The Post Office Orphans Benevolent Institution is the oldest charity in the Post Office. It was founded in 1870 to offer financial assistance to Post Office employees and their families who were experiencing hardship because of the illness or a death of a relative.

The Post Office Relief Fund and the Second Post Office Relief Fund were set up during the First and Second World Wars to relieve suffering amongst Post Office employees and their families because of conditions resulting from the wars or occasioned by hostile action by or against the enemy.

The Rowland Hill Fund was set up to provide financial assistance and support to who were working or who had worked for the Post Office.

6.20.4.1 Records that will be selected for permanent preservation

The Royal Mail Archive is keen to select records from these societies in order to show how staff supported themselves in the face of hardship. Records, such as those that demonstrate how staff benefitted from the work of these societies and those that set out their constitutions, will be selected.

Annex 1 – Public records and the Post Office Act 1969

The definition of Public Records is given in the Public Records Act 1958, First Schedule.

The Post Office Act 1969, and subsequent legislation and privatisations, had effects on the application of the statutory definition of Public Records to the records of functions discharged by the Postmaster General's department. These effects and some of the wider legislative context are set out in the table below:

Post Office Act 1969	Part I	Abolition of the office of Postmaster General	
	Part II	Provision for the appointment, powers, and duties of Minister of Posts and Telecommunications	
	Part III	Re-constitution of Post Office as a non-Crown public authority	
	Part III s 16 (2)(b)	Exclusion of the (pre-vesting day) records from <i>General Provisions as to Transfer to the Post Office of Property, Rights and Liabilities of the Postmaster General</i>	Effect is: to preserve Crown ownership, and Public Records status, of records created up to 1969
	Part III s 75 (1)	Public Records Act 1958 to have effect as if the Post Office were included in Public Records Act 1958 Schedule I para 3 Table Part II	Effect is: to make records created by the new Post Office authority Public Records
	Part III s 75 (2)	Secretary of State may by order vest in the Post Office the property in records of the Postmaster	

		General specified in the order; and within the order provide for continuing Crown access to the records	
	Part IV	Transfer of radio and television broadcasting licensing function to Minister of Posts and Telecommunications	Effect is: records of this function continue to be Public Records
	Part V	Constitution of Department for National Savings as a new government department	Effect is: pre-1969 Act savings functions records and post-1969 Act Department for National Savings records are Public Records
	Schedule I para 1.	Post Office to be a body corporate having perpetual succession and a common seal	
British Telecommunications Act 1981	Part I	Constitution, Powers and Duties of new public corporation, separate from the Post Office, to be called British Telecommunications	
	Part I s 56 (1)	Public Records Act 1958 to have effect as if the Corporation were included in Schedule I para 3 Table Part II to that Act	Effect is: to make records created by British Telecommunications (public corporation) Public Records
	Part I s 56 (2)	Secretary of State may by order vest in the Corporation the property in records of	

		the Postmaster General specified in the order; and within the order provide for continuing Crown access to the records	
Telecommunications Act 1984	Part I	Constitution of Office of Director General of Telecommunications (OFTEL)	
		Transfer of radio and television broadcasting licensing function to Director General of Telecommunications	Effect is: records of this function continue to be Public Records
	Part V	Provisions for constitution of successor company (British Telecommunications plc); and for transfer of property, rights and liabilities of British Telecommunications (public corporation), on day appointed by Secretary of State by order (the 'transfer date')	Effect is: records created by the successor company (British Telecommunications plc) after it ceases to be owned by the Crown do not have Public Records status
	Schedule 5 para 44	Nothing to affect operation of s 56 of the 1981 Act in relation to any records of British Telecommunications (public corporation) and predecessors which become records of the successor company (British Telecommunications	Effect is: to preserve the Public Record status of any records transferred from British Telecommunications (public corporation) and predecessors to the successor company (British Telecommunications plc)

		plc) on the transfer date	
November 1984		Initial public offering (IPO) for sale of shares in British Telecommunications plc	Effect is: records created after IPO date are not Public Records (transfer to British Telecommunications plc of the business of British Telecom, the statutory corporation, on 6 August 1984)
1990		Girobank sold to Alliance & Leicester Building Society on July 2	Effect is: records created after sale date are not Public Records