

The National Archives

Accounting Officer System Statement



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Section one: Scope of the system

1. I am the Principal Accounting Officer for The National Archives. This System Statement sets out all of the accountability relationships and processes within my department, outlining where accountability sits at all levels of the system.

2. The National Archives is a non-ministerial department, and the official archive and publisher for the UK Government, and for England and Wales. Its parent department is the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. It fulfils the remit of the Public Record Office, the Historical Manuscripts Commission, the Office for Public Sector Information and His Majesty's Stationery Office. It works to secure the archival heritage of the nation. Its collection is accessible to everyone all over the world.

3. The National Archives:

- is the custodian of the public record and government's trusted expert in managing, preserving and using information
- provides access to and makes available more than 1,000 years of the nation's histories, and connects people and communities with the millions of stories contained in its collection
- leads and supports the archives sector, and help archives to build and develop the skills and capacity needed to sustain the nation's archival heritage
- works with the academic community and others engaged in scholarly research across a broad range of disciplines, to provide solutions to the major challenges facing archives, and to open up greater access to archival collections
- brings together the skills and specialisms needed to conserve some of the oldest historic documents, as well as leading digital archive practices to manage and preserve government information past, present and future
- plays a leading role in addressing the cross-government challenge of preserving and making accessible the digital record of government.

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4. The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport has statutory responsibility under the Public Records Act 1958 for the public records system and is accountable to Parliament.

5. As Principal Accounting Officer, I am personally responsible for safeguarding the public funds for which I have been given charge under HM Treasury's Estimate, and The National Archives' resources accounts, as listed in the Accounting Officer appointment letter.

6. This System Statement helps me ensure that I am fulfilling my responsibilities as an Principal Accounting Officer, in accordance with HM Treasury's guidance as set out in Managing Public Money. It covers my department and describes accountability for all expenditure of public money through my department's Estimate, all public money raised as income, and the management of any shareholdings, financial investments and other publicly owned assets for which I am responsible.

7. This accountability system is in place at the date of this Statement, and will continue to apply until a revised Statement is published.

Jeff James

Chief Executive and Keeper, and Principal Accounting Officer

12 July 2023

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Section two: Responsibilities within the core department

8. As Principal Accounting Officer, I am personally responsible for safeguarding the public funds for which I have charge, for ensuring propriety, regularity, value for money, and feasibility in the handling of those public funds; and for the day-to-day operations and management of The National Archives.

9. In addition, I ensure that The National Archives as a whole is run on the basis of the standards, in terms of governance, decision-making and financial management that are set out in Box 3.1 of Managing Public Money.

10. The operating structure is designed with a focus on The National Archives' strategic vision, *Archives for Everyone*, which challenges the organisation to become the 21st Century national archive – inclusive, entrepreneurial and disruptive.

11. The National Archives' Executive Team (comprising the Chief Executive and Executive Directors) is the decision-making body of the organisation and responsible for the day-to-day operational management of the organisation. During the year, the Executive Team were supported by two sub-committees, the Operational Management Team and the Estates Strategy Committee. The Operational Management Team was created in 2021 to oversee operational performance and resource efficiency, improve operational systems and processes, drive strong financial discipline across the organisation and oversee compliance in areas of corporate responsibility. In the reporting year, its main focus was to manage people resource requests. Following the departure of the Corporate Services Director and subsequent restructuring of functions, the Operational Management Team was disbanded. The Estates Strategy Committee was established in 2022 to provide assurance that the organisation is managing its sites and assets appropriately and effectively, identifying interfaces across projects, managing competing demands and priorities for space and ensuring that all estates development activity aligns to and furthers our strategic plans, brand and cultural change initiatives. Its main focus in the reporting year was future document storage requirements, opportunities for commercial development, public space transformation and office space planning.

12. Management information is reported monthly to the Executive Team. The role of the Executive Team includes managing improvements in business and financial performance, driving innovation, transparency and efficiencies that support delivery of strategic objectives and delivering value for money.

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13. The National Archives' Board is the key strategic advisory body of the organisation and comprises the Chief Executive, Executive Directors, the Chair of the Board and Non-executive Board members. Supporting the Board are two sub-committees, the Audit and Risk Committee and the Nominations and Governance Committee. The Audit and Risk Committee is the main assurance committee for the organisation and supports the Chief Executive and Board members in their responsibilities for issues of risk, internal control and governance. The Nominations and Governance Committee is a key forum for discussion of leadership development, succession planning and senior civil service pay and reward.

14. The Board's role is advisory and through scrutiny and challenge ensures that the leadership of The National Archives sets the strategic direction, maintains the highest standards of corporate governance, delivers statutory, corporate and business responsibilities, makes key investment, procurement and project decisions, effectively manages risk, monitors financial information, drives improvement in performance and takes responsibility for its decisions and their implementation.

15. Challenge on the performance of the Board is provided by the Non-executive Board members and other Board members.

16. The National Archives' internal auditors provide a third-party evaluation of the risk management, control and governance arrangements in place. The risk-based approach is agreed with the Executive Team and approved by the Audit and Risk Committee.

17. For further information on the responsibilities of the Board and Committees, please refer to the Governance statement in The National Archives' annual report and accounts, which can be found on the 'Our Performance' section of the website.

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Section three: Local funding arrangements

'New Burdens' funding 2015-25

18. Since 1 January 2015, specified public sector organisations (magistrates' courts, prisons, coroners' courts, NHS bodies and some arms-length bodies) must now transfer records selected for permanent preservation to a place of deposit, in line with the 20-year rule. 'New Burdens' funding has been made available from central government to cover the increased activity for local authority places of deposit during the ten-year transition period (£660,000), with a smaller sum available to assist coroners (£50,000). Distributed via The National Archives, this funding is paid annually for each year of transition.

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Section four: Third party delivery partnerships

19. The National Archives uses third party delivery partnerships to support its work as leader of the archives sector. One of those organisations, the Pilgrim Trust, acts on its behalf to hold monies for the Archives Revealed programme. Financial accountability is assured via review of progress reports from the fund recipients at agreed milestones. At the end of the project, receipt of a final output report is required.

20. Other organisations fund and deliver a range of training, support and sector development work across the archives sector, for example, the Archives and Records Association and the Digital Preservation Coalition. Formal agreements are mandatory for each arrangement and approval is required at Executive Director level. Progress is monitored as appropriate, depending on the length/intricacy of the agreement.

21. The National Archives participate in the Government Indemnity Scheme, which covers damage or loss to objects loaned for public benefit to us from private lenders or from non-national museums and galleries in the UK or abroad.

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Section five: Grants to private and voluntary sector bodies

22. The National Archives works with and has in place a grants system with other sister organisations to support a range of mutual strategic goals that benefit the archives sector, research and academia. Grants are subject to funding agreements, memorandum of understanding between both organisations, and a clear action plan with regular monitoring and reviews against progress.

23. The National Archives provides grants to a small number of private and voluntary sector bodies as part of its role as the government's lead for the archive sector. An internal panel approves each grant, except in the case of larger grants, in which instance an external panel is convened. Grant agreements are countersigned by both grantor and grantee at an appropriate organisational level. Delivery against agreed targets set out in the grant agreement and project plan is monitored by The National Archives' Grants and Funding Office and by a regionally based sector development team, with all recipients required to report on how they have delivered against agreed targets. A final evaluation is required upon grant completion.

24. Following the creation of a Grants and Funding Office in 2021-22, in 2022-23, The National Archives refreshed its approach to grants governance, including the approval of a new grants policy. In the reporting year, the senior officer accountable for grants was the Director of Research and Collections and the senior officer responsible for grants was the Head of Grants and Funding.

Major contract and outsourced services

25. The National Archives ensures value for money from its contracts through competition for any new requirement with a value of £10,000 or more, using Crown Commercial Service frameworks wherever possible. Contract reviews are conducted with our key suppliers, as appropriate. The National Archives procurement and contract management processes are subject to review as part of the internal audit programme.

26. The National Archives has no major contracts in place for the financial year 2022-2023, a major contract being defined as one with a total value over £20 million in the Model Services Contract Terms.