

Archives for Everyone 2023-27 The National Archives' strategic priorities		THE	
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nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-for-everyone		ARCHIVES	

This is our vision:

The National Archives is an essential resource for our democracy, a public good and an asset for future generations. Our conviction is that archives are for everyone, and that archives change lives for the better.

In April 2019 we committed The National Archives to a transformative path, to becoming the 21st Century national archive – inclusive, entrepreneurial, and disruptive.

In the four years since, much has changed in the world, and we have changed too. We have found new ways of working, new ways of reaching people, and we have become still more important to the life of the nation as a source of memory, evidence, and public value.

Throughout this time of change our historic mission has endured: to collect and preserve the record, to use our expertise and knowledge to connect people with their history through our unrivalled collections, and to lead, partner and support archives at home and worldwide. Our commitment to this mission is undimmed and we continue to embrace the obligation this creates: to connect with the biggest and most diverse audience possible, in the most innovative ways we can.

Since 2019 The National Archives has withstood the sternest of tests. Staying true to the principles we set out in *Archives for Everyone* enabled us to adapt and meet the challenges of the pandemic, holding to our mission without sacrificing our ambition for the institution or compromising our belief that archives are *for* everyone because they are *about* everyone - past, present and future.

In 2023 we reaffirm our commitment to this vision: to the transformation of The National Archives to meet the present-day challenges of our historic mission, to a creative approach to these challenges, pioneering a new kind of cultural and heritage institution, and to making good on our unique promise and potential.

These are our principles:

We will be the Inclusive Archive

Building trust and tearing down barriers to access, participation and understanding. Harnessing talent from diverse backgrounds.

Bold, active and outward-looking - encountered by people and communities in unexpected places and at vital moments.

The Inclusive Archive is about who we are, who we serve, how we work and, as custodians of a collection of international significance, our global role.

We will be the Entrepreneurial Archive

Creating and realising value at home and across the globe. Operating flexibly and fearlessly, adept at finding and exploiting commercial, research and philanthropic funding opportunities - opening out and promoting our collection.

The Entrepreneurial Archive is ever-alert to new possibilities, partnerships and collaborations and adventurous in pursuing them.

We will be the Disruptive Archive

Constantly adapting, rethinking and reshaping our practice to meet our contemporary and future challenges. Developing new skills and exploiting emerging technology, reaffirming and transforming our historic mission for the digital age, from creation to presentation.

The Disruptive Archive solves problems. It moves quickly and it moves things forwards.

This is where we're going:

In 2038 we will celebrate the bicentenary of the founding of the Public Record Office. As an institution we have a long history, and that history is one of regular change and renewal, but our response to the challenges and opportunities ahead of us will transform The National Archives more profoundly than at any point in the last two centuries. By 2038, if the transformation we have embarked on is complete, we will be:

- A living digital national archive preserving the contemporary record of government and radically widening access to the historic archive
- A national archive not just of government but of the state – preserving and making accessible the record of the executive, legislature and judiciary
- A genuinely inclusive, collaborative and available national archive - an active, catalysing presence wherever we're encountered
- A demonstrably sustainable national archive, leading the archives sector both through our expertise and by example

The National Archives is, by virtue of our mission, a living, growing repository of evidence, stories and memory. We care for and make available to the public records that aid legal certainty, shed light on personal and shared histories and inform our collective national identity. Our fulfilment of that mission maintains and adds value for present and future generations – value from our collection, from the connections to it we foster and from our role as custodian both of the collection and of the institution that supports it.

Our priorities then for the next four years must focus on sustaining and maximising our value and impact as a national archive, and the value and impact of archives more widely.

This is what we need to do next - our goals for 2023-27:

Building the value of our Collection

We will grow the collection, its accessibility and utility.

Over the next four years we will begin a new era in the history of our collection. We will be accessioning near-contemporary digital records at scale, bringing the Parliamentary Archives together with the archive of Government and completing the single biggest transfer in our history – the historical records of around 10 million service personnel.

Key outcomes:

- Exponential year-on-year growth of the digital archive, underpinned by a new holistic service and support offer to government and the courts
- Completed transfer of the 15 linear km Parliamentary Archives collection with successful integration of the staff and services supporting it
- Completed transfer of around 10 million service personnel records, with an effective access service offer in place
- A new collection policy informed by inclusive archival practice.

Creating value through Connection

We will open up bigger and better opportunities to connect with the collection for everyone, everywhere.

Over the next four years we will develop further our ability to connect people with our collection in person, online and crucially, through education at all levels, research and scholarship. In each of these settings we will grow the number of people who encounter and benefit from the experience of archives.

Key outcomes:

- Increased in-person connections, promoting equity of access to our collections at Kew and across the country, with:
 - an overall increase in visitors by more than 50%
 - doubling of participants in our learning programmes
 - a new regional learning programme, initially reaching up to 10,000 students per year
 - a new touring exhibition programme

- Stronger online connections, making it easier for more people to encounter our content and offering them a more accessible and satisfying experience when they do, putting us on track for a 'tenfold in ten years' increase in visitor numbers to our digital services
- Growing connections in schools, with a 10% year-on-year increase on the 3.3 million connections we already make through our taught onsite and online sessions and through our online resources for teachers
- Greater global connections through widened access to collections of significant international interest, including those representing shared archival heritage
- Enhanced research connections, supporting more high-impact research especially where our collection has relevance.

Sustaining value through Custodianship

Ever mindful of our historic role, we will invest in the skills, capability and infrastructure needed to support our mission over the long-term

Over the next four years we will continue to invest time, thought and resource into the long-term sustainability of our work and that of the sector we lead. This will include, in the first year, a completed business case for a new regional location to complement our Kew headquarters.

Key outcomes:

- A completed business case for and significant progress towards a second, regional location
- Sustainable infrastructure in place to support the growth of our collection as we become the archive of the state
- Upgraded legacy infrastructure to protect and sustain the collection
- Reduced preservation risk for digital public records wherever they are held
- A refreshed version of *Archives Unlocked* – the Government's vision for archives.