

Question 3: Do the recommendations (listed below) provide an appropriate direction for addressing the identified challenges?

a. In the longer term, there is significant value in moving towards fewer, bigger, better archive services for a more sustainable future.

- 3984567 Improving storage facilities is certainly important. I think that local archive services need staff with good local knowledge so that they can promote and collect from the communities they serve. I think this depends partly on the type of archive.
- 3990458 There seems to be little benefit in each local authority holding its own records given that archives are an easy target when funding cuts are required.
- 3990671 No. I have concerns here - I think the document ignores the reality that many small authorities take great pride in their archive services, that some really good standards are set by some small offices, that collaboration delivers some great regional projects, and that in the digital age there is a practical way to bring collections together virtually rather than physically. Local authority offices are just that - local, and that can be a virtue. I appreciate the economies of scale argument but I am not absolutely convinced by it.
- 3990928 Good in terms of collaborating ideas but if the archive services get too big then they may become unmanageable, also space is an issue here
- 4002677 If reducing the number of physical archives real accessibility needs to be considered, by public transport - e.g. central London locations and availability of indexes and the majority of records by the internet.
- 4002997 Not sure if big is best, unless funding would be better. Accessibility for the public is paramount
- 4003407 There are issues here in the movement, preservation and continued storage of valuable records. It is important to ensure that valuable expertise is not lost.
- 4005440 No. Where possible local archives should remain locally based.
- 4005529 Don't know. There might be economies of scale but will fewer archives offer access to material as much as they could?
- 4006637 less duplication; affordability of better facilities; but this needs careful risk management
- 4010347 No. Whilst there is a certain attraction in moving towards fewer, bigger, better archive services this can only be at some cost in terms of reduced localisation of services and the consequent reduction in both specialist local knowledge and public accessibility; not all services can be web-enabled.
- 4021165 Would be easier in some ways for access, but we also recognise that this may mean material moving out of the immediate area which local people may object to. Yes as a museum with an archive collection (with no archivist) ideally we are starting to think about and look into transferring our archive to a place where they can be better used and accessed. The main problem with this will be opposition from local people.
The staff at the museum have museum qualifications therefore are able to care for the archive but indexing is a huge problem as there is no one really appointed to do this with an appropriate qualification in archive studies.
- 4030582 No. Too much centred in one place is not helpful. The National Archives is not the most accessible part of England & Wales - unless you live in the south-east. Specialist and local archives are often more user-friendly, too.
- 4032864 No. As a service user and former Chair of a regional museum service, I am again confronted with a question which cannot simply be answered 'yes' or 'no'. I can see the advantages of creating larger preservation and conservation units, perhaps built on established and already successful units, where one archive service takes the lead in providing a service to other archives. I see little point in creating new regional services, unless the hidden agenda is that these will, at worst, be managed privately, or, slightly better, as 'social enterprises'. When it comes to the archives we visit as users, there is a strong

- case to be made that we need more - not fewer! In too many areas, especially counties, users are many miles away from their local archive and, in the absence of a car (many of us don't own cars), find it difficult to reach the archives. Logic says that local studies and archives should be brought together to create better networks of local archive services and when digitising records and collections, a
- 4034137 Some consideration should be given to those who still wish to visit archives in person. Long travel distances could add to the global warming problems.
- 4034144 Maybe, but for the family historian, & general public, fewer & bigger Archives could have the effect of being intimidating, & too far to travel. There is nothing quite like going & looking for one's self at the documents. as well as being able to access on line.
- 4034530 No. Help should be given for smaller archive services to meet the challenge of the digital age. If archive services become too centralised there are access issues, especially those individuals in remote areas.
- 4035026 See caveat above! The value is all-round: collections would gain from better resources; users would gain from concentration of sources in fewer places and (hopefully) from increased investment in online cataloguing and access.
- 4035670 No. It is much better and more appropriate to have local Archive Offices run by local councils. Too much has been centralised in the past, we need to get back to basics.
- 4036569 Yes, if the move takes place in conjunction with access to a greater range of primary material online, to negate the impact of greater distance to reach Archives, AND while sustaining/improving the content knowledge of archivists
- 4037595 My only/main concern is access for those who do not have a computer, or are not comfortable with, on-line data. Also many people like to see original documents to verify that there are no transcription errors, so more journeys could be involved if documents were stored centrally.
- 4038885 Obviously this only works if there is easy access to transcribed copies of what is stored in vast centrally located archives. Not everyone can physically go long distances to look information up. Here I speak as the Chair of Royston & District FHS. A lot of our membership, myself included, are retired and have neither the spare money or the necessary vigour to attack vast archives in person.
- 4039455 I feel there is still a need for local archives though as the local historian is a very valuable person as he generally knows his 'stuff'
- 4040728 not necessarily
- 4042982 so long as they do not become few and centralised
- 4043645 In principle I think this is correct, but care must be taken in creating these bigger, better archive services so that local/community engagement is not lost. Online services are widely accessible, to be sure, but the online community is vast and I am not sure yet how that is reconciled with maintaining/building local identities.
- 4044308 No opinion. A big and fewer places of archive smacks of a centrally controlled state. This country is developing into such a state and for everyone's sake it is better to keep county and locally controlled archive sites
- 4044376 As long as they are accessible to people without having to travel for miles
- 4044594 No. Its Ok it put info onto electronic form to view but sometimes you need to see more than one piece of info and for that it is cheaper to go and see the records so places like the Family Records Office need to be re-opened so people can spend a day looking if needed.
- 4044879 Why fewer and bigger?
- 4045084 There are significant challenges in promoting mergers or cooperative efforts between organisations which place different priorities and funding on their respective archive services. Each partner needs to be confident that the services achieved by cooperative efforts or partnership will reflect the respective levels of input but with additional service levels. Local access, say in a city whose service might be subsumed within that of a more ambitious county, must not

- be lost. Incentives provided by seed-corn funding for collaboration and joint service will be vital.
- 4045234 I'm not sure the problems lie within the archive services but at the council or regional level where other considerations come into play (finance, planning,) If these people (ie councillors) don't recognise archives as important the profession has a hard mountain to climb.
- 4046081 A little concerned about concentrating archives in bigger centres which may make it difficult to reach.
- 4047385 Pooling of funds and resources is vital to avoid duplication of effort and to achieve an acceptable standard of service is vital. Problem is to sell the idea to people who are possessive of their own collections.
- 4047518 Provided people can get access to these records - electronically & in person if required. Geographical locations are also important - easy access for all.
- 4047719 Again, a vague question. What do you mean by 'bigger, better?' Is the opposite smaller, worse? Or not so good? All I can tell you is that you need to be inclusive of your records, not discriminatory in the records you keep or put on line.
- 4047969 Yes, if this provides better staffing levels and better facilities. However, increased centralisation of archives means that using them becomes more expensive in terms of travel and accommodation. This makes it even more important that very detailed and complete catalogues are available online.
- 4048158 As long as this does not compromise the access to archives available now. To centralize services in one area could prevent the access some people have now, unless those archives were made accessible online.
- 4049555 Sounds like a money saving exercise reducing staff and expertise. Also there is the fear that some buildings of historical interest themselves which house the archives will be closed and either sold off or left to rot.
- 4049800 This is correct: at the moment related material is often widely scattered.
- 4050816 Provided they are still regionally based, and availability on line becomes more the norm than the exception.
- 4055787 Bigger is not better, diverse storage is safer and gives better access to the majority of researchers.
- 4055895 Do not put all the eggs in one basket. Look at what happened in Germany.
- 4057074 Many archives are specialised and it would not be appropriate to merge these with general archives
- 4057585 The value of most archives is their local nature - remove this element and much of the context of archives is lost. We need strong local archives partly funded by central government to help safeguard what is our local and national heritage.
- 4057921 Provides for more efficient use of the available funding.
- 4058022 For people like myself, who want to look at documents that are in London, I have no choice. Travelling that far is out of the question
- 4058200 The availability of local Archive offices is a valuable route of research to academic, private and family historians.
- 4059216 Local territorial and political differences will make this a real challenge, but I think it provides the only sustainable and equitable way forward.
- 4061728 The bigger the better as long as there is a good index to the archive and it was easily searchable. A free archive would suit me best, but I currently pay for what I consider to be a good archive (S+N Genealogist) and would continue to be willing to pay if there is value for money. I like the idea that information was put into the archives without cost (?) and should be also available without cost - but realise this could be a step too far.
- 4062339 Up to a point. It is important too that access to record offices are maintained locally. Thus there is logic in merging the operations of some contiguous archive repositories - such as Manchester and Greater Manchester archives. There would also be some merit in looking at looking at places like Hampshire - assessing if the separate record offices of Southampton and Portsmouth should be maintained as well as the County Record Office in Winchester. There is a

- balance to be struck, and to centralize might be to remove political support at the local level which has been fostered by municipal pride and involvement.
- 4064889 But only if the merged archives are close to each other. It is impractical to have to travel all over the country to view what was at our back door. Depending on how much of the combined collection is digitised and so available on the internet. The net cost to the user must also taken into account.
- 4067218 As long as the records of the past are readily accessible, useful (in their data compilation) and complete. Data stored should be protected against corruption and mis-use.
- 4067404 I really don't think that merging services will help in any way and would possibly be detrimental by destroying the ability to be specialised.
- 4067633 A qualified yes; circumstances will differ. It is difficult to really give a straight 'yes' or 'no' to these recommendations. It was stated by the National Archives that this document would provide a range of options - now it sounds more as if the National Archives are pushing this as THE way forward by asking for a 'yes' or 'no' answer. The point has also already been made that fewer and larger archives does not tie in with another aspiration of this document, to bolster the value of local community. Some communities could be left high and dry if their archives now lives not even in the same county. It should also be noted that there will be opposition to merged services at local government level, as there are many agendas and vested interests ([Personal] and organisational) and budgetary constraints (new combined facilities will cost millions) that do not make this as sure a solution as seems to be presented here. Are economies of scale through shared services always real? e.g. a Conservator shared bet
- 4067889 Yes, bigger and better BUT copies available in several sites all over England
- 4067913 Whilst I in general subscribe to the principle of the cost-effectiveness of centralisation of facilities one of the policy's aims is to enable local communities to use archives to understand and participate in local decision-making etc. Even now County Record Offices are not always easily accessible to the communities to which they relate due to their geographical location and lack of public transport links etc. There is also the cost of travel to archives to be taken into account. Accessing archival material is tiring and is best tackled in small chunks of a maximum of half a day at a time. Visits to any but the most local of archives tend to have to be planned for carefully by most people both in travel time and cost. A visit to the National Archives for instance for anyone who lives further away than the Midlands is not really considered unless on a break to London because of the travel time involved and because the National Archives is not open on Sunday half of a weekend's stay in London is wast
- 4068226 I believe it would be of value to lessen the amount of storage areas in an effort to keep the information as accurate as possible, the more widely spread the more chance of errors, etc.
- 4068605 Fewer, bigger archive services does not always mean 'better', and I am concerned at the assumption that bigger is better that is shown throughout the consultation document. Larger services risk losing local accountability and the sense of local ownership which I feel is a vital part of local archive services. I am also very concerned that bigger services will mean fewer trained archivists and conservators (fewer people doing more work is often seen as being efficeint and therefore effective which is not always the case). I fear a loss of depth, in knowledge, experience and oportunity, for the archive profession with bigger regional archive services. I think that the consultation has pre-judged bigger as better when it merely means cheaper
- 4068977 I nhave used several county archives, military and national in London and Edinburgh. I would NOT wish to see amalgamation into larger units. I am an amateur family historian and do not require a number of massive, and off-putting, large units. Raqther, make more and more available on the internet, even for a charge (cheaper than a night's B&B.

- 4069269 This makes sense irrespective of the current economic climate but may be difficult to achieve.
- 4069275 In a rural area such as Wales concentrating or centralising services will remove access to services from the local user. Transport difficulties cannot be disregarded.
- 4069391 Providing the buildings housing the larger archives, can be reached fairly easily, without travelling to the other end of the country, unless of course all is available online and downloadable at reasonable rates.
- 4072162 Bigger better archives may be better for preserving material but they are not good for public access . There are pros and cons here which need more debate.
- 4072226 It depends what is meant by 'value'. If the object is economy of scale, the likely answer is 'yes' but in terms of the greatest convenience for the greatest number i.e. those who, in spite of digitisation and electronic transmission of documents, will still need to consult the originals, then probably not.
- 4072545 The location of the individual components of the national network of archives will, of course, be of lesser importance if all archival material were to be digitised and put on line. If the taxpayer's money were directed more towards this end than certain others which few people support, such as prosecuting illegal wars and allowing politicians to get rich at taxpayers' expense, then most researchers would heartily approve. This is meant to be the age of communication, after all, and access to archives is an important part of it.
- 4072958 Bigger and better but not fewer. Until all documents are available to view online fewer archives will restrict access to those that live in major cities and who work part time who are retired.
- 4077679 At present, archives are stored in so many places it is difficult to consult them. Many are also just indices, and one cannot access the actual records themselves, which leads to much frustration.If, as I do one does not live in the U.K., and only visits periodically, then one is completely dependent on the Internet. The present method of paying for some accesses is totally unsatisfactory. In some instances,one pays, and the period of possible access is only for a short period. The payment should, in my opinion, cover a number of accesses, not a time period.
- 4077687 Bigger is not necessarily better. Closure of local archives can make it harder to access records. If this is felt to be necessary then all documents should be digitised during the moving process so that on line access can be provided in local libraries etc. Local knowledge of archivists is often vital and this may be lost if documents are moved to a more distant location.
- 4078040 I agree that the centralisation of resources makes sense providing that accessibility is preserved. There is however a danger in this. Many localised archives are run by volunteers. A fresh focus is required in order to preserve their input, because their input is not sensitive to funding crises.
- 4078177 As long as there is access to the archived material. Fewer 'better' archive services should not have global powers to restrict access to documents unless they are truly vital to the Nation's security.
- 4078655 except i have a fear of bigger meaning beureaucratic, costly and inflexible, whilst at the same time being underfunded and too small for purpose;- I am thinking of what happened with Kew in the 1960's, and the new British Library. When the PRO was created, documents were still inaccessible, and because kew was too small, documents were weeded, or dispersed, - sometimes abroad.
- 4078859 The concerns about geographical location expressed in response to the previous question also apply to this question. I do recognise the value of perhaps a centralised document cataloguing, preparation and digitisation facility or service.
- 4078957 But don't let it all get too big and unweildy. I think there needs to be more than one or two places or it will become like any big organisation - dominated by one.
- 4079208 This will depend on the access - if documents are available on-line then location does not matter to a great deal, however in many instances even

- digitalised docs unless everything is recorded are not sufficient, as a researcher often finds the odd comments notes etc added to a document that are the links/information that is being sought. The Austrian War records are a good example of where every piece of information, for example both sides of even a postcard have been recorded and made available on-line worldwide. This has been a very useful source for research into WW1.
- 4079221 Local archives can provide a better, more [Personal], easier access to records for the people who do not have access to the internet and cannot easily travel to centralised repositories. Digitisation and on-line access means that centralisation of storage of original documents is not necessary.
- 4079670 As long as they do not become too large and lose their local emphasis.
- 4080172 If records are digitised, the originals can remain in smaller collections, while the benefits of scale come from cataloguing and organising the digital information collected. The National Archives website has shown this to an extent, acting as an online gateway to the nation's archives.
- 4080294 Yes .. and no, as it depends on how few. Many of the archives offices have very little car parking which means access to them is mainly via public transport, which is not cheap. I would travel to the county archives offices in Nottingham or Lincoln with no problems, but if, say, all of the Midland counties were consolidated into one office in Birmingham, I would think again before visiting. If a significant number of records were made available online, that would be a better situation, but as the consultation document says, it will never be possible to digitise all the archives' holdings.
- 4081310 Local Archives for each county should exist and be open and accessible after work and at weekends not just 9-5 mon - fri
- 4084317 In the long term yes, so long as the availability of IT services is available for all.
- 4084466 refer to previous page - there are inherent problems in thinking big is better. I have grave doubts about this as a general policy.
- 4084777 In part. I was rather surprised that (a) there was no element of commercial thinking within the document. I would not object to paying to access material. (b) that you had not considered the model the private sector had adopted in growing their databases ie harness the resource of the individual. I realise that some documents need to be handled with care but would have thought you could train 'associates' to assist you.
- 4085031 Presumably this would often mean travelling further to see things in person.
- 4085202 Archives should still be at least on a county level to make visiting reasonable for people. There should also be no loss of original material either.
- 4085255 This is too vague. It depends entirely on what is meant by 'fewer, bigger, better' archive services.
- 4087521 Today it is possible to integrate geographically distant repositories through the click of a button without the need of having to physically travel from one town to another, from one state to another.
- 4087569 A skilled workforce is always a great asset to any archive! Along with that of course is a strong leadership and the best team spirit.
- 4088377 I believe that local services are more likely to be used and more likely to meet individual needs.
- 4089291 Yes but in the context of increased digitisation of the most used materials.
- 4089929 If rationalisation reduces costs and increases efficiency then it is to be encouraged but these benefits need to be demonstrated rather than assumed.
- 4090903 It is reasonable to assume that the more popular archives i.e. family history sources will be more widely available soon in a digital format or as a result of an indexing project. The capacity of public areas in record offices should be shaped with these developments in mind. The establishment of record offices should be linked to the traditional counties rather than chasing a modern pattern 'of newly formed local authorities. Their location should be in easy reach of a public transport link not like Northampton or Northumberland with reasonable parking facilities close by. A single title for a national network such as 'Archives' or Record Office' would be useful rather than e.g. 'Kentish Studies'.

- Some rationalisation of 'copyright' restrictions would be helpful. I know of one office that has nine different types of forms for those requesting copies.
- 4093015 No just greater interaction between the bodies
- 4103536 Although I agree in principle with 'fewer, bigger, better' services I can envisage difficulties in the university sector
- 4104397 I think, particularly in terms of dealing with digital records which require significant levels of resourcing to properly manage and preserve, the only practical way forward is for archive repositories, both public and privately-funded, and other heritage/cultural organisations to collaborate, to pool resources and expertise, and to develop regional centres which manage, preserve and provide access to archive records.
- 4105243 This will depend on how integrated these 'bigger, better' services are envisaged to be. If it is a sharing of knowledge, specialist resources, etc then I feel this is particularly valuable. I would have reservations if any integration resulted in the loss of specialist knowledge about the collections and the individual character of some of the smaller services. In many instances these are particular strengths.
- 4107378 Economies of scale and a critical mass of collections must make this a good idea – in the Plymouth context for example, one facility could absorb and manage all the collections currently distributed around the city. The public profile of such a body would be much higher than stand-alone entities. Economically, anything else is probably unsustainable. The idea of fewer, larger, but better services is also something that funders, e.g. HLF would expect to see with similar developments and partnership working being the norm. The only concern is that such amalgamations/joint arrangements respect geographical and practical imperatives, e.g. in the south west to amalgamate any two of the LA archive services would remove local accountability and access to a substantial constituency – e.g. Plymouth records moving to Exeter, 45 miles away.
- 4115553 Yes and celebrate the services that are well led and responsive not just denigrate whole sector.
- 4123442 Local communities will lose identity if services are located outside & less likely to be to participate in local projects. Difficult for officers to keep current with local issues if spread over wider areas. Keeping the pulse on local issues & timely response to groups, schools, individual requests is part of delivery, technology choices is only another aspect of choice.
- 4125980 The public still like to be able to consult records from the local region without having to travel too far. They feel a connection with their local office and feel a [Personal] ownership of certain records because they relate to the local area and people. Ease of physical access to see original documents in a safe controlled environment is very important. People will still want access to the originals within reason to get a 'feel' and connection with the past - something you lose when looking at a digital image on a screen. However, it is recognised that the buildings and facilities of many archives are not adequate for the future and this will need to be addressed.
- 4126709 helpful staff at the assistant level should be skilled but not aloof, ready to provide a service more akin to a good library.
- 4128611 There is some value, not significant value. Fewer locations will inevitably cause problems for those who need to access actual documents either because electronic versions are not available or because they need to physically see the item; also, the 'local knowledge' which can help make less-obvious connections and direct an enquirer to a source will be greatly diminished. However, some archives are currently in unsuitable environments which must be upgraded and there may be benefits e.g. consistency of approach & economies of scale in fewer archive locations.
- 4129682 Big could mean difficult to access and over crowded
- 4132314 I agree with 'better' but 'fewer' and 'bigger' does not really tie in with the government's interest in communities. Many of the users of local authority

archives are older and would find it difficult to travel further to a regional archive, say, rather than having on in each country. Also would you lose something in the community by removing local records from the locality? I'd also be worried about an increasing distance between the archivist and the public- archivists are taught to reflect the original uses of the collection when cataloguing it and develop specialist skills and knowledge about collections. If archive services are bigger, will there still be the same opportunities to interact with the public?

- 4132461 Expecting people to read a 22 page document before they can usefully take part is a bit much! I have scanned through the Exec Summ but for a public consultation I am surprised there was no bite size version available. Also I was reluctant to start the questionnaire as I wasn't sure what questions I would be asked and I didn't want to waste my chance to voice my opinion. That said the strategy seems reasonable but laying out the challenges/obstacles and proposed strategy more clearly would make this consultation more worthwhile, would be more inclusive, and would generate a bigger response. I think a lot of people would be put off by this - unless that's the objective!!
- 4134640 Yes : I hope bigger archive resources does not mean less staff or more complicated access. I believe joint up storage and access benefits will benefit the collections but only if other resources are not reduced.
- 4148922 Yes : I do think this is the way forward but can anticipate a lot of resistance, more from councillors than record office staff. Local isolationism is a real problem, especially in large urban centres (as I know from [Personal] experience)
- 4155484 No : Small, local archives have deep roots in local communities, and are appreciated by many groups of users, from school parties to pensioners. The integration into larger centres means an inevitable loss of local knowledge, contact and ownership, and could seriously affect the quantity and quality of deposits.
- 4158579 Don't know : Yes, if users needs can be provided for. It will never be possible to provide online access to all archival records and therefore access to reading rooms will remain important. Moving services further from their communities may have a detrimental impact on individuals' sense of 'identity and place' that the Government is so keen to foster. Joining universities with archive services in the same geographical area seems like a good solution.
- 4162015 Yes : Especially for fragile historical/archaeological artefacts. These facilities should be sited at centres around the country and have online content lists with description.
- 4162437 Yes : consolidation of resources makes the utmost sense and the public find it expensive and confusing to have to refer to a number of smaller repositories when doing something like family history research
- 4162867 No : Fewer and bigger is not always necessarily better. Economies of scale do not always apply in the provision of services to the public. It is often the case that smaller archive services, under resourced as they might be, provide a far better service to customers (locally, nationally and internationally) than those on a more regional or national scale, because the delivery of the service is a more [Personal] thing. Large, corporate archive services become faceless and unappealing to customers and potential customers. A large part of the archives sector's problems lie in attracting new users who do not appreciate the value of archive services, and it is unlikely that fewer and bigger archive services will change this.
- 4170757 No : It will be cheaper
- 4173754 No : It is difficult to understand from the document whether 'fewer, bigger, better' relates to geographical size or population counts. Some services may be dealing with a large, diverse population in a fairly small geographical area. Or, does this refer to the size of the record office and its staff? What number of staff constitutes a 'small' or 'large' service?
The quality of small areas is not necessarily worse – many metropolitan

districts did very well in TNA's self assessment.

Smaller services are more likely to fully integrate local studies and archives, thus offering a seamless service to users and opportunities for library and archive professionals to learn from each other.

Community engagement is more effective as local identity is often based on a very small area. Reaction to local initiatives is easier (many county services use libraries to provide local services). Small services can develop a sense of ownership among users which leads to more deposits of material. Smaller geographical a

- 4175422 Don't know : I can see fewer bigger archives might be resourced better but would they be closer to the local users especially schoolchildren? I am not sure. It is easy for me as an adult to visit a county town or another part of the country but for a child it probably requires adult assistance which might not be available.
- 4186970 Only if 'fewer' and 'bigger' really mean a large improvement. Despite more people accessing online it should not be forgotten that many still research at the local archive in person. We should not allow this recommendation to remove all local archives from their (usually) local researchers.
- 4246663 No : What is vitally important is that family history archives are readily accessible for everyone.
- 4263161 Yes: Central regional archives with local hubs. Central cataloguing would give a unified standard of cataloguing and allow focus on the procedures involved allowing archivists who prefer to be public facing to concentrate on that role.
- 4285129 No: Wake up! You're still in the 1990s! The New Labour centralising agenda is over. Decentralisation, empowering local communities, is in.
- 4288835 No: Fewer and bigger is not the same as better. Your question is prejudiced and not neutral, as a consultation should be.
- 4314682 Yes: In general, yes. But there are many exceptions.
- 4330459 No: This doesn't seem appropriate for universities. Partnerships with, for example, local authorities would only work on certain levels of delivery. Universities need to retain their own brand to attract students and their own specialisms which are part of their unique attraction.
- 4331770 Don't Know: I can see points for and against this. My main reason against this view is that I feel that good local history material needs to be available locally, so that local people can see and handle it more easily. While it would be good to have more material more widely available digitally on the internet, there is no substitute for hands-on experience, particularly to inspire younger people with a feeling for history.
- 4332533 Don't know: I am concerned about the potential loss of local centres of local history, but at the same time tempted by the prospect of being able to visit fewer archives to capture more information.
- 4335832 Yes: But do not forget the smaller archive collections that have been set up to preserve records when there is no other place for them, eg such as is kept by small museum initiatives. The fire and rescue service for example has several of these around the country. Could there not be a funding initiative to help improve these?
- 4340822 Don't know: The pooling of resources would widen the potential for projects using the archives; however, fewer archives services would impact negatively on access.
- 4340895 Yes: I can see the advantages of combining resources for the ease of research but I don't want the locations to be based in and around London, which is not just inconvenient but becomes too expensive for those of us who live north of the Watford Gap. This could be a major opportunity to regenerate communities that have been affected by the economic crisis through attracting visitors happy to pay lower rates for hotels and parking than will be found in major city centres.
- 4344783 No: Archives relate to specific places and need to be kept in the same vicinity

- 4354655 Yes: BUT there has to be a sufficient addition of resources to ensure continued local access and use. My experience has been that amalgamation is always a cost cutting measure.
- 4363856 Yes: but only if they are easily accessible to everyone and not just professional researchers and not if the archives are only based in London. They must be accessible on-line too and not too expensive as a lot of family researchers are retired and on limited incomes.
- 4371701 No: This hare has been running for a little while, enough time for me to discuss it with local history groups. Without exception they have been horrified. Many of their members have difficulty reaching Oxfordshire Record Office; if I told them everything was going to a new super-Office in, say, Reading - doubling the distance for people in Banbury - there would be open revolt. Consolidating local services, as we are currently doing with Oxfordshire Record Office and Oxfordshire Studies, is a sensible economy of scale; trying to do so with services 30 miles apart is not.
- 4386023 Yes: There are clearly benefits to be had through re-evaluation and consolidation of services. The danger is that the mantra 'fewer, bigger, better' is misunderstood both within and outside the archive sector to mean the imposition of a top-down rigid structure which would rather run counter to the historical development of the archive sector in the UK and seem to be counter-intuitive when government speaks of greater and more local accountability. In reality almost all the capital investment currently underway in the sector is based on partnership working, but with options being developed appropriate to local needs. It is unfortunate that exemplar projects such as The Keep do not seem to have received a level of governmental support that would demonstrate a full commitment to this recommendation. My feeling, based on talking to a range of archive professionals, is that archivists within the public sector, are not unwilling to seek new working methods and co-location. The main concern about the 'fewer, bigger, better' mantra is that it could lead to a loss of local knowledge and expertise.
- 4392049 Yes: Although having the same number of archive services would be good from the point of view of being able to travel a shorter distance to see your local archives, overall the services would better serve people by having fewer, bigger, better archive services. The key decision will be which services to merge.
- 4396029 No: Local archives play an invaluable role for local communities, be they communities in terms of towns or regions, academic, professional or commercial. Larger archives with a concentration of material tend by their very nature to be distanced from these communities and have problems in terms of equality of access.
- 4396969 No: Bigger is most definitely not better. My own county record office provides a friendly, knowledgeable, personal service, brigading record offices would destroy this and deter users.
- 4399836 Don't know: I can see advantages, but have some doubts
- 4403973 Yes: Provided the local context is not ignored
- 4419472 Yes: ...but it already has one, largely
- 4442875 No opinion. "Up to a point, Lord Copper..." Despite years of toiling in the barren groves of metropolitan borough archives during the 80s and 90s, I have always maintained, and still maintain, that EVERY local authority should be compelled by law to provide and maintain adequately, an archives service for its council tax payers. What I have always believed is that central government, through TNA and its duties, should control local authority archives as a branch of the civil service - do other countries have this sort of model? (?France/Germany)
(see also comment 5)
This seems even more logical following the various local government reorganisations of recent years which have resulted in the creation of unitary authorities.

- This does not, however, preclude the existence of centres of excellence in looking after specialist collections or electronic records e.g.TNA and academic repositories.
- 4488931 Yes, particularly as the physical location of archive services becomes less relevant as digital/virtual access increases; shared services can help to overcome inequalities of over/under-funding and staffing.
- 4499598 No: I think sharing resources and skills is valuable. I do not think larger institutions further removed from their locality will promote better access.
- 4499949 Yes: Generally agree with this thrust. Don't underestimate the challenges especially re local resistance to mergers with neighbouring communities and the logistical problems for users like travelling further. However, must build in ability to counteract the loss of understanding of communities and their archives at the micro-level that could occur. Also, must counter physical loss of services with more remote services. Also, who's going to fund these newer services? As a consultant I see very clearly that the drop in HLF funds has cut dead major investment in archive services. However, bigger gives opportunity to run services in a more business orientated manner (cf British Library) which whilst I consider sensible could be a major culture shock to many in the sector. If you are going down that route TNA as a lead body really has to be undertaking change management within the sector to prepare it to move in such a direction.
- 4501133 No: "In principle, this would appear to be sensible suggestion that could result in better facilities, improved access and staff expertise. However we have some major concerns:
- that such a move would be used to justify cuts in funding and staff, so that the new services would be no better off than before, and face exactly the same sorts of challenges
 - that amalgamation of holdings may result in disposal of material
 - that the local orientation of current services would be lost, along with staff expertise. This could result in a failure to identify the importance of local material when building the collection.
 - that access for local people, particularly older users (who often have a particular interest in local history and visit frequently) may be impeded. For this generation, digital access will be no substitute.
- The alternative model – to maintain existing services but provide them with the resources they need to maintain and expand their services – does not feature in the consultation document. We r"
- 4607389 No: Coordination of individual resource provision is needed; not larger archive services
- 4611922 No: 'Fewer, bigger, better' is close to an oxymoron. Thus, bigger is not necessarily better; and fewer is almost certainly not better in this context. In this latter connection, fewer in the north-west of England would almost certainly mean that large, regional archives centres would be established in Manchester or Liverpool and Newcastle. Can anyone seriously suggest that such a framework would meet the archival needs of the people in Cumbria? I am President of a local history society centred on a village in the North of Cumbria, and, unfortunately, the time-frame in which this consultation process has been set up has made it impossible for me to consult our membership but I am in no doubt whatsoever that some kind of regional structure (i.e. fewer, bigger and better) would not meet our needs.
- 4627859 Don't know: I agree that there may be economies of scale but one must not lose the expert input of those who know a lot about a specialist area. We should value our specialists and use their knowledge.
- 4632100 Don't know: This is a complex question, but fewer and bigger does not = better
- 4676464 No: If people want to travel to the bigger archive it may mean longer journeys.
- 4693704 No: This is the recommendation with which we disagree most strongly. Many of us work in comparatively small repositories, and some of us manage the

archives of more than one College. However, we do not feel that there would be any value at all in amalgamating them; indeed the result would be a serious deterioration in our service.

First, there is the question of trust. An institution's archive contains its most important documents, many of them of great legal and commercial sensitivity. Colleges frequently find themselves in dispute or competition with other colleges, private businesses or the local authority. It is essential that the parent body can feel confident that in these cases its confidentiality is not compromised. Giving up control over its own archive by the creation of 'fewer, bigger' services will cripple the institution in carrying out its legitimate and necessary administration. This is true of all institutions, public or private; the parent body must retain control over its own archive.

Seco

- 4704292 Don't know: Fewer repostories may compromise access for many people and dilute sense of local identity and the expertise of those who interpret the documents which evidence that locality's history
- 4712549 No: We should not be moving towards fewer, bigger archive services. This does not necessarily mean better - they could be too big and bureaucratic, leading to inefficiency and the absence of a personalized service. Also the vital link between the locality and the local archive will be broken - a loss of distinctiveness, easy relations with local family and history societies, etc. We need to improve the funding and profile of the smaller services, not lose the valuable existing range of small, local archives.
- 4713339 Yes: We've recently looked at this in North Wales. Given the serious underfunding of archive services in this area, a bigger service, not necessarily with fewer service points, would be a sensible use of what funding there is. However, there was a lack of political will across the authorities to do this, as well as concerns from service users and depositors that the local nature of the service would be lost.
- 4733004 No: This is not practical for a number of reasons, and is likely to be an emotive issue. Archives are part of an institutions' identity, and particularly in the case of Universities, they will not want to give them up. Local archives held in Universities are often directly related to university research strengths and activities, and are therefore needed on site.
This move could lead to many researchers having to travel a lot further to access local records. Specialist knowledge built up about collections is likely to be lost, and acquisitions policies at larger institution will be less attuned to local needs, so many archives could be lost because the few remaining archive institutions won't accept them. In addition, many archive donors wish their collections to remain local, and if they were pushed to choose between a larger institution further away or a private collection, they might well choose the latter. This could be potentially devastating for publicly funded archives. With work continuing to impro
- 4741023 Yes - but the way it has been set out has merely set off alarm bells without setting out how a staged approach can build the necessary bridges to promote shared working. This step approach should have been in the document - as it is the fear of compulsion will simply alarm those who believe in the dictum 'never mind the quality, feel the locality' - and will want to hang on to current local patterns of service irrespective of whether there will ever be the investment to provide proper standards of custody and adequate service delivery capacity.
- 4753080 Don't know: Viewed from the point of view of a user I think it is essential that local archives should be gathered, as much as possible, into a single archive centre. However, this does disadvantage many users who do not live in close proximity to the centre. Every effort must be made to make a wide selection of sources available on line and on disc to searchers. East Sussex has already contributed significantly to such approaches. Their proposed new office is a partnership project. Had the HLF grant we applied for been made available it

- would have enabled even more groups to participate in the project. ESRO made 80% of their lists available on A2A and although that service is still accessible to searchers sadly it is not in the original excellent format and is not as useful as it was. A stark reminder of the need to ensure that any digitised source is able to cope with the demands that will be made upon it in the future.
- 4797359 Don't know: It is clear that to achieve greater reach, wider sharing more easily mined information about the collective local and national archive is desirable and the way in which this is achieved might best be determined by some preliminary feasibility study and consultation of which this exercise might be the first part.
- 4813115 No: The case that fewer and bigger archive services would be better is unproven. Bigger could lead to the loss of essential expertise should 'economies' become necessary. Such cuts may not happen in smaller archives where the specialist knowledge is part of the archive's *raison d'être* and a decision to entirely close such a small archive would normally provoke discussion where cuts to a small part of a larger whole might not.
- 4835951 No: We don't all live in London - what about the rest of us?
- 4836077 Yes: Overall I would agree but believe that there are dangers in this approach. For instance bigger does not always mean more efficient or effective - it is easy for large organisations to become simply bureaucratic. Important that this does not lead to the loss of one of the great strengths of many archive services - their close links with the local community which would undermine one of the best developments of the past few years the greater democratisation of archive services.
- 4869543 No opinion: None of your options fit my response I think there is value in moving towards a fewer bigger better in some areas like cataloguing, conservation, IT (on line access and databases) but I strongly believe the archive needs to be local to the community it serves. There is no sense of ownership or even goodwill towards a region as there is towards the national (TNA) or a county or city
- 4869616 Yes: There is value in moving towards fewer, bigger, better services in certain areas, but care must be taken not to allow this to become an over-riding principle at the expense of better practice. Potential amalgamations must be considered on a case-by-case basis and potential savings must be weighed up against public access issues. While on-line access will go some way to alleviating the access issue, the policy correctly identifies uncatalogued material and lack of on-line access as challenges. Moving to 'fewer, bigger, better' services may risk exacerbating those problems. 'Fewer, bigger, better' services must be adequately resourced, and there is also a need for much greater formal involvement and support from TNA in this area.
- 4869695 Yes: To make efficiencies, this is a practical solution.
- 4869842 Yes: This is probably the most expedient strategy, but there are likely to be risks in moving towards larger services as well as staying small. Although there are good models in place for partnerships between local authority and university services, such as at the Borthwick Centre at York University, forming these in the commercial or charitable sectors, in the current economic climate, may present difficulties. Equally, staying small leaves services vulnerable to cuts. These risks would need to be mitigated by innovative and imaginative solutions. Another important consideration is that of geography when consolidating services as some parts of the country might become disenfranchised from their 'local' heritage services. The consultative body is asked to consider these risks.
- 4870080 Yes: "• Broadly this should be an opportunity to make most effective use of resources, particularly around high-cost capital investment in suitable buildings, ICT networks and development and the management of digital records and information and access to online services. It is, however, most immediately likely to be beneficial in metropolitan areas or areas of dense

population where current services are located closely together, as for example in London or even the East Midlands. In regions like the South West this is more problematic as issues of distance become important to the effective connection of people, place and archives.

- Opportunities for effective service sharing also require resources and longer lead-in and planning times and resource. They also require a great degree of dispassionate assessment of benefit and willingness to work together, particularly in the areas of conservation and other high cost, high skill aspects of service support and delivery. Local pride may be a difficult issue to overcome.

4883218 Yes: But provision must be made to make the archives easily accessible. No good settling them on a beautiful out of town site if there aren't good transport links.

4883225 Yes: Possibly not so in Wales due to the geography. The whole nature of archive consultation is changing as the expectation that more research can be done over the internet is becoming the norm. As more and more people (especially those who, currently, are not traditional archives users) become adept at using online services I believe they will want to follow this up with more indepth reseach using resources not available online but which they will expect to be available locally. I would much prefer to see, in Wales at least, the concept of sharing premises and services between local museums, archives and libraries, being encouraged and supported, rather than larger archives units located in fewer centres in Wales. There are also other opportunities for university and specialist repositories to group together, in many cases also with local authority services. New 'resource' centres such as these would have great benefit for users, who will be able to gain access easily to a wider range of services locally but w

4883415 Yes: This will have to be handled with great care given current community loyalties to 'their' archives, but if this can be 'sold' as also giving more joined up thinking/catalogues re materials hitherto dumped in historic silos, then it might work. Priority should also be given to developing trained archivists rather than pushing for greater bureaucracy and 'management'.

4883523 Yes: Yes, however this needs to be qualified in some way, if only by way of examples to show the authors' meaning more clearly. We assume that the intention is not to create large regional public services, whereby researchers would need to travel very long distances for their 'local' records (although regional special repositories, digitisation or cataloguing services might be appropriate), but rather to bring together small archives, particularly cross sector, within geographic localities, to enable economies of scale. The new Hull History Centre might, perhaps, be a good example of this. More could be said about relationships with library services, especially given the number of joint archive/local studies services now in existence. This is given little prominence in the document, and yet offers huge benefits in terms of profile, usage, resources, integrated services etc., for which there are plenty of good examples.

4884885 No: A major feature of any archives service whether in local government or a univeristy, is the management of current and nearly current information in its institutional archive for the use of the administration of the institution. This would be very difficult if the repository were a long way away and had different priorities than your own institution's.

4885590 No: This is not a panacea and is only possible and appropriate in certain circumstances. Local authorities have difficulty seeing any of their services as serving anyone but their own council tax payers and are unlikely to look very favourably on relocating even parts of their services to outside their own areas. Local groups and individuals often have difficulty with sending their archives to somewhere which is only a few miles away. Ideally conservation expertise needs to be available where the archives are held and used and pooling conservation resources in an area would put more archives at risk, if

- you are going to do that you might as well just tell archives to buy in from private companies.
- 4885921 No: Accessibility is key. More, Bigger, Better archive services please.
- 4892508 No: I fail to see how moving towards bigger services necessarily translates into better services.
- 4894075 Yes: Fewer archive services should not mean that it is more difficult to access services in a local area.
- 4896444 Yes: Fewer, bigger & better must also include benchmarks for quality and regulation
- 4897724 Yes: "Many medieval archives are held at some distance from their regions. Each region should have access to all their documents. The cost of travel and the cost of digital copies at for example the British Library is prohibitive, if you live in Lancashire and want access. Encouraging 3rd parties to take digital copies and placing these on the web (The Internet Archive can do this, for example) will increase access to medieval documents. Some libraries allow this for free or at a small charge (£5 for unlimited half day at Lancashire Records Office or Manchester City archives) Sadly the British Library will charge nearly £30 for a single image). So access to archives is a post code lottery in this respect."
- 4898395 No: You need small local offices who know their clientele and the local area. I have managed to solve many a problem quickly for users because I am a local girl who knows the area.
- 4898758 Don't know: Having documents concentrated in one place inevitably means that if there were a disaster of some sort that a very large number of documents could be destroyed. However, perhaps at the moment there are too many very small collections.
- 4899913 Yes: If all archives standardise their records to comply with ISAD (G) then using the same means to store them electronically will be of benefit.
- 4902268 Yes: "• The key point in this context is that any service needs to be adequately resourced; the results of the TNA self-assessment exercise have demonstrated the impact of improved resourcing on service performance.
• Services require a critical mass, in terms of range of collections, services, staff and other resources. This does not necessarily mean that all services should be able to offer all facilities and specialisations, but that any aspect of the service offered should be viable.
• It is difficult to square the idea of fewer, bigger, better with improving community engagement; many in the community might argue that fewer does not equal better. It may be helpful to make clear that fewer services does not necessarily mean fewer archive service points. Development of online provision will also help to allay concerns on this point.
• The principle should not be extended to community archive organisations, provided acceptable levels of stewardship and sustainability can be maintained.
• The spread of digita"
- 4902537 No: Can see the argument for this but feel this may not equate with working with local communities etc. Bigger services may not allow for local flavour in acquisition. Sharing conservation / digitisation facilities makes sense but not necessarily getting rid of local archives.
- 4902849 Economies of scale will help pool resources and share skills and expertise but there needs to be a political will and a business case to move towards this recommendation. This is the early stages of such thinking and requires further investigation and research. Requires all bodies to come together to inform and shape future direction. Definitely worth pursuing.
- 4902864 Bigger and better is surely more than just mergers with other archives. Museums already work closely with archives (and vice versa). The same applies to libraries. So mergers/joint working with existing organisations should be built on rather than trying to develop new. And surely these will

- build more community links and accessibility - which this strategy sees as central - mergers of archives will do the opposite as they could be at a further distance. Sharing of resources should also include conservation.
- 4902942 I use many small archives which do not have the staff skills or even the physical room to provide a comprehensive service
- 4903073 Corporate priorities of increasing local participation and decision making would not be best served by 'fewer, bigger, better'. The phenomenal rise of community archives suggests that the converse may be true; the trend is towards more support at local, grassroots level in order to engage with local communities.
- It must be recognised that there is a strong link between performance and size of archive services, and there are cost implications in ensuring that archive buildings are fit for purpose and conform to BS 5454. This would all support 'fewer, bigger, better'. However, it is important to consider access for users and stakeholders, and the scope of the collections. County archives give excellent value for money, and are a meaningful unit for local residents as well as managing the records of local government. Regional working could provide the best solution to issues such as specialist storage for alternative media e.g. film and sound. The loss of MLA regional offices has had a greater negative impact on archives than libraries and museums, and emphasises the need for national and regional advocacy.
- A model to consider for the future might be that of the Renaissance programme for museums, which provides funding for 'Hub' museums to support smaller, local museums. By creating archive hubs, smaller archives could be supported. There is scope too for funding to be devolved to local authority archive services to support archives held in museums, which may be too small to provide appropriate environmental storage conditions for archives, and lack appropriate skills for conservation and collection management. There are also great advantages to be gained from joint archives and local studies services, but 'fewer, bigger, better' works best by joining up services at local level rather than creating geographical and administrative areas which are too large to respond to local needs.
- 4903813 I think it is essential that all archive material should be placed together but made available through responsible organisations and websites.
- 4903878 There is value in considering going towards fewer, bigger archives but I think it is a highly sensitive and complicated issue that requires serious thought, and many challenges to overcome to make it work
- 4904563 Whilst I accept that there are economies of scale which could provide benefits, bigger is not always better. It would be a shame if the flexibility (which enables a more locally focussed service, for example) to be lost if smaller offices were to be subsumed into much larger services.
- 4904589 I know this recommendation has been controversial, and I can see that it might be taken up by some parent organisations as legitimising service cuts without consequent investment in innovative service delivery. The point needs to be more clearly made that any economies of scale need to be accompanied by a significant upturn in accessible services, but that these are not necessarily tied to physical service locations. I do think this may prove difficult to achieve successfully whilst archives in the UK remain only a loosely connected network of independently funded organisations, and I would like to see a move towards the federated local archives approach which seems to work well in several other European states. Examples given in the draft policy don't seem to be terribly innovative - some of us have been sharing conservation resources for donkeys years! With regard to the sustainability of some digital content, fewer, bigger, better may indeed be the only way forward, simply because of the inherent interdependencies of the digital data itself.
- 4904607 The description 'fewer, bigger, better' seems a crude expression for what is required across the sector. Supporting partnerships between services, and across sectors, is recognised as an essential tool to support progress, and a

strap line along the lines of 'together, bigger, better' might be more helpful. Working together, particularly for specialist functions such as the challenge of managing and preserving digital records, is recognised as essential. Reducing the number of services will not help community engagement, and we hope it is accepted that access to services must be available locally. Archives have an intimate connection with the communities that created them, and this needs to be sustained and developed. Whilst shared facilities such as storage repositories may help to make the most of limited resources, any move in this direction needs to be backed up with improvements in public service points, and ensuring that archive materials can be made available through them on demand. There is otherwise a danger that this recommendation could work in direct opposition to central government's emphasis on local involvement and engagement.

4904827 While in general there are undoubtedly benefits from the 'bigger is better' model, it is important that this does not reduce accessibility to local communities, or diminish the vital contexts that are provided by records being located within the area where they were first created.

4904963 In Manchester, we are currently developing proposals to bring together two city-centre based local authority archive services (Greater Manchester County Record Office, and Manchester Archives and Local Studies) to form a new partnership service, recognising that this will maximise efficiency, capacity and archives' positive contribution to local communities and key agendas. Our proposals, which also enable greater partnership working with other Greater Manchester districts, are a good example of how 'fewer, bigger, better' can be realised. In some ways, our development plans are an extension of some long-established partnership practices, notably the provision of archive conservation facilities at Greater Manchester County Record Office, which funding local authority archive services, and indeed a wide range of other archive-holding bodies in the region, use. However, there is not sufficient evidence to suggest that it is simply the scale of an archive service that determines its success or sustainability. Indeed, The National Archives' Self Assessment process has demonstrated that the key for successful and sustainable archive services is resourcing, rather than simply scale - there are several well-resourced small archive services achieving very high Self Assessment scores (Tameside Archives, within our Greater Manchester area, being a prime example). Some of the simplistic statements within the strategy may therefore be misleading. We are also aware of service areas where smaller 'local' services can be highly effective. Within Greater Manchester, for example, we are aware that, due to the community engagement work of the archive and local studies services in each district, we are collectively engaging more (both quantitatively and qualitatively) with our local communities than many larger 'shire' county archive services are able to achieve in their areas.

4905150 The closing of the FRC is a case in point. We were promised the DOVE project that appeared to soften the blow of it's closing. However that appears to have been put on the back burner with the result that large numbers of Family Historians are descending on Kew and clogging up the facilities for the more advanced 'manuscript' researcher. Although I did notice a dramatic fall-off of numbers around the computers from January of this year to last week.

4905533 We can support fewer, bigger, better by sharing services and
expertise.

4905795 This needs to be qualified. The fragmentation of the County Archives Services into smaller units, as a result of local government changes, has done little to help either the services or their users. Similarly, the very small archive collections often found attached to borough libraries and museums in London and elsewhere often cannot achieve the critical mass needed to provide an adequate service. However, the local nature of archives cannot be ignored. Small record offices generally score much higher than large ones in user surveys, and, even with limited staff resources, they can achieve remarkable

results, particularly in terms of outreach, by forming local partnerships. It is not so important that an office should be big enough to provide a full range of services itself as that it should have access to whatever professional expertise it needs. For example, not all offices can justify the expense of properly equipped conservation or reprographics units themselves, but this is not a problem if they are part of a larger service or can form a partnership with a neighbouring office which has spare capacity. There is no simple solution which can be applied generally.

4905858

As one of the largest local authority archive services we certainly recognise the added value that our scale of operation offers. With a large team of staff we are able to support a range of specialisms, ensure that professional isolation does not occur, consider for purchase the latest equipment, and deliver service efficiencies, for example through larger scale procurement. These options would not be available to smaller operations. Balanced against this we recognise the pride and reinforced sense of place and community, that local people gain from caring for their historical records in their community.

Clearly this aspiration is partly met by providing local access to digital copies of original records that are stored remotely. And some documents are too valuable or fragile to make local storage a sensible risk. However, we do not underestimate the potential for real public and political hostility to the storing of records and artefacts outside the relevant community, even where good alternative access is proposed.

We also recognise that people express a high level of identification with and loyalty to certain natural geographical areas. One such area is Kent despite the fact that it is one of the largest counties in England. Few other local authorities can evidence such a high level of public identification with the area they are responsible for.

Our developing strategy therefore is to exploit the size of Kent to develop a single centre of excellence for the storage and care of, and direct access to, our most significant historical records. Staff based there will also work with an increasing number of community archives to advise and support them in retaining local collections in many communities. And by providing access to an ever increasing range of digital copies, through the web and in hard copy at local libraries and other access points, we will strike a good balance between the TNA aspirations for "fewer, bigger, better" archive services, and the need to provide responsive and effective local access.

In summary, we feel that the Kent County Council Archive Service reflects the optimum size for such organisations – sufficiently large to deliver an excellent service, while being close enough to the communities we serve to be responsive to local need.

4906033

Bigger archives can become bureaucratic leading to staff becoming disengaged and disenchanted. We find that researchers enjoy visiting a smaller independent archive such as HAT where the service can be more customised to the person's study needs. We also attract volunteers who wish to support our charitable aims.

4908319

Yes if access to the public is improved whilst safeguarding the original documents. No if it's just a bureaucracy.

4908909

No - I not believe that this would deliver the projected benefits for the profession, and could lead to a loss of local knowledge and professional skills.

4909405

if there is money available, I would like to see a two pronged strategy: TNA at the lead, but gradually bringing in local archives. I applaud what TNA has done so far in making services available both large and small (i.e. indexing documents; A2A, and providing copies of wills and other documents on line

4914770

The survey undertaken of the North Wales services has identified the possibilities and benefits of rationalisation with improved services for users, both physical and remote. Although it is impossible to accurately predict future trends, economic, environmental, technological, political and social

change will impact upon the ability of small services to provide a level of service which users will expect. This is a particular issue with regard to permanent access to information which is being generated, and stored, in digital format. The infrastructure, skills, energy, tools, equipment required to enable permanent access is currently beyond the capacity of many small repositories in Wales, as is evidenced by TNA self assessment and responses to the digital preservation questionnaire circulated to ARCW members. The rationalisation of services will have an impact upon local communities and it is vital that all stakeholders, including end users, are involved in the decision making process and co-create the solution.

4914878

- The key point in this context is that any service needs to be adequately resourced; the results of the TNA self-assessment exercise have demonstrated the impact of improved resourcing on service performance.
- Services require a critical mass, in terms of range of collections, services, staff and other resources. This does not necessarily mean that all services should be able to offer all facilities and specialisations, but that any aspect of the service offered should be viable.
- It is difficult to square the idea of fewer, bigger, better with improving community engagement; many in the community might argue that fewer does not equal better. It may be helpful to make clear that fewer services does not necessarily mean fewer archive service points. Development of online provision will also help to allay concerns on this point.
- The document does not recognise the considerable resources required to establish agreements for shared services between authorities, and to maintain them over a long period. This should not be seen as a criticism of the concept but as a factor to be taken into consideration in developing these ideas.
- The spread of digital archives will drive changes in the current model of archive service provision (see comments on Q2 above)

4915098

It is understandable that very small services will face challenges in providing the range of activity expected of them. However, there are alternatives that do not necessarily lead to fewer archive services crossing geographical boundaries. An alternative route is to create a grouping of compatible services under the parent umbrella. This is way services are developing in Somerset where heritage functions (archives, museums, historic environment) work together. This model enables the theming of functions such as learning and business development, without the possible problems associated with combining services across local government and geographical boundaries. Also in large rural counties travel distances could become very great if services are physically combined. Other functions that may lend themselves to working across local government boundaries are conservation and digital storage.

4915193

There are many small archive services with few staff that are much more proactive and successful than some larger archive services. Most large repositories are positioned away from or outside large towns and cities and often on industrial estates due to the amount of storage needed. This makes access harder for the public, who may be reluctant to make such a long journey even if they are curious about learning more about archives or local history.

Also a lack of presence in local communities and the building of large distant repositories makes local communities feel as if their history is being taken away from them. The MLA report Community Archives and the Sustainable Communities Agenda highlights this issue in its challenges, page 59

'Addressing concerns with community archive organisers, that MLA or local authorities are getting involved to take the archival material from them. Or, getting involved to interfere in how the project is being run.'

Large combined repositories do have their advantages, more space, staff and resources. However, it can be hard to justify large repositories to the local Government and local taxpayers who are funding them when they are

positioned so far away from communities. Digitisation of material does provide greater access to everyone globally, but you cannot provide the same level of interpretation or service that you can with visitors to the archives services or with workshops, events and working with schools that will result in further visits. Users of digitized material are often only after one particular document and will never use the service again.

4915420 This view poses a number of issues for archive services such as those offered by the Wigan Heritage Service. Little definition is offered of what constituted a 'bigger' service. Is this to be determined by size of holdings, population figures, user numbers or another factor? If the Wigan Archives Service is considered in the context of the Heritage Service, having very close links with the other services provided within Heritage, it offers a large service with multiple outlets for the creative use of collections. Yet, cross-sector working in this way is not recognised sufficiently by the scoring systems used in local government self assessment criteria, in spite of informing part of the 'model for excellence' offered by the consultation draft.

Furthermore, the draft document fails to take into account the very real benefit derived by communities who have their own, dedicated archive service. Many of the important contemporary drivers, working towards community cohesion, the promotion of local democracy and engaging with local volunteers and children, are perhaps best carried out by smaller services with a strong grounding in local communities (and strong links to the local cultural/heritage sector), rather than geographically (and culturally?) distant, traditional county record offices?

A model that provided for specialist services to be carried out regionally (conservation, storage of digital records), does however have some logic, but in promoting this model, care should be taken not to undermine the work carried out by local borough archives, especially at a time when potential budget cuts would fall hardest on smaller services.

4915621 Yes, in that there are some small, severely underresourced services, particularly (in my experience) in some of the London Boroughs, which are unable to undertake any sort of positive developmental work or be proactive in their collecting strategy. All energies are devoted to 'fire-fighting' and maintaining some level of public access. However, it should be recognised that the larger and more 'regional' the service, the more difficult it is to maintain and develop links with local communities. For local record offices, such links are vital because they generate many deposits of locally important records and also provide vital support in terms of volunteers.

4916587 The document does not make clear what is meant by 'fewer, bigger, better'. We believe that the county remains the largest appropriate unit for local authority archives, as it reflects the organization of the records themselves and also provides a reasonably local level of access to residents. As it is, some residents may feel that even the county is too remote, an obstacle that could be at least partly addressed by repositories working with community groups and the use of digitisation.

However, there may be advantages in certain groups of archives being maintained at regional or sub-regional level where that reflects the creating organization (as already happens with some diocesan archives, for example). The preservation of digital archives is certainly an area where co-operation at regional or sub-regional level has an essential role to play, as are film and sound archives, requiring special storage conditions and access facilities.

4917208 We understand and recognise the advantages in having larger archive collections and centres. Moving towards larger repositories and closing smaller ones may be a viable option especially in large urban areas and has been successfully developed as the way forward for specialist film and sound archives. We agree that the sharing of knowledge, skills and resources is essential. We agree that consortia approaches might be the way forward for a whole range of shared issues including digitisation, websites, exhibitions,

training, conservation and cataloguing. We are already working to establish a 'partnership' website, Suffolk Heritage Direct, to provide the archive user with access to the holdings of a range of collections including those held by local authorities, museums, specialist agencies and the voluntary sector.

A key element of the stated archive Vision is that:

'Every citizen feels a connection to their nation state and their local community and can readily find out why their country and neighbourhood is the way it is. Communities are empowered to collect and share their stories to inspire, inform and entertain.' (2.1.1)

We support this vision. It is a vision that means that we must involve and engage with everyone and all of the communities that make up the areas we serve. It is a vision that will make local awareness and local commitment to the preservation and use of archives an essential element of what we do.

Suffolk Record Office works hard to reflect the experience of local communities and to place it in a wider context; whether it involves the maritime history of the east of the County, the experience of new communities in Ipswich and elsewhere, or the more rural parts of the centre and west of Suffolk.

Much of this experience and work on the history of communities is inevitably very local. It relies on the commitment of volunteers and enthusiasts working in their own environment. It is essential that we do not encourage a view that archives are remote from the huge amount of work that goes on in very local societies or from the experience of new and minority communities.

We recognise the statement that 'Without archives we have no comprehensible history and without history we have no roots or clear future direction' (2.2). We suggest that without the context and understanding of those archives that can be achieved by working with local people and local, especially new, communities those documents will not have the power and resonance that they could achieve.

The experience in Suffolk, where we have three outlets for Suffolk Record Office, is that whatever the pros and cons may be for the organisation in developing and maintaining a distributed model of service, it does allow much better access to archive collections and a greater willingness amongst local organisations to deposit collections in a properly equipped archive.

If access is made more difficult for depositors, customers and volunteers, especially where large centres of population aren't located centrally, and in Suffolk they tend to be at the edges of the County, there will be a significant risk that they will not be so well used or, so well recognised and valued by the communities they are supposed to help support. Archives could be seen as even more remote from local issues. Digitisation of archives will help address this but not all archives will be digitised. Access to original materials will remain important for the foreseeable future.

Much will depend on the structure of local government and the bodies entering into partnerships for fewer, bigger, better services. We agree that joint arrangements could strengthen archive services but in some circumstances they could make them more vulnerable. We believe that experience in some parts of the country shows record offices operating under these arrangements have struggled to sustain levels of service and develop strategic long-term plans due to conflicting interests and tensions between authorities.

We therefore welcome the discussion which this approach will undoubtedly generate but at the moment are unsure that the centralisation of archives in one centre is practical, affordable or appropriate generally.

4917330

The situation in rural Wales means that a single 'bigger, better' archive service would actually be more remote for more areas and probably would not be much better resourced than the current position. This would have a negative effect on areas of development and outreach activities: physical access for schools work, for example, would be more difficult to orchestrate and actual

visits to the building would in all likelihood be the preserve of those schools nearest to the service, thereby delivering a lesser service to those more remote from the building. This would hold true for all users and potential users of the service. Also, transport access (public or otherwise) in rural areas is poor for the whole population, thereby potentially lessening the opportunities for people who want to make a personal visit to do so. Removing the physical building from the community would further weaken any ties felt by that community to the archive service, which could in turn lead to a disinclination by donors/depositors to place material with the service due to the remoteness of the facility from their location. This could see the material either being lost to posterity or being housed in inappropriate conditions but somewhere nearer to the heart of the community. This could eventually very well lead to the same conclusion of the material being lost to posterity.

4917445

A best value study of Black Country archives services in 2000 to achieve a single Black Country archive service indicated that economies of scale would be achieved, but the proposal was not politically viable. We all know how important local pride is, we trade in it and we are encouraging understanding local identity. The further that we proceed down this route the harder it will be to argue the case: parochialism is rife in the Black Country and we will need support from TNA to educate our users, so that they understand what they could have. One solution will not suit all locations – the proposed collaboration in Dudley between the Dudley Archives and Local History Service and the Black Country Living Museum is one suggestion: greater collaboration cross-sectors within a political area would be more sustainable than one large archive service for the Black Country. We are planning to work in the same way as Somerset's Heritage Centre and Worcester's HE/local government collaboration which supports the development of understanding of local identity in their local environment but would not be appropriate for all regions. There is potential for offices to lead on particular areas, such as education, conservation, digitisation within this model on a regional basis that may bring efficiencies. It is hoped that TNA and MLA would play a role in brokering such an arrangement.

4918319

I agree that there is strength in consolidation of services. We need ways of attracting larger organisations to work with small archives. The problem with this is that users want more access provided on their own doorstep – if we are based geographically further away, this will increase complaints as digital access can only do so much. However, if we can work together with other locally based community archives or organisational archives and provide a better service through joint provision, this can only be a good thing for users. If a local authority is only in one place, community groups set up their own collections to fill that perceived gap.

4918483

Such a move may conflict with other current priorities identified for the archive community, such as increased community engagement and creation of volunteering opportunities. The model of future service delivery needs to be developed to ensure that the important links between the archives and the communities who created them are not destroyed, and with them a great deal of the benefits which can be gained from creating better access.

Our stakeholders have expressed concern about the model's applicability outside large urban areas and its impact on community engagement in rural areas.

The consultation document focuses on the evidence of The National Archives self-assessment process (which is limited to the local authority archive sector and does not cover HE archives), and it would be helpful to understand more fully how the results demonstrate the value of 'fewer, bigger, better' services and the impact on staffing levels and skills needs. There is also a general weakness within the consultation document of information about the HE archive sector and how the recommendations fit within this sector.

- 4918880 Yes, although there are major challenges, for example, how will close links with local communities be maintained and developed; what arrangements will be required for governance and liability in the case of a disaster? There will always be a requirement for local archive "shop fronts", if communities are to feel ownership of and engagement with archive services.
- Frameworks for consolidation need to be flexible. As well as looking at possible merger of services they should also support the sharing of resource in the most problematic areas, such as conservation (including the supply of key conservation materials); storage of specialist and vulnerable media; and digital archiving solutions
- 4919053 Broadly, yes, but the 'better element should be the priority, and 'fewer, bigger' seen as one possible route for achieving this.
- 4919417 I have several difficulties with this. One is that it implies smaller archives should all merge, although subsequent explanations I have heard maintain this is not the case and that it is really about working together. Perhaps it needs to be considerably better phrased in order to get away from the implication of mergers? Working together is good in some respects, if my service can share certain resources with the neighbouring borough, or I can tap into things being done by the library service as examples. I'm not sure that it makes services more accessible, it is already difficult to encourage people from the disadvantaged areas of the borough, or from minority groups, to use the archives - they tend to perceive it as something that is not for them. Where I worked previously people didn't like having to travel to the next town for the service. Surely fewer, bigger services puts these people at a disadvantage, and excludes them more than they are already? Archive services can often be intimidating to the unfamiliar, and the bigger the service the more likely this is to be the case. A community can have more of a sense of ownership of a smaller, local archive service than they are likely to for a e.g. larger service shared with a neighbouring borough. It is also more likely for them to be able to physically travel to a local service without worry over cost or accessibility. Cross-sector partnerships with local organisations do not necessarily overcome the barriers to access, the university based in the borough I presently work for faces huge difficulties in trying to encourage local people to use its facilities, as they feel it is not for them. These are the kinds of people who should be being encouraged to use archives, not put off by where they are based.
- It is also worth noting that most organisations would see fewer archive services as needing fewer archive staff! If two services had three staff each and joined together, the chances of the joined services having six staff are slim.
- 4921523 Yes, via collaboration and partnership - but asking distinct communities to travel to one site would inhibit volunteering opportunities for senior citizens and community engagement
- 4927395 'Fewer, bigger, better' requires additional elaboration and qualification. It is a bold statement, not entirely supported by the paragraph about public sector partnership working and collaboration which follows. In the context of North Yorkshire where there is a variety of independent and voluntary archive activity, and where distances are great, 'fewer, bigger, better' needs to be set more firmly alongside an archive service provision which is more collaborative, more supportive and more locally accessible.
- 4927490 However, unless the catalogueing is excellent, it will discourage those who cannot find a document relating to a local area.
- 4927496 We believe that there is not enough evidence to suggest that this is the case. Indeed, there is a danger that specialist archive knowledge and skills would be lost, particularly if "cross-sector collaborations" were encouraged. We are concerned that small, specialist archives may become increasingly marginalised. There is a danger that resources would be monopolised by the

- larger partner or partners of such a collaboration leading to the potential loss of more specialist archives and knowledge
- 4927580 See my narrative comment sent to Liz Prior. Better cooperation and coordination holds the keys
- 4927620 The description 'fewer, bigger, better' seems a rather crude expression for what is required across the sector. Supporting partnerships between services, and across sectors, is recognised as an essential tool to support progress. In Shropshire the archive service works closely with both cultural and regional partners to deliver services and develop projects.
- Working together, particularly for specialist functions such as the challenge of managing and preserving digital records, is recognised as essential. However, reducing the number of services will not help community engagement, and we hope it is accepted that access to services must be available locally. Archives have an intimate connection with the communities that created them, and this needs to be sustained and developed.
- 4927643 The description 'fewer, bigger, better' seems a rather crude expression for what is required across the sector. Supporting partnerships between services, and across sectors, is recognised as an essential tool to support progress. In Shropshire the archive service works closely with both cultural and regional partners to deliver services and develop projects.
- Working together, particularly for specialist functions such as the challenge of managing and preserving digital records, is recognised as essential. However, reducing the number of services will not help community engagement, and we hope it is accepted that access to services must be available locally. Archives have an intimate connection with the communities that created them, and this needs to be sustained and developed.
- 4927910 I don't think that fewer is a good option.
- 4927989 Inequalities of funding are often the result of political priorities. It is self-evident that poorly-resourced archives are unlikely to be able to deliver the range and quality of services available in bigger offices. Where a small borough or metropolitan borough archive exists, it is often linked administratively (and sometimes physically) with a local museum or local library network whose users are likely to be from the immediate neighbourhood - that is, local council taxpayers. Merging small archives services to achieve economies of scale may well be politically unacceptable and funding of such joint services has proved extremely challenging. Building capacity for archive services has proved very difficult. Even where capital funding has been found for new buildings, revenue resources may well not have proved resilient enough to sustain initial services over time and in changing political circumstances (eg Essex). Therefore, without a stronger statutory basis for services, it is difficult to see how these hurdles might be overcome in order to achieve the objective of 'Fewer, bigger, better: increased sustainability through the integration and collaboration of services'.
- The consultation paper recognises that archive buildings may be too small. Again, at a time when local authority capital resources are in decline and when large-scale Lottery funding is becoming more difficult to access (eg the failure of a Lottery bid for a new record office for East Sussex), it is perhaps unlikely that there will be a strong political will to replace or extend archive buildings. There will be many competing claims on local authorities such as those requiring improved facilities for older adults as the demographic continues to change.
- The same point about lack of statutory powers also applies to active collection development. Staff capacity for cataloguing and space to store archives are factors in acquisition strategies but, for example, increasing awareness of the monetary value of intellectual property rights in business archives is a significant complication in relation to their acquisition (the

Minton archive is an example).

The consultation paper acknowledges that fund-raising to save important archive collections can place an undue strain on small archive services. In this context, it might also be helpful if it were to be emphasised that securing funding from charitable or grant aid sources very much depends on the initiative of local archive service staff. The Export Review Process has proved effective in saving important local items for local archive services and this is not mentioned in the paper. Similarly, the Acceptance in Lieu arrangements for collections of national importance have saved many series by offering owners a significant reduction of their inheritance tax liabilities. A strengthening and simplifications of such tax concessions merits active consideration by central government. Such measures would significantly reduce the risks of loss of our archival heritage.

The issue of backlogs of uncatalogued material is one which is critical to users of archive services, whether in person or online. Updating older, inadequate catalogues is similarly problematic. Staff require not only qualifications but practical skills and experience if they are to tackle these areas effectively. However, as is well known, most external funders such as Lottery programmes will not make monies available for cataloguing per se, but only if attached to a persuasive outreach or interpretation initiative. This in itself contributes to a perception by official bodies and employers that archive cataloguing is not important – a view contrary to that of users. The Cataloguing Grants Programme administered by TNA is a welcome exception, but its funds are limited and competition is extremely fierce. It is also project-based, rather than infrastructural.

It is generally agreed that a 'one size fits all' approach is not desirable. There are many examples of effective collaborations, shared services, resources and provision which also need to be taken into account. The potential negative effect, both politically and in terms of public support, of larger service centres more remote from their users should also be recognised.

4928292 I am yet to be convinced of this; regrettably it is probably necessary for archives to combine into larger (regional) storage facilities and reading rooms, pooling financial and staff resources. It maybe possible, however, to retain some of the county and borough record office system within a regional structure, as county loyalties cannot be forgotten over night.

4928572 Confronted with only one multiple choice answer, I selected no. This question cannot simply be answered 'yes' or 'no'.

Yes, there are definitely advantages of creating larger conservation and preservation units, particularly for use by smaller local authority and community archives, whose budgets and facilities are limited or non-existent. This outsourcing is currently practised by many smaller centres but still enables them to remain independent and autonomous. Furthermore, I also agree with the consultation's suggestion that cross-sector services would benefit from collaboration of certain specialist functions, as well as pooling of resources.

I however challenge the assumption that, in the long-term, there is significant value in moving towards 'fewer and bigger' units; there exists no substantial evidence to support this concept on a mass scale. This concept will not result in an overall better service. Whilst I welcome sharing services and partnership working, I firmly believe that integration and/or co-location of entire archive services are not in the interest of service users. Many users at present already find it difficult to access archives and records and will find it even more complicated if centres were to amalgamate. Geographic relocation may also be an issue for users with disabilities and older and financially less solvent users, who may have to travel greater distances to access archive services. Furthermore, the concept of bigger, better archive services doesn't appear to fit with the vision as described in section 2 or paragraph 5.7; these

highlight that 'archives [sit]... at the heart of their communities'. If a local archive were to relocate from the geographical and physical heart of its own community to a larger, potentially 'heartless' consortium then this vision statement contradicts itself.

I am also concerned over the potential 'dividing' of existing partnerships e.g. many local authority history and local studies centres and archives are physically attached to museums. These provide mutual on-site services and resources and their re-location will seriously affect combined service delivery and severely restrict accessibility to materials for both staff and users. Governance of material is yet another concern.

4929558 Community engagement is unlikely to be enhanced by having fewer, larger services. The custodial arguments are strong in this context, where shared arrangements could provide better sustainability. Fewer service points through reducing the number of archives could potentially be balanced by sharing access facilities with other services, and through substantially enhanced levels of online resources.

4930043 I guess it is all to do with 'economies of scale'. Too many small archives would mean greater expense in the long run and less efficiency. The only advantage would be easier access for the local population. Local communities would probably not have the funds to maintain multiple, modern, technologically up to date archives in the future. Fewer, bigger, better archives would be more cost effective, but not as accessible for the local community. People would have to travel further if they wished to research original documents. That is why, if the future means fewer archives, which are more centrally located, then greater online accessibility of records will be essential.

4930547 Fewer, bigger, better' would be more honestly written 'Fewer, bigger - better?' I have received mixed messages about this strap line - being told that it does not mean merged services, but more joint working across cultural sectors in an area. If that is the meaning intended, then I am afraid that the authors of this paper are well behind the times in terms of the reality of what is actually happening on the ground in local archives. If the real meaning IS that TNA would like to see different local authority archives services merging in their entirety (as is implied in para.4.1) then two immediate issues arise (one of which is acknowledged in the Impact Assessment). Firstly, the existing track record of local authorities co-operating across authority boundaries to manage any joint service is not exactly a record of glory when it comes to establishing long-term sustainable funding agreements. In the absence of any sustained financial or legal incentive from the centre this model will not stand - and I do not see any proposal in this paper that TNA is going to follow the example of the national museums, and establish regional out-stations which might possibly act as the seed corn for a new type of local authority co-operation. Secondly: how does removing access to archives to a smaller number of larger regional repositories sit with the role of local archives in contributing to the government's 'place-shaping agenda' for local government? It seems that university archives have been levered into this paper simply to paper over the cracks by identifying one sort of joint service co-operation that might possibly succeed - as is happening in Hull. However, this ignores the fact that this type of joint service will only work where both parties have a common agenda, and in general the university sector agenda is not the same as the local authority agenda. Where two or more parties have a common agenda then of course co-operation will be possible on specific initiatives, especially 'back-of-house' services such as storage, digitisation, cataloguing and conservation. But given that this will happen anyway under the existing arrangements if there is a coincidence of interests and political/institutional will, it is not really a radical strategic policy shift - more a tactical huddling together for warmth in a cold economic climate. And, to be quite frank, if I were to look at gaining economies of scale by participating

- in a joint facility, I would rather seek a private sector (not-for-profit?) third-party partner with whom I could draw up a contract for services, rather than attempt to broker and manage a consortium of local archives which would always be on the verge of disintegration after every election or change of local government funding regime.
- 4930603 Community engagement is unlikely to be enhanced by having fewer, larger services. The custodial arguments are strong in this context, where shared arrangements could provide better sustainability. Fewer service points through reducing the number of archives could potentially be balanced by sharing access facilities with other services, and through substantially enhanced levels of online resources
- 4930680 Yes, especially in view of the need for expertise in digital record keeping. TNA and MLA will need to win hearts and minds over the longer term, starting now with the new policy. There was general awareness among Archive professionals that this recommendation was coming. There is entrenched local and regional archival resistance to the concept embodied in the recommendation. It is expected to prove the most contentious. The reason lies in the recognition of shaping the shared sense of community identity. Local archives and the meaning and value of location are considered in some quarters to be under threat from such a potential development. The concern is around potential loss of local identity through new enlarged groupings. Archives for London is an example of a regional network organisation wary of, if not opposed to, such proposals.
- Our lead bodies should show in this the strength of their convictions in order to overcome such resistance. Archive practitioners are demanding explanation of how this can be achieved in practice, especially in a complex area such as London. How would the funding work in practice? Practitioners are waiting to understand how such a proposed move can be reconciled with the local communities and place shaping agenda.
- Westminster City Council will be keen to work with other boroughs to use its excellence for an appropriate consideration, and to help improve co-operation, performance and quality London-wide. Westminster already works in formal partnerships with other local authorities on libraries and communications. Given the high quality of our Archives provision, we would be very interested in extending our partnerships in this area and bringing good practice, economies of scale, and leadership to other Archive services. We would be pleased to discuss further how this might work in practice.
- 4930853 There are clearly benefits to concentration of archive services to maximise the potential of shared management, technology and exploitation, especially for the many small archives which struggle to maintain their established practice, far less develop and embrace the new opportunities of the 21st Century. However, there is often a strong link between archives and particular locations for their permanent home - both in terms of subject relevance and user base - which will over-ride the benefits of greater centralisation. Fewer, bigger, better is a good option to form the core of a wider network of archives, and in reality this model is the more likely one to develop successfully from the point of view of donor support, user access and financial practicality.
- 4931747 'Bigger is better' is a fallacy long-since discredited in both government and business. Innovation and dedication to new causes are most often found in small organisations. Cooperation may sometimes bring benefits. But enlargement for its own sake is a proven recipe for stultification and inefficiency.
- 4933002 Although internet access to online records continues to increase, there is still a huge way to go archives (particularly county and unitary authority record centres) must remain physically accessible to local residents.
- 4933310 What happens when disaster strikes? Few archival buildings are big enough - storage of archives is already a problem and, as more material is added, the

- problem will grow. Just look at what happened with the new British Library. Leave it alone. If it ain't bust, don't fix it.
- 4933395 But only if many more records are available on line. if not, records should stay locally where they are likley to be of more use
- 4939315 Local archives are important. They have local knowledge.
- 4049800 This is correct: at the moment related material is often widely scattered.
- 4088377 I believe that local services are more likely to be used and more likely to meet individual needs.
- 4078655 except i have a fear of bigger meaning beureaucratic, costly and inflexible, whilst at the same time being underfunded and too small for purpose;- I am thinking of what happened with Kew in the 1960's, and the new British Library. When the PRO was created, documents were still inaccessible, and because kew was too small, documents were weeded, or dispersed, - sometimes abroad.
- 4661589 No: "Bexley welcomes collaboration with other local authorities to deliver 'back office' functions. Indeed, Bexley library service has been at the forefront in this area. Working with the London Boroughs of Bromley and Lewisham, Bexley has established 'London Requests'; a unit operating from Bromley to satisfy customer requests from across the three Boroughs, either through purchase or borrowing. It is hoped that this joint delivery of key functions will be extended to bibliographic services in the near future. Bexley library service is also a member the Central Buying Consortium, which consists of 40 library authorities, and enjoys discounts on the purchase of stock.
However, due to the local focus of the service we recognise that archive services may require a different approach than that adopted by library services and that 'fewer and bigger' is unlikely to be 'better' for the front office functions. However, Bexley welcomes joint back office initiatives with other local authority archive services, for e"
- 4155432 Don't know : there is a danger in creating too large a repository where the limitations of the National Archives would apply -limitations on accessibility, on the number of records that can be looked at and the amount of time it takes to access them together with the trial and error approach needed because the catalogues have insufficient details. Smaller, local archives are a wonderful contrast but investment in cataloguing and staff knowledge are needed. There must be a balance between the two.
- 4168171 No : Fewer, bigger, better doesn't work with archives, just as it didn't work with schools. Researchers need and value small archives with specialist local knowledge. There is no substitute. Too many resources these days are regulation driven, and supervised by people who are either not really interested or don't know enough.
- 4328097 No: I don't believe that bigger is always better. Sustainable links need to be forged between different archive services to facilitate the easy flow of information.
- 4368609 Don't know: Depends on location and distance that people may have to travel to access 'local' archives. For example, living in Derbyshire and only having to travel to Matlock at present is very easy. If Notts and Derbys were combined at Nottingham that too would be easy for me (though not for everyone in Derbyshire.) However, a larger East Midlands Archive Service at Leicester would inconvenient.
- 4518451 No: Fewer, bigger, better - or money ploughed in to a few high profile, media friendly projects, while small archives continue to suffer? It would help if the document defined in a little more detail what was meant in concrete terms by 'fewer, bigger, better'.
- 4525330 Don't know: bigger isn't always better, and people are more likely to travel to their local record office to find things, not make a major journey. Local ownership of resources is important
- 4549417 No: "Archival endeavours have distinctive characteristics no less than they have shared characteristics, therefore arbitrary amalgamation of archive

services risks negating the special expertise and defining characteristics of many specialist archives services. The nature of the Web and the Internet is distributed not monolithic, achieving unity through use of common standards and protocols. Interoperability between archives should be achieved in a similar way, through common standards and methodologies for storage, description and archive management, enabling seamless sharing of resources.

Equally a single centre of excellence might easily become a single point of failure."

- 4549880 No: Archives should be located in the area from which they were created, not in some 'distant' location. Locally based is better as it makes them more relevant to the individual or community. I want to be able to pop in and consult easily, without having to organise a transport to some sort of regional centre.
- 4577608 Yes, I think we need to try and avoid silos of projects all doing the same thing and try to have one central place people need to go to to access information about online archive content if possible. Its also important that smaller archives aren't left behind and that they can participate in these projects.
- 4586973 No: I don't believe that bigger is necessarily better. It can be a cost saving exercise in the short term I see that for local government and some organisations, but there is always the danger of loss of a smaller partner in a merger and can result in fewer posts for professionals in the sector, which could discourage entracne to the archival profession and so a loss of skills in a generations time. There is much cross sectoral working now in universities NHS partners etc which should be looked at before major blanket decisions are made
- 4587095 Yes: Provided local sensibilities are taken account of, and a balance maintained/ delivered via partnership working.
- 4597180 Yes: As a user of the NA I just want a fast reliable service, whether it is via the internet or personal visits.
- 4606501 Yes: This will only work if the fewer and bigger archive services are supported by the required resources, namely staff and other funds. Otherwise it will just result in larger and more inefficient archives, with unsurmountable cataloguing backlogs.
- 4606689 Yes: As long as this is about raising the profile of archive services rather than being to the detriment of staffing numbers, since limited staff are already struggling to cope with their growing responsibilities.
- 4607389 No: Coordination of individual resource provision is needed; not larger archive services
- 4871402 Yes: If some professional services could be offered to Bury from other bigger services this could have good impact on some of the challenges faced. We already benefit from a Greater Manchester wide conservation provision but a widening of the professional duties offer (eg. cataloguing) would be an offer Bury would welcome. As a small service we benefit from our proximity to the communities we serve which has had positive impact through the projects we have undertaken. In a small service the archivist role can be much more of an outreach archivist than a traditional role – but as the archivist is trying to balance the full range of professional issues, some inevitably, are neglected. As Greater Manchester Archivists Group the local authority services have a good working relationship and we have worked on successful cross-authority projects and benefited from funding as a result. The political will from AGMA (Associated Greater Manchester Authorities) needs to be in place and better communication between repres
- 4622580 No: Fewer and bigger is definitely not necessarily better, especially in a large, mainly rural, scattered county like Cumbria. We must preserve the four Record Offices that we currently have. Having said that what is the level of co-operation between say Barrow RO & The Dock Museum in Barrow? I presume that as the Barrow RO and Reference library and Public Library are all housed in the same building that the co-operation there is good. Does the

- Lancashire RO in Preston work with the University of Lancashire, UMIST, Liverpool University etc? I believe that Preston have a computerised archive box making machine. Do other RO's make use of this facility?
- 4624880 Yes: As long as this is not at the expense of experienced professional staffing levels remaining constant
- 4628040 No: Local access to specialist resources remains important. Digitisation and linking of catalogues is important to aid the discovery of relevant records, but then users should be encouraged to visit, handle, read and even smell the originals.
- 4647938 Yes: This is fine, provided a sense of balance is achieved and archive services are not simply 'swallowed up'
- 4648094 Yes: On some levels, yes. However the need for local access to real things is still essential if we are to retain the identity of local archive services. Politically, this will be very difficult to achieve in local government. The sector needs to develop a model which harnesses the power of partnerships (fewer bigger better) in certain key areas (digital records, conservation, etc.) but retains local collecting networks, community engagement, access to real documents, etc.
- 4648324 Yes: The smaller services are ill-prepared to meet the challenges of the changing world and do not have a loud enough voice in the planning processes of their local authorities. They are last in the queue for resources in these difficult times.
- 4648386 No: "Whilst we understand the arguments being put forward for 'fewer, bigger, better' services, it is not clear that this sits comfortably with local and regional interests, or indeed with the Higher Education Sector and individual University's research, teaching and learning interests, where responsiveness to the academic interests of the individual University is crucial. Such a move would provide resource savings, but in such a small profession and community, where collections and expertise are often specific to regions / cities, how would this improve the delivery of services other than by rationalising resource? It may well be that a large number of smaller repositories is a strength and not a weakness, in the same way that community libraries, and indeed community schools / churches are a strength. They are what makes a community or region what it is and distinctive. A "supermarketisation" of archive services would simply dilute this by weakening community and regional distinctiveness."
- 4661878 No because 'significant' is too strong a word, and a feeling that this is particularly targeted at smaller archive services. There is clearly value in seeking ways to enhance less well-resourced services through co-operation and partnership, and also perhaps when based on specialisms including education services or shared digital repositories, but we doubt its appropriateness as a general approach. There is also a poor track record in existing joint services run by joint committees. They often lack clear leadership at a political level and are even more vulnerable to cuts than services run by a single authority, throwing doubt on their long-term sustainability. There is a clear advantage in ensuring that democratic accountability, funding and archive responsibilities are kept in step with each other. The document also ignores the realities of community identification, as well practical issues such as distance to an archive service. In a largely rural county such as ours, travel is a big issue and we already
- 4664663 Yes: "The National Archives self assessment has shown that there is a critical level below which it is not possible to run a viable archive service. However a service larger than at a county level is going to be extremely unpopular with archive users who would not be willing to travel greater distances to use archives. Nottinghamshire County Council has an agreement with Nottingham City Council to provide archive services and partnerships at county rather than regional level are likely to be the most successful. The

- optimum size for an archive service should therefore be clarified. However collaboration for the provision of specialist services such as conservation, digitisation and digital preservation where expensive equipment is required would be worth further investigation."
- 4664736 No: I think this might only make the divide between big and small greater. It is noteworthy that the mergers cited in the document are between medium or large repositories. Also we are trying to give people a sense of place, community etc. The example of the Highland Archive with its hub and spoke policy of setting up local area archive offices speaks to the need for down-sizing.
- 4676464 No: If people want to travel to the bigger archive it may mean longer journeys.
- 4680581 Yes: although the level of service often found in smaller archives should not be lost. Issues such as accessibility also need to be considered and kept in mind as fewer archives mean people will have to be travelling further which also means increased costs. Although much seems to be going on-line, professional historians are unlikely to rely on electronic versions.
- 4725722 Yes: Viewed from the point of view of a user I think it is essential that local archives should be gathered, as much as possible, into a single archive centre. However, this does disadvantage many users who do not live in close proximity to the centre. Every effort must be made to make a wide selection of sources available on line and on disc to searchers. East Sussex have contributed significantly to such approaches. Their proposed new office is a partnership project. Had the HLF grant we applied for been made available it might have enabled even more groups to participate in the project - sadly that will not now be the case. ESRO made 80% of their lists available on A2A and although that service is still accessible to searchers sadly it is not in the original excellent format and is not as useful as it was. A stark reminder of the need to ensure that any digitised source is able to cope with the demands that will be made upon it in the future.
- 4753080 Don't know: Viewed from the point of view of a user I think it is essential that local archives should be gathered, as much as possible, into a single archive centre. However, this does disadvantage many users who do not live in close proximity to the centre. Every effort must be made to make a wide selection of sources available on line and on disc to searchers. East Sussex has already contributed significantly to such approaches. Their proposed new office is a partnership project. Had the HLF grant we applied for been made available it would have enabled even more groups to participate in the project. ESRO made 80% of their lists available on A2A and although that service is still accessible to searchers sadly it is not in the original excellent format and is not as useful as it was. A stark reminder of the need to ensure that any digitised source is able to cope with the demands that will be made upon it in the future.
- 4756730 No: Archives are important to the identity of Local Communities, and therefore should be both accessible and relevant to the locality in question. Moving archives away to larger regional centres or conjoined services could damage this relationship, which would inevitably lead to a reduction in their use and benefit. No moves which alienate or distance a recognised community from the records of its past should be considered.
- 4757805 No: "There has been a strong response against this recommendation. The response from three of our sub-groups are given below.
North-West Local Studies sub-group:
It is generally felt that smaller geographical areas have more to offer. The quality of small areas is not necessarily worse – many metropolitan districts did very well in TNA's self assessment
Smaller services are more likely to fully integrate local studies and archives, thus offering a seamless service to users and opportunities for library and archive professionals to learn from each other
Community engagement is more effective as local identity is often based on a

- very small area. Reaction to local initiatives is easier (many county services use libraries to provide local services). Small services can develop a sense of ownership among users which leads to more deposits of material. Smaller geographical areas promote social inclusion as they are more accessible.
- 4765098 There are still opportunities to co-operate between services for expe"
No: One area of the paper which we are not in agreement with is the idea that we should push for bigger, better fewer archives. This seems to be contradictory to idea of archives being used to shape and foster community identity. It is not always the case that a better service is provided in larger archives. Often staff working in smaller archives have a better knowledge of their collections and can spend time talking to users about their research in a way that does not happen in larger places.
- 4765786 Yes: As long as the reduction is not too great.
- 4765861 No: There is a requirement to rationalise the management of archival collections, and to ensure facilities are sustainable and cost effective, but not at the expense of local and regional identity and sectoral granularity.
- 4768027 No: Much is made, quite rightly, of archives being a means of maintaining/creating a sense of local identity but this is not necessarily compatible with the proposal for fewer and bigger archive services. Accessibility, both in physical terms and to knowledgeable staff with a local interest, is immensely important.
- 4779980 Yes: "We are aware of a number of examples of this approach already being taken in the region, namely Woodhorn, which has combined Northumberland County Archives, the county's museum collections, modern records management and local studies library collection; and Tyne and Wear Archives which has recently merged with Tyne and Wear Museums. It is acknowledged that larger organisational set-ups give potential advantages of scale in terms of efficiency and value for money, with the provision of a single service providing a single point of contact for users.
However, for Universities, scholarly societies and other similar organisations there may be a concern (which ought to be acknowledged) that this approach might negatively impact on the deposit of material, if people become less willing to associate with a service which might be physically or organisationally remote from them and their interests. The significance of the ownership of cultural assets, as representative of the values and cultural status of an instit"
- 4796259 Yes: Partnership working must be embraced by publicly-funded archive services to achieve the best service within finite funds. The fact that county archive services have often been retained intact following local government reorganisation through service level agreements shows the truth of this. In future, such partnership working in the UK could also include the consolidation of several existing archive services onto one site or the sharing of certain services, such as conservation and digital preservation. In this sense, fewer, bigger, better is the way forward. Indeed, East Sussex is an example of this principle. It is planning The Keep, a major partnership project between East Sussex County Council, Brighton & Hove City Council and the University of Sussex to combine the archives and historical resources of the county of East Sussex and the City of Brighton & Hove, currently held at the East Sussex Record Office, together with those of the Royal Pavilion and Museums of Brighton and Hove, the Special Collec
- 4797076 No. The future should be the use of technology to give access to information and expertise, especially the latter.
- 4798623 No: We are a small museum-based archive and by moving our archive to a larger service we would lose a large number of users and contact with enthusiasts/researchers.
- 4801367 No: Whilst I agree that better archive services will make them more sustainable I do not agree with fewer archive services as will deprive access to

- certain elements of the population (Older, non-drivers, in poorly supplied public transport areas) to local records
- 4822815 Yes; My choice of answer should be 'yes, if ...'. If local government archives services are funded via locally-levied taxation it is entirely understandable if those who pay the local tax want their archive service to be in the same locality, or at least local authority area, as them. My view is that a move to 'fewer, bigger, better' is inevitable, and to be encouraged, but that to prevent disengagement between local people and local authority archives either the funding basis for such services needs to be altered (for example, so that they all centrally rather than locally funded) or service delivery needs to be radically changed, and not simply through 'putting everything online'.
- 4823510 Yes: We believe there is scope to improve capacity building, develop centres of excellence, enhance building provision and develop access initiatives through 'fewer, bigger, better' services; however the strength of local feeling towards their 'heritage' being removed from them should not be underestimated. The capacity required to manage and develop multi-agency services would also be significant. A management board (of a variety of stakeholders, including, but not exclusively Elected Members) with freedom to make decisions may go some way to alleviate this. With advancing technology there may be more scope for improved back office and conservation services being shared whilst maintaining local access through other means, such as digitisation. We believe that storage of hard copy archives, conservation, and the challenge of digital archives have the most to gain from shared services. We wish to stress the increasing popularity of local archive services and that access for the public should be as easy and readily
- 4835480 Yes: There is a strong argument in favour of this suggestion on the grounds of sustainability and on the viability of shared facilities and specialisations such as conservation or digital preservation.
- 4883390 Yes: This may be controversion, but the likelihood is that it will increase efficiencies, and in a digital age where visits to offices are likely to decrease and online access is going to increase, this is probably the sensible way forward.
- 4862692 No: Besides the practicalities of merging disparate archives in a period of scarce resources, there is a huge loss in the knowledge of archives where the collection size is increased. It is far more difficult in large organisations such as TNA or LMA to find the appropriate staff capable of answering queries.
- 4872401 No: An important and significant issue is access for the public. Fewer and bigger archives will reduce opportunities for busy, local people to access the full range of our services.