



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
www.defra.gov.uk

By email:

Your ref:
Our ref: RFI 6087
Date: 18 December 2013

Dear

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Records Management in Defra

Thank you for your email of 10 December 2013 to the Defra Helpline in which you requested information about Defra's record management procedures. This request is being responded to under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Your request asked for the following information; I have answered your requests in the order raised:

1. *A copy of the guidelines or criteria employed in the selection of the records of Defra (and its predecessor ministries) for permanent preservation at the National Archives.*

Defra, like most Government Departments follow The National Archives (TNA) appraisal and selection standards. These are the links to its current relevant published guidance:

- "Best Practice Guide to Appraising and Selecting Records for The National Archives" <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/information-management/best-practice-guide-appraising-and-selecting.pdf>
- "The Records Collection Policy" (high-level guidance for public records bodies preparing to transfer records to The National Archives) <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/records-collection-policy-2012.pdf>

Internally, Defra applies TNA Retention and Disposal schedules as the basis for our "What to Keep Desk Guide", document attached, to be applied by all core-Defra staff.

2. *The terms of reference of any advisory committee maintained by DEFRA to advise on the selection of records of DEFRA (or its predecessor ministries) for permanent preservation at the National Archives or elsewhere, the names of the current members of that committee and the minutes of any meetings of that advisory committee held in the past three years (i.e. in 2011, 2012 and 2013).*



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

Defra does not have an advisory committee to advise on the selection of records, so this information is not held by Defra. Recommendations on historical selection are referred for agreement on an on-going basis to our Information Management Consultant at TNA, following research and scrutiny by the Defra Information Appraisal Team and subsequent discussion of the evidence. If necessary, collections where further advice is needed on whether to select, can be referred to TNA's Records Decision Panel; its role is explained in this published document <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/records-decision-panel.htm>

3. *(1) An estimate of the number of files held by your Records Centre which are more than 30 years past their closure and (2) an estimate of the number of files held by DEFRA at its Records Centre which are more than 30 years past their closure and which have not yet been assessed for preservation at the National Archives or elsewhere.*

This information is published as part of the Government's Transparency Agenda. Defra provides returns to TNA twice a year on the 20 year Rule Reduction <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/record-transfer-report.htm> As the information is reasonably accessible to you by other means, section 21 FOIA applies and we can point you to where this information is published.

4. *The number of files not selected for transfer to the National Archives which have been offered to other appropriate repositories in the years 2011, 2012 and 2013.*

No files have been selected for transfer to other places of deposit (other than the National Archives) in the years 2011, 2012 and 2013.

5. *A copy of any annual reports or annual returns on the work of Defra records centre which might have been made covering the years 2011, 2012 and 2013.*

There is no formal annual report on the work of Defra records centre, therefore this information is not held. Formal Annual returns to TNA on appraisal activities have already been addressed in response to Question 3 and applies here also. Note that the Annual Returns for 2011 are not available on the TNA website, but are attached as requested.

Finally, in looking at the trail of correspondence in handling your original request, I apologise that this was not handled originally in the most efficient way. While I am pleased to note that the required information was traced for you, it is relevant to note that when requests for information are received it is standard practice for the relevant business team within Defra to respond to the enquiry. However for this request, the business team had long disbanded and no modern equivalent team exists, or any individual with knowledge about the particular subject matter. It was necessary then to engage with the Information Appraisal Team to try to determine whether the information sought was still available. The original enquiry response was limited and ascertained from searches of the available databases, based upon the request parameters provided. The file series that was eventually identified was not held by the Records Appraisal team at Alnwick, but in official contracted archival storage in Kent.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the FOIA, and in keeping with the government's Transparency Agenda, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt. Therefore, the information released to you will now be published on www.gov.uk

together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. Please note that this will not include your personal data.

I attach Annex A, which explains the copyright that applies to the information being released to you.

I also attach Annex B giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me.

Yours sincerely

Knowledge Services/Standards, Knowledge, Transparency & Resilience

Encs

Annex A

Copyright

The information supplied to you continues to be protected by copyright. You are free to use it for your own purposes, including for private study and non-commercial research, and for any other purpose authorised by an exception in current copyright law. Documents (except photographs or logos) can be also used in the UK without requiring permission for the purposes of news reporting. Any other re-use, for example commercial publication, would require the permission of the copyright holder.

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Copyright in other documents may rest with a third party. For information about obtaining permission from a third party see the [Intellectual Property Office's website](#).

Annex B

Complaints

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 18 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to Mike Kaye, Head of Information Standards, Area 4D, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR (email: requestforinfo@defra.gsi.gov.uk) and he will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure are on our [website](#).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Please note that generally the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Record Transfer Statistical Return

October 2011

Please see the Completion Notes tab for more information on how to complete.

Please complete and return by Friday 07 October

When complete please save and email to: information.management@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

1 Overview		Notes
Name:	<input type="text"/>	Job title: <input type="text"/>
Email Address:	<input type="text"/>	Contact No: <input type="text"/>
Dept/Agency:	<input type="text" value="Defra"/>	

2 Please estimate the amount of paper records (either as metres, files or both) you hold.		Notes
2a Backlog (pre 1981)	<input type="text"/> metres <input type="checkbox"/> Accurate	<input type="text" value="29,784"/> files <input type="checkbox"/> Accurate
2b Due this year (1981)	<input type="text"/> metres <input type="checkbox"/> Accurate	<input type="text" value="6,633"/> files <input type="checkbox"/> Accurate
2c Due next year (1982)	<input type="text"/> metres <input type="checkbox"/> Accurate	<input type="text" value="5,775"/> files <input type="checkbox"/> Accurate
2d 20 year transition period (1983-2002)	<input type="text"/> metres <input type="checkbox"/> Accurate	<input type="text" value="356,759"/> files <input type="checkbox"/> Accurate

3 At what stage in the process are those records?		Notes		
The following are given in:	<input type="radio"/> Metres <input checked="" type="radio"/> Files <input type="radio"/> Percentages			
Status	Backlog (pre 1981)	Due this year (1981)	Due next year (1982)	20 Year transition (1983 - 2002)
Not yet reviewed for selection				
Awaiting TNA selection confirmation				
Awaiting sensitivity review	208			
Awaiting Advisory Council	nil			
Awaiting cataloguing	208			
Awaiting preparation	1787			
Awaiting transfer	774	66.00%		
Awaiting destruction				
Other (please add details in a comment)	ge/smoke control files for very long term storage			

4 Planning estimates		Notes
4a Each year, roughly what percentage of files reviewed do you select as an historical record?	<input type="text" value="2"/> %	
4b Each year, roughly what percentage of the files you have selected, do you retain under LCI?	<input type="text" value="0.01"/> %	
4c Each year, roughly what percentage of the files you have selected go to Places of Deposit?	<input type="text" value="nil"/> %	
4d Which PoDs do you transfer to?	<input type="text" value="n/a"/>	

- 4e Do you think, looking at the files from 1982 onwards, the number of records from each year... (select from dropdown)
- 4f Do you think, that for records created before 2003, you will have a significant number that you will want to transfer as digital? (select from dropdown)
- 4g What year did you end your 'Print to Paper' policy?

5 What records are you planning to transfer this year (by end Mar 12) and at what stage are t [Notes](#)

The following are given in:

Metres Files Percentages

Status	Backlog files (pre 1981)	Due this year (1981)	Early transfer (post 1981)
Total	36m	2m	
Not yet reviewed for selection			
Awaiting TNA selection confirmation			
Awaiting sensitivity review			
Awaiting Advisory Council			
Awaiting cataloguing			
Awaiting transfer	36m	2m	
Awaiting preparation			
Other (please add details in a comment)			

- 5b Do you plan any transfers that are held in non-paper format e.g. microfilm, mapping or digital records. Please indicate briefly the format and volume.

Some internal drainage maps but they are not prepared for transfer yet (about 3000 maps).

6 Comments - Please include any other data you hold that may be relevant

[Notes](#)

Section 3 should read 66 files for 1981 not the % figure shown (could not change formatting). Most older material relates to ex-DETR Common Land files, other land related file series, drainage (inc maps) & Smoke Control Orders requiring long term storage (an exercise to obtain LCIs where necessary is underway however cataloguing etc is required and resources are limited). None of this material will be transferred to TNA. We do have some accuracy questions re dates on the database so absolute accuracy of the figures cannot be guaranteed.