

## Archives Service Forward Plan 2022-24

### Note

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic a number of outcomes in the 2020-2022 plan were modified or suspended. These actions have been reinstated where appropriate into the current plan, but successful attainment of these actions nevertheless remains dependent upon the staff capacity available, which is impacted by government lockdown rules and wider corporate needs.

### Outcomes

At least one objective has been allocated to each outcome. Each objective may contain a range of actions. Objectives and actions can be used to inform annual appraisal objectives for individual members of staff.

The outcomes the Archives Service is working towards are:

- 1 To achieve national archive standards and best practice;
- 2 To help people, businesses and authorities solve their problems and informational needs;
- 3 To safeguard evidence and information which supports the delivery of other government services and business activity;
- 4 To deliver an even better service in the future;
- 5 To capture the imaginations of young people, inspiring them to take an interest in their surroundings; to support learning for children and young adults;
- 6 To build family, social and community relationships and identities;
- 7 To encourage the widest possible awareness of Cambridgeshire's archives;
- 8 To train and develop our staff to enhance their specialist expertise and provide excellent customer service;
- 9 To work with partners and stakeholders to deliver enhanced services;
- 10 To create opportunities for volunteers to improve the preservation and access to collections while supporting individual learning and social contribution to local communities.

## Outcome 1: To achieve national archive standards and best practice.

Objectives: Achieving PD5454-compliant archives accommodation; achieving TNA Accredited Archive status

### Actions 2022-24

- 1.1 Work with FM colleagues to maintain PD5454-complaint environmental conditions in the archive stores.

*Baseline:* The new store at Ely has been built and the records have been moved in. It is necessary for accreditation and for the well-being of the archives themselves that PD5454-compliant environmental conditions are maintained. Following a scheduled service visit in July 2020 the conditions began fluctuating and it was some months before the engineers resolved the issue. The strongrooms have become more stable since then but during the winter of 2021-22 the units began showing alarms. At the time of drafting this forward plan FM are waiting delivery of parts.

*Evidence:* TinyTag records.

- 1.2 Achieve Archives Accreditation.

*Baseline:* the service is currently not accredited.

*Evidence:* application submitted in April 2022.

## Outcome 2: To help people, businesses and authorities solve their problems and informational needs.

Objectives: Providing searchrooms where searchers can directly consult authoritative evidence about the past contained within written archives; providing expert advice to searchers and enquirers; providing a high quality digitisation service.

### Actions 2022-24

- 2.1 Provide physical searchroom environments which continue to be Covid-safe following FM rules and risk assessments.

*Baseline:* Both searchrooms were risk-assessed for Covid safety by FM in March 2020. These risk assessments remain valid as of January 2022. The layouts and procedures of both searchrooms have been adapted to meet corporate Covid-safety rules and corporate guidance about working from home (WFH). The searchrooms were reopened to the public in July 2020 with a new, limited service model which follows Covid-safety advice.

*Evidence:* Any updated corporate guidance about building protocols and work from home to be followed. New guidance which impacts on service delivery to be communicated to stakeholders via website and CAGALS.

- 2.2 Provide a Covid-safe service delivery, including appointments-only sessions, documents booked in advance, minimised handling of searchroom equipment.

*Baseline:* A new service delivery model was established and agreed with senior officers.

*Evidence:* Service delivery to be reviewed at team meetings and agreed changes to be implemented. Changes which will impact the public, including possible future lockdown closure dates, to be communicated to stakeholders via website and CAGALS.

- 2.3 Recommend that searchers try to use our Historical Research Service whenever possible rather than visit us in person, which in turn requires us to provide an efficient and high quality HRS, prompting users to return to it to place more orders.

*Baseline:* Annual HRS orders prior to 2022-24: 100 per year (CA 75, HA 25).

*Evidence:* An increase over the baseline in the number of orders.

- 2.4 Recommend that searchers order high quality digital copies of documents.

*Baseline:* Annual FSB digitisation orders prior to 2022-24: 50 per year.

*Evidence:* An increase over the baseline in the number of orders.

**Outcome 3: To safeguard evidence and information which supports the delivery of other government services and business activity.**

**Objectives:** Creating high quality ISAD-G compliant multi-level catalogues; creating helpful finding aids; making catalogues and finding aids available online; implementing rigorous searchroom and strongroom security procedures; preserve and conserve the records in our care.

#### **Actions 2022-24**

- 3.1 Create ISAD-G compliant catalogues from original records when staff are available to work in the repositories.

*Baseline:* Entries on CALM catalogue module, end of 2020-22: 473,203.

*Evidence:* Increase in the number of records on CALM.

- 3.2 Recruit and begin a Kimbolton Estate collection cataloguing project.

*Baseline:* We were unable to recruit to a six month role funded by a grant from the Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire Family History Society. Our plan is to apply to

the HLHS Goodliff Fund for additional grant funding, to make it a twelve month role, which we hope would be more attractive.

### 3.3 Implement the Preservica digital preservation solution.

*Baseline:* Zero.

*Evidence:* Number of assets ingested.

### 3.5 Carry out successful disaster plan training.

*Baseline:* A staff training session has been carried out at Huntingdon and another is scheduled for Ely.

*Evidence:* Sessions delivered.

## Outcome 4: To deliver an even better service in the future.

**Objectives:** Improving the service delivery at Ely and Huntingdon; acquiring more archives as they become known; carrying out user surveys to identify where improvements can be made.

### Actions 2022-24

#### 4.1 Continue post-move restabilising at Ely, including finding documents in mislabelled boxes; linking orphan boxes; improving OS map storage; carrying out stocktakes on heavily-used collections; unpacking and barcoding items in HDRS boxes.

*Baseline:* NA.

*Evidence:* To include stocktake closure arranged and publicised; number of HDRS boxes cleared; number of orphan boxes linked.

#### 4.2 Review searchroom and back office procedures for possible bottlenecks or inefficiencies, so that the service can be as staff-light as possible and thereby reduce friction and delay.

*Baseline:* Current processes. The accessioning process was temporarily streamlined in 2021 to help us deal with very large quantities of marriage register accessions within a short period of time.

*Evidence:* Reviews carried out of back office and searchroom processes; any suggestions for changes discussed with relevant team members; worthwhile proposals implemented.

#### 4.3 Carry out user surveys to identify where public-facing improvements can be made.

*Baseline:* This action was suspended due to Covid with the result that we have no recent user data. Reliable searchroom user surveys may still not be possible until the

Covid-19 threat has completely passed, due to the small numbers of searchers now visiting, and their self-selecting nature.

*Evidence:* Surveys carried out.

**Outcome 5:** To capture the imaginations of young people, inspiring them to take an interest in their surroundings; to support learning for children and young adults

**Objectives:** Workshops for visiting school groups.

#### **Actions 2022-24**

5.2 Promote our ability to deliver school sessions; react positively when approached by schools for possible sessions.

*Baseline:* Thanks to the NLHF-funded schools project, we now have schools information resource packs and staff who are experienced in delivering and/or assisting in the delivery of sessions to schoolchildren.

*Evidence:* School sessions delivered.

**Outcome 6:** To build family, social and community relationships and identities.

**Objectives:** Providing access to records of genealogical and local historical value; putting people in touch with Cambridgeshire's family and local history societies; supporting the Cambridgeshire Community Archive Network; providing friendly advice to new users; making sure that the searchrooms are as welcoming and non-intimidating as it is possible to be.

#### **Actions 2022-24**

6.1 Publicise CFHFS, CCAN and local history society events and activities where relevant.

*Baseline:* Such events have always been promoted, mainly in searchrooms.

*Evidence:* Number of events promoted. A proposed day conference to celebrate the opening of the new archives centre at Ely, originally arranged for May 2020 but then cancelled, may now be going ahead.

6.2 Attend relevant committee meetings of local groups.

*Baseline:* the service is formally represented on the CCAN committee and the Huntingdonshire Local History Society Committee. Links with other groups are maintained via CAGALS.

*Evidence:* Committee meetings are currently held online.

### 6.3 Progress an Ancestry-style parish registers digitisation project.

*Baseline:* the service has contributed school log books to FindMyPast and electoral registers to Ancestry. A proposal by the CHFHS to digitise the parish registers was withdrawn following their pilot scheme in Wisbech. Ancestry have approached us in the hope of starting a digitisation project, but the situation is complicated because copyright in the transcripts lies with CHFHS.

*Evidence:* set up meetings to discuss project with Ancestry and CHFHS.

## Outcome 7: To encourage the widest possible awareness of Cambridgeshire's archives.

**Objective:** Develop an access improvement plan; publicising and publishing our documents through exhibitions, articles, publications, broadcast media, displays, and online activity.

### Actions 2022-24

#### 7.1 Develop an access improvement plan following a formal stakeholder analysis.

*Baseline:* No analysis has yet been carried out.

*Evidence:* Stakeholder analysis carried out; access improvement plan developed.

#### 7.2 Create a programme of both physical and online displays of documents, including support for exhibitions created by external partners.

*Baseline:* No physical displays were created over 2019-2022, due to Big Move work, the move to Ely, and then the Covid-19 pandemic. At the end of the 2021-2022 year the service's Instagram account had 1,633 followers, the Facebook account had 402 followers, and the Twitter account had 533 followers.

*Evidence:* an increase in the number of followers on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter; promotion of the service through *Great History Chase* materials and resources; number of physical displays created or contributed to.

## Outcome 8: To train and develop our staff to enhance their specialist expertise and provide excellent customer service.

**Objective:** Ensuring staff attend valuable, informative, relevant and worthwhile course and workshops.

### Actions 2022-24

8.1 Establish regular meetings of as many of the team as possible.

*Baseline:* Meetings of the entire team are difficult to arrange because of the commitments to have both Huntingdon or Cambridge open to the public.

*Evidence:* Continuing Covid-19 restrictions, especially the corporate requirement to work from home whenever possible, make this difficult. A number of Zoom-style meetings were carried out during lockdown to discuss working arrangements.

**Outcome 9: To work with partners and stakeholders to deliver enhanced services.**

**Objectives:** Keeping CAGALS members up-to-date with developments; working alongside members of Cambridgeshire's family and local history societies and members of CCAN; delivering joint events and projects with colleagues in Cambridgeshire's libraries, museums, and other record-holding bodies.

**Actions 2022-24**

9.1 Archives Manager to maintain formal communication links with CAGALS and other stakeholders.

*Baseline:* This is ongoing.

*Evidence:* Since the start of the pandemic this communication has largely been carried out by email, with occasional telephone calls and one socially distanced meeting with the Chair of CAGALS. A face-to-face CAGALS meeting was carried out in October 2021 and another has been set up for March 2022.

**Outcome 10: To create opportunities for volunteers to improve the preservation and access to collections while supporting individual learning and social contribution to local communities.**

**Objective:** Recruiting volunteers in listing, conservation and digitisation.

**Actions 2022-24**

10.1 Recruit and deploy volunteers.

*Baseline:* This outcome was temporarily suspended during the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to FM requirements concerning social distancing, public access to buildings, and the physical spacing of desks, there is little room for volunteers to work while staff are present too. However, it remains possible (outside of lockdowns) to use volunteers singly in Conservation and Digitisation, and to place them in the searchroom if volunteering on cataloguing projects.

*Evidence:* number of volunteers and volunteer-hours.