World leader website launched

A new website launched today by The National Archives will give clearer, faster and simpler access to legislation, from Magna Carta to the latest statutory instruments. At www.legislation.gov.uk people will for the first time be able to find details of everything on the statute book in the same place, for free.

The site will enable officials, lawyers and ordinary citizens alike to scrutinise the laws on which their legal rights and responsibilities are based. A simple web search will quickly find key legislation such as the Consumer Credit Act and the Data Protection Act. This will make Government more transparent. It will also save considerable resources in time and therefore money.

Lord McNally, Minister of State and Deputy Leader of House of Lords, said of the website, “This is the public’s statute book. Legislation.gov.uk presents complex information in a clear and intuitive way. This groundbreaking work puts democracy at the heart of legislation and makes a major contribution to the government’s transparency agenda.”

This new official site will show both the original version of any piece of UK legislation covering all jurisdictions (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) and details of any amendments and updating so that those accessing it can see how the legislation evolved. The site will show a timeline feature which will give a unique insight into how the law has changed and help people to understand the status of what they are looking at.

The website is a world first, letting people identify and reference legislation in a completely new way. It clarifies the scope and scale of the statute book, making it more accessible by introducing an interactive browse and timeline facility - now users can easily filter down through each section to find the paragraph they are interested in. The development of the site takes forward Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg’s recent call for
wider democratic involvement in the legislative process. In line with the government’s open data policy and drive towards greater transparency, Legislation.gov.uk gives access to legislation data for others to use, in their own applications and services, for the first time.

Francis Maude, Minister for the Cabinet Office, who chairs the Public Sector Transparency Board comments: “We pledged to put transparency at the heart of everything we do in government and have already released a series of datasets about people, jobs and salaries that had been previously unavailable to the public. Only by making as much information as possible freely available can people really start to hold politicians and public bodies to account. Having 200 years worth of legislation readily available at the touch of a button is a fantastic tool for anybody who wants to better understand the law.”

The National Archives plays a pivotal role in ensuring government data is accessible for all. Acting CEO of The National Archives, Oliver Morley, enthusing on the launch said, “We’re making a bold statement in support of transparency today. By using the latest technology and opening up the raw data underpinning Legislation.gov.uk, The National Archives has given global access to the nation’s ‘operating system’. I’m proud to say this website is the only example of its kind in the world. It provides access to an invaluable and historical resource for anyone wanting to know what the law actually says.”

Legislation.gov.uk replaces The Office of Public Sector Information (www.opsi.gov.uk) and Statute Law Database (www.statutelaw.gov.uk) websites to deliver an integrated and responsive service and better value to the taxpayer. The new site brings together content from both sites providing effective navigation around the documents and between versions. Users can also link between associated legislative documents including EU legislation on the EURLEX. There also multiple options for downloading and printing the legislation. The website is huge, consisting of 6.5 million distinct web pages and a further 6.5 million PDF documents.

TSO, a private company has worked with The National Archives’ editorial team on the transition of data from the existing legislation websites to deliver this state of the art legislation publishing service.
Ahead of the website launch, The National Archives are providing media the opportunity to preview the website. To access, please enter **Username: live, Password: l1v3s00n**

For further information, images or to arrange an interview, please contact The National Archives press office on 020 8392 5277 or e-mail **press@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk**  

-Ends-
Did you know?

- The Statute of Marlborough Act, which became law in 1267, is the oldest piece of statute law on the database yet to be repealed.

- One of the most famous pieces of legislation, Magna Carta, or the Great Charter of Liberties, was originally issued in 1215 and reissued at later points in the 13th century. The 1297 version remains on the statute book.

- The most recent act on the statute book is the Academies Act 2010 which was last updated on 28 July.

- Acts of parliaments are laws enacted as primary legislation by national parliaments e.g. the UK Parliament at Westminster.

- When new Acts of Parliament are published, two copies of the new act are produced on vellum (goatskin) one for the Parliamentary Archives housed in Victoria Tower and one for the Chancery Rolls, held at The National Archives (pictures available on request).

- Delegated or secondary legislation allows the Government to make changes to the law using powers conferred by an Act of Parliament. Statutory instruments form the majority of secondary legislation.

- It is illegal to enter the Houses of Parliament wearing a suit of armour according to the Statute forbidding Bearing of Armour (1313):
  
  http://www.legislation.gov.uk/aep/Edw2/7/0/contents

Notes to editors:

The Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) website is currently a top-ten government site with an average of 1.5 million unique users, 50 million hits and 12 million page views per month. The Statute Law Database website has around 300,000 unique users a month.

A 2008 survey of more than 7,000 users of both these websites revealed that 43% of users were not law professionals but were accessing the site for professional purposes. Of these users, most were working in local government. Around 20% of users were trained law professionals and 17% were members of the public.

Legislation.gov.uk provides a single point of access for legislation covering the entire United Kingdom from 1267 to the present including laws passed by the Old English Parliament (1267 to 1706), the Parliament of Great Britain (1707 to 1800), the Old Scottish Parliament (1424 to 1707), the Old Irish Parliament (1495 to 1800), the Northern Ireland Parliament (1921 to 1972), the Northern Ireland Assembly (2000 to the present), the Welsh Assembly (2008 to the present), Local acts (1857 to the present) and Church measures (1920 to the present) as well as statutory instruments. The database holds a complete set of records from 1991 to the present and partial records from 1267 to 1991.

The original (as enacted) and revised versions of legislation on legislation.gov.uk are published under the authority of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office (HMSO) in her capacity as the Queen's Printer of Acts of Parliament, Queen's Printer for Scotland and Government Printer of Northern Ireland. This post is currently occupied by Carol Tullo.

The revised versions of legislation held on this site are maintained by the legislation editorial team at The National Archives and the staff of the Northern Ireland Statutory Publications Office – part of the Office of the Legislative Counsel in Northern Ireland within the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister. The Office of the Queen’s Printer for Scotland (OQPS) provides access to Acts of the Scottish Parliament, Scottish statutory instruments and a range of other legislation applying to Scotland. It also
delivers a range of services to the public, information industry and government relating to the re-use of information created by the Scottish Government, the devolved government for Scotland. The Queen’s Printer for Scotland, who is appointed under section 92 of the Scotland Act 1998, reports to the Scottish Ministers.

**The National Archives**

The National Archives, [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk), is a non-ministerial government department and an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). As the official archive of the UK government, it preserves, protects and makes accessible one of the most significant historical collections of official records in the world, dating back over 1000 years.

As a leading advocate of the archive sector, The National Archives expertise touches every point in the lifecycle of information – from the early stages of planning processes and storage methods, through the creation, management, use and re-use of information in day-to-day business by government and citizens, right through to its eventual archiving and long-term preservation. This work helps inform government’s decisions and ensures that they become tomorrow’s permanent record.

Between 2003 and 2006, four government bodies came together to form The National Archives: the Public Record Office, the Office of Public Sector Information, Her Majesty’s Stationery Office and the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts. Each of these organisations specialised in different aspects of managing important information.

Today The National Archives brings together the skills and specialisms needed in our digital world for managing and preserving government information past, present and future – and for making it accessible to its users.

**Public Sector Transparency Board**

Set up by the Prime Minister to drive forward the Government’s transparency agenda. Its aim was to make transparency a core part of all government business and ensure that all Whitehall departments meet the new tight deadlines set for releasing key public datasets. In addition, it is responsible for setting open data standards across the whole public sector, listening to what the public wants and then driving through the opening up of the most needed data sets.

The other members of the Transparency Board are Sir Tim Berners-Lee, inventor of the World Wide Web, Professor Nigel Shadbolt from Southampton University, an expert on open data, Tom Steinberg, founder of mySociety, and Dr Rufus Pollock from Cambridge University, an economist who helped found the Open Knowledge Foundation, a not for profit organisation which promotes open knowledge in all its forms.