Strategic Plan
2010-2011
Introduction by the Chief Executive

I am pleased to present the strategic plan for The National Archives for 2010-2011.

These are challenging times. The public sector must evolve to meet new demands and constraints, and The National Archives is adapting to operate effectively in a harsher economic climate. Our plans for the coming year are rooted in a firm commitment to maintaining the quality of our services, on which our many different customers rely. This commitment is not about standing still: ours is a culture of continuous improvement. Innovating and embracing smarter working practices are the key to making the best use of our funding while consistently enhancing the services we provide.

In times of economic uncertainty, it is more important than ever that government can harness the full value of its information. Accurate, accessible information is a vital ingredient in policy development and public service delivery. At the same time, good information management means greater cost-effectiveness, and we can help government departments and public sector bodies make the best possible use of resources by continually building capability in managing information. Some official information collected or generated – including reports, statistics and datasets – can also be re-used in many ways. Our role in promoting the effective re-use of public sector information to enable citizens to access it, not only empowers individuals and community groups but also supports the growth of the digital economy.

The National Archives has been through a process of rigorous review and refocusing in recent months, identifying areas where we can operate more efficiently, or where we can cease providing services that are not essential to our core priorities. This process has allowed us to prioritise the most important aspects of our business, emerging stronger and more focused for the future.

The savings made as a result of this process will allow us to invest in making essential environmental improvements to equipment and infrastructure at the Kew site during 2010-2011. This will help us maintain the best possible environmental conditions for preserving the unique historical records in our collection, and ensure that they will continue to remain accessible.

At the same time, we are investing in key technological improvements. We will improve our catalogue and other search facilities, to make it easier for researchers to identify the information they need, whether searching online or on site at Kew. We will develop more integrated and flexible services to benefit those who use our services for academic research. And all researchers accessing our collection now use digital resources, whether examining digital images of records or accessing our online catalogue, and we will work this year to better unite these two areas, rather than approaching physical examination of documents and digital research as separate services.

We are ready to move forward, building on our strong track record of innovation and achievement. Our goals are demanding, but we are confident that we can rise to the challenges we face in the coming year, holding true to our vision.

Oliver Morley
Acting Chief Executive, The National Archives
Our remit

The National Archives is a government department and an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice: we are the official archive of the UK government and for England and Wales.

We preserve and protect one of the most significant historical collections in the world, holding public records dating back over 1,000 years. From Domesday Book to digital files and databases, we care for 11 million public records, making them accessible to all.

Our work aims to ensure the effective management and sustainability of public sector information throughout its lifespan – from the moment of creation, through use and re-use in day-to-day business, right through to its eventual long-term preservation. The information essential to government today will also be critical for the researchers, historians and policy makers of tomorrow.

We provide a service for the whole of government, helping to build its knowledge and information management capability, both through sharing expertise and through our regulatory role. Our support can help government make the best use of the information it holds, and keep vital information useable for as long as it is needed.

We promote the re-use of public sector information, setting standards and ensuring that this resource can be accessed and utilised by individuals, community groups and businesses. This re-use empowers citizens and fuels new enterprises, contributing to our national economy. We manage the licensing of government content and information, and we publish key information that underpins government’s core day-to-day business, including all UK wide legislation.

We also provide leadership, support and guidance to the wider archive sector. We develop and promote policy, standards and best practice in all aspects of archive management. We offer support to custodians of records nationwide, including private owners, businesses and those who manage institutional archives.

Our expertise in managing, using and preserving information makes us a valuable resource for government, for the wider archive sector, and for the public.

Our priorities in 2010-2011

Our aims are expressed through our vision, which is to:

- Lead and transform information management
- Guarantee the survival of today’s information for tomorrow
- Bring history to life for everyone.

We have identified five key priorities for the coming year to help us achieve our aims:

- Drive innovation: drive service excellence
- Unite the online and on site customer experiences
- Strengthen our working relationships with key partners
- Build a culture that inspires us all to fulfil our potential
- Champion investment in information management throughout its lifecycle
Drive innovation: drive service excellence

We recognise that innovation and a culture of continuous improvement are essential if we are to maintain the quality of our services to government, the public and the wider archive sector. Employing the most advanced and efficient technologies and processes available to us helps us to maintain high standards of service delivery while driving down the cost of fulfilling our objectives.

This forward-looking approach also means that we can respond rapidly and flexibly to changing circumstances.

Continual innovation and enhanced efficiency not only help us to make the best possible use of public money, but also help us to operate in a more sustainable, environmentally-friendly manner. We expect every member of our organisation to contribute towards these goals, participating in developing and implementing innovative plans and using our resources prudently.

In particular, in 2010-2011 we will:

1. Develop technologies that give researchers better access to information
   • We will improve the online and on site search experience for all our customers, helping them to find information more easily

2. Implement the Civil Pages network on a much wider basis
   • Following the success of the Civil Pages pilot project, we will widen access to this secure online system, which is designed to allow civil servants to share knowledge and expertise
   • Further development of this system will help colleagues from different areas of government to work together more effectively

3. Benchmark back office functions
   • We will establish clear benchmarking and efficiency targets for several of our key support teams

4. Implement legislation services online to meet the changing requirements of Governments, Parliaments and Assemblies
   • We will launch a new online resource dedicated to UK-wide legislation that meets users’ needs and expectations, makes it easier for citizens to re-use this key material and ensures best value for government
**Unite the online and on site customer experience**

The work we have done in developing our online services has allowed us to widen our audiences and raise awareness worldwide about the unique and varied records that we hold. Many of our most popular records are now available online, and this increased accessibility has made it possible to build the number of people who benefit from our internet services to over 20 million a year. In 2008-2009 over 112 million digital copies of our records were downloaded, and this figure continued to rise throughout 2009-2010.

However, we are equally committed to maintaining our excellent service on site at Kew for those who need to visit us in person. With 11 million records in our collection, it is impossible for us to digitise everything – and some research demands first-hand inspection of original documents. Face-to-face advice and support are also a much-valued element of our on site provision, although this expertise is also available to customers remotely by email or telephone. We take pride in the standard of service that we provide on site, and in the coming months we will sustain and further develop the quality of our on site services and facilities for all those who need or choose to use them.

In recent years we have refurbished a number of the public areas at Kew, to make them more useful to our visitors. We will now further this process of improvement by refitting our map and large document reading room. We are also refining the layout of our open-access reading room. This will ensure new visitors to The National Archives receive the support they need, while dedicated enquiry staff are better able to handle more complex research queries, providing in-depth guidance and assistance.

Now that we have improved our online services with a newly-designed website, our goal for the coming year is to ensure that our online and on site services fully complement each other. We will ensure that they work together effectively to provide a seamless experience, appropriate to the needs of our customers.

In 2010-2011, we will make more content available online and make it easier for our customers to find what they are looking for. We will work to meet our customers’ expectations by developing a more integrated catalogue system for researchers. We will combine a number of key research resources, bringing together catalogue information and contributions from records experts worldwide in one easy-to-use system. We will also add to our range of online advice, tutorials and reference guides that are designed to address many commonly asked questions.

These resources will benefit all of our customers in their search for information, whether they are accessing our services online or by visiting our Kew site.

In particular, in 2010-2011 we will:

5. **Implement our future catalogue for researchers**
   - We will provide customers with a single, more integrated catalogue facility, combining a number of key resources into one easy-to-use system

6. **Replace our document ordering system (DORIS) to meet future business and customer needs**
   - We will implement a new system for customers to order physical documents to study on site at Kew
   - This will allow us to maintain the quality of our document delivery service while benefiting from greater flexibility in managing our repositories, and improving our information gathering, management and reporting
7. **Streamline the online and on site customer experience**

- We will make sure that our online and on site services work together seamlessly, complementing each other to provide a more accessible and user-friendly experience, whether our customers access our resources remotely or on site at Kew.
- We will make it simpler for web customers to order and download digitised records.
Strengthen our working relationships with key partners

The National Archives has a wide range of distinct audiences, each with different needs and expectations. If we are to provide the services required by these different groups, we must ensure that we continually listen to and communicate with our stakeholders, building strong relationships. In this way we can be sure that we fully understand their requirements, and can benefit from sharing their insights and expertise.

In 2010-2011, we will review and further develop our programme of stakeholder engagement initiatives. Ensuring that we provide key partners with tailored communications in a consistent and planned way will help us to meet their needs. We will review and refine our communication methods to make sure that they are as effective as possible – that they will secure the feedback we need to inform our future strategies, and enable our audiences to get involved in contributing to our plans.

In uncertain times, we must ensure that we focus on our key priorities: we have had to find ways to evolve to operate more effectively in the current economic climate. In the coming year we will continue to ensure that our stakeholders are engaged and informed about changes we have made, and are provided with appropriate opportunities to feed into future plans.

In 2010-2011, we will strengthen links with the academic community, and work more closely with scholars to make sure that our services support quality research. To this end, we have already set up a quarterly forum including representatives from the Institute of Historical Research, the Royal Historical Society, the Historical Association and the British Academy. We will also continue to meet with key individuals in the academic community to gauge views and opinions.

Our plans for the future include developing targeted digitisation projects of particular benefit to academic researchers. We will explore patterns of use for records series and, with the collaboration of academics we will provide online access to records that meet the needs of our scholarly users. At the same time, by enhancing our catalogue and other search tools, we will make it easier for all researchers to identify records relevant to their studies.

We are working to understand the needs of diverse customer groups and to provide resources and services appropriate to their needs. Our Equality and Diversity strategy is designed to ensure that our organisation and our services are as accessible as possible to everyone. In the coming months, we will continue to embed equality and diversity awareness more deeply throughout The National Archives.

In particular, in 2010-2011 we will:

8. Enhance our strategic stakeholder and partner management
   - We will adopt a more integrated approach to engaging with our stakeholders, ensuring that communications are appropriate for our audiences and consistent across the organisation

9. Widen our reach to new audiences
   - We will research the requirements of new customer groups, helping us to meet the needs of a wider and more diverse range of audiences
Build a culture that inspires us all to fulfil our potential

Every member of staff at The National Archives has a role to play in achieving our ambitious goals. Our staff have a tremendous wealth of expertise, and we benefit from a staff community where a strong commitment to excellence is the norm. All of us who work here are proud of the high quality of service we consistently provide.

In the coming year, we aim to build even further on this tradition of expertise and customer service. Our goal is to ensure that a commitment to collaboration and innovation is embedded ever deeper throughout our organisation. In addition, we will work towards a culture where every member of staff feels empowered to seek out opportunities for personal development, to enhance their performance and plan their career path.

At the same time, our organisation will work towards increased sustainability, minimising the impact we have on our environment. We will also develop the biodiversity of the Kew site, making sure that it supports a wide variety of animal, bird and plant life.

We want each person working here to feel inspired by being an integral part of this exceptional community, by the contribution they make and by the opportunities for personal development available to them. And each person should play an active part in ensuring that The National Archives achieves the full reach of its potential as a dynamic, sustainable and successful organisation.

In particular, in 2010-2011 we will:

10. Build people management capability with clear, measurable objectives for everyone
   • We will enhance our internal performance management processes, ensuring that all objectives and expectations are consistently appropriate, achievable and well defined
   • We will continually improve the skills and performance of all our staff who have management responsibilities

11. Build a shared sense of purpose with people taking ownership
   • We will work to ensure that our whole staff community feels engaged and takes an active role in helping The National Archives reach its full potential, both as a service provider and as a place of work
   • We will improve our recruitment procedures, further enhancing their efficiency and effectiveness

12. Deliver against our Green Strategy, with initiatives which help us comply with government guidelines/directives
   • We will increase our energy efficiency, reduce our carbon emissions and embed a ‘greener’ culture throughout our organisation
**Champion investment in information management throughout its life cycle**

Government is adapting to meet the demands of the times. The whole of the public sector must find ways to become more efficient, streamlining internal processes and functions while still providing the public services that citizens depend on.

We believe that robust information management is even more important in times of economic uncertainty, to ensure effective government. Public sector organisations that manage their information well can operate more cost-effectively, and this capability is an important factor in successfully achieving objectives. Being able to harness the full value of government information is a critical element in policy development and delivery, especially when resources are limited.

Good information management is also essential if government bodies are to keep the right information to fulfil their statutory responsibilities, to enable citizens to re-use public sector information and to ensure that the public record is sustainable and survives for future generations.

Accordingly, we will champion information management as a vital element in effective government. We will consolidate, strengthen and clarify the services that we provide government bodies in this field, ensuring that they are equipped to support this key business function.

We will also ensure that our unique collection of historical public records is safeguarded for everyone to use – now and in the future – by sustaining the best possible environmental conditions in our repositories at Kew.

In particular, in 2010-2011 we will:

13. **Complete the Digital Continuity project and embed it within government departments as ‘business as usual’**
   - We will support government bodies in identifying, assessing and effectively sustaining their digital continuity risks

14. **Deliver the Estates Capital Plan, making our estates ‘fit for purpose’ for the future**
   - We will improve the physical infrastructure of the Kew site to meet our current and future business needs
   - We will manage the environmental conditions in our repositories as effectively and efficiently as possible, providing the best possible conditions for our historical records

15. **‘What to Keep’ – ensure the survival of digital information and records in government**
   - We will make sure that key government departments are well equipped to assess the long-term value of their information
   - We will work with these departments to ensure that statements and schedules are in place detailing what information they keep for business purposes, and what should be kept for the researchers of the future

   - We will support government in making key information, including datasets, more accessible for citizens to re-use in creating new products and services
   - We will deliver simplified licensing for government data, enabling its re-use
17. Deliver the government’s Archives Strategy and provide leadership to the archive sector

- We will take a leading role in supporting the realisation of the vision laid out in *Archives for the 21st Century*, government’s policy on archives

- As part of this work, we will help the archive sector in the UK to meet the challenge of managing digital information so that it is accessible now and remains discoverable in the future