

PRESERVATION POLICY

Introduction

This Preservation Policy details how the Gwent Record Office will preserve and continue to make its Collection accessible. It deals with all aspects of GRO activities which have an impact on preservation. It forms one element of the suite of policy documents which combined address how the GRO will meet its mission of preserving, collecting and making archives accessible.

Conservation

The GRO recognises that preventative conservation is the most effective means of conserving its records. Preventative conservation will form the main focus of activity.

Prioritising of conservation requirements is necessary to determine long-term preservation strategies. Decision making will take into account the needs of the user; condition of material and resource implications; the importance of material (See also Collection and Appraisal Policy) and expected level of use.

Conservation and repair of items will be to the standards specified in BS2971 Parts 1 and 2.

Storage

Facilities for archival storage will aim to meet BS 5454:2000. In line with this:

- Temperature, relative humidity and light levels will be monitored and controlled
- Records will be packaged in suitable archival quality materials before being placed in permanent storage
- All documents will be stored in secure areas. Only staff and those accompanied by staff will be allowed access to these areas
- An ongoing programme of packaging, repackaging and cleaning of the Collection and strongrooms will be in place

Document Usage & Handling

Documents are in greatest danger when they are in use. Correct handling, tracking of documents and security measures are essential to prevent damage and loss.

The GRO will ensure that:

- Members of staff and volunteers are trained in document handling techniques

- Searchers receive information and/or instruction in the correct handling of documents
- Suitable equipment such, as document cushions for volumes, weights and protective coverings, will be used in the searchroom
- Documents which, if handled, would deteriorate at an unacceptable rate are declared unfit for production. This information will be fed into the conservation plan
- A system is in place recording levels of document use and information necessary for their security
- If practicable, where documents are subject to heavy usage, surrogate copies will be made
- Documents are consulted under staff supervision at all times and never left unattended in non-secure areas

Copying

Whenever possible, copies of documents will be supplied upon request. Restrictions will be made in cases where there is risk of damage to the original document by the process of copying. Where necessary decisions on the suitability of documents for copying will be taken after consultation with the conservator.

In line with this archival books will not be copied on a photocopier or flat bed scanner. Copies will only be supplied using overhead scanners / cameras.

Exhibition/Loans

Only surrogate copies of documents will be used for exhibitions unless facilities for their display and storage in line with the requirements of BS5454(2000) are available.

Advice on display, storage and security will be provided to depositors temporarily withdrawing their own documents.

Disaster Preparedness

An emergency plan will be in place. All staff will be aware of this plan and adequately trained in its implementation.

Strategy Formulation and Performance Measurement

It is recognised that to be effective a strategic approach to preservation is essential. A preservation strategy and conservation plan will be in place and will be reviewed on a regular basis

Standards and References

BS4971: Part 1 (Recommendations for the Repair and Allied Process for the Conservation of Documents), BS4971: Part 2 : 1980 (Archival Binding)

BS5454: 2000 (Recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival documents)

National Preservation Office Preservation Assessment Survey