
Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service

Policy on Access to Archives

a partnership between

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1.0 Mission Statement

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service's (WAAS) priority is to ensure the proper management of Worcestershire's heritage for current and future generations. We protect, preserve, manage, record, interpret, share and promote the history and historic environment of Worcestershire. We help the modern county of Worcestershire to achieve its priorities as identified in the Corporate Plan, especially sustainable development, a strong economy, better education and skills and independent healthy living. We are developing a sustainable model for the continuance and growth of the Archive and Archaeology Service in the current financial climate.

2.0 Policy aims

This policy demonstrates how access will be provided to Worcestershire's archive collections, on-site and remote, and documents any charges or restrictions affecting that access.

3.0 Statutory and legal status

WAAS is the successor organisation to the Worcestershire Record Office, established in 1948. It is a recognised Place of Deposit for Public Records, the Diocesan Record Office, and County Record Office, licensed to hold Manorial and Tithe records, and records of local government and other public and statutory bodies.

WAAS operates under the following legislation:

- Local Government (Records) Act 1962
- Local Government Act 1972
- Public Records Act 1958, as amended 1967
- The Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Tithe Document Rules 1960 and 1963
- Parochial Records and Registers Measure
- Environmental Information Regulations 2004
- Manorial Document Rules 1959 and 1967

4.0 Access at The Hive

Access to the county archive collections is available to our community and stakeholders. These include, but are not restricted to, the people of Worcestershire, depositors,

Worcestershire County Council staff and Councillors, Friends of Worcestershire Archives, as well as potential users and depositors.

Access will be provided free of charge at The Hive, in a secure area supervised by archive staff. WAAS is a member of the CARN (County Archive Research Network) scheme, and customers are required to provide proof of identification to sign up to the scheme. Use of original archives is subject to observance of the Searchroom Rules and the Access to Personal Information Statement.

4.1 Archive Staff

Our 12 miles of archives are made available to our customers under the guidance of friendly, knowledgeable and experienced staff. We treat all customers with courtesy and respect, and make every effort to provide customers with a good customer experience whilst researching at The Hive. All important information about using the service – including that given below – will be communicated to our stakeholders via our online Visitor Guide, induction to new users and staff guidance.

4.2 Security

In order to protect the collections, it is a requirement that customers observe required security measures. These include the requirement to:

- Sign visitor book, and in doing so agree to abide by our rules and regulations
- Lock bags and coats in lockers prior to entry to the original archive area

4.3 Good handling practices

Staff will be proactive in monitoring reader activities, and intervene where necessary to offer advice on handling materials, including use of book supports, cushions, weights and other equipment.

Where available, customers will be required to view surrogate sources of documents on microfilm or CD/DVD in order to protect the originals

4.4 Use of Cameras and copying of documents

Copying documents is permitted, where physical condition and copyright allows. Limited photocopying of documents is allowed, but as this can damage documents over time we encourage visitors to use their digital camera or to make use of our in-house digitisation service.

Photocopying will **not** be permitted if:

- A document has a seal
- A document is especially fragile
- A volume is bound tightly and photocopying would harm the spine
- A document or volume will not fit on the photocopy plate

Charges will be incurred for photocopying, digital camera use and the digitisation service. Please see our [Visitor Guide](#) for more information.

4.5 Restrictions

Archives will not be issued if:

- They are considered by staff as too fragile, and further use would cause damage to the item
- If they are affected by a closure period under the Data Protection Act or any other relevant legislation
- If a closure period has been requested by an owner or depositor

If an item cannot be issued, staff will:

- Explain why it cannot be issued
- Suggest other suitable sources or alternative for use
- Where possible, advise on how to apply for permission to view the item

5.0 Remote Access

In addition to on-site access at The Hive, we aim to make information and resources available via a variety of media.

5.1 Website

The Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service aims to regularly review and update our website. It is a priority for new content, including indexes and information about collections, to be added.

5.2 Enquiries by post or email

The Worcestershire Archive Service aims to offer assistance in research, to assist with specific enquiries and to provide information about our holdings with the aim of encouraging a personal visit to The Hive.

Information on our service and resources held will always be given free of charge, however if the search involves accessing original archives, microfilm or secondary sources there will be a charge.

For further information please see our [Policy on Answering Enquiries](#)

5.3 Use of social media

We aim to use various social networks in order to provide up-to-date, personalised information on news and events from the service with the intention of reaching a wider audience and raising awareness of our work. Social media sites used by WAAS may include (although are not limited to):

- Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook)
- Blogging and micro-blogging sites (e.g. Blogger and Twitter)
- Photo and video sharing sites (e.g. Flickr and Vimeo)

For further information please see our [Policy on Social Media Use](#)

5.4 Learning Activities and Outreach

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service aims to engage with existing and potential customers of the Service, either on its own or as part of an activity organised by others. In doing so we aim to:

- Assist users to make the most of our resources.
- Encourage people to engage with archives, especially those who are not aware of the Service and how it can support them.
- Inform the public of what we do, the value of archives and how we can be relevant to them.
- To use archives to support the County Council's priorities.
- Provide fun and enjoyable activities for our customers.
- Promote local distinctiveness and the diverse heritage of local communities

For further information please see our [Policy statement on Outreach and Promotion](#) and our [Policy Statement on Educational Use of Archives](#)

6.0 Review

This Policy was written in August 2013 and will be reviewed in April 2018 or earlier if circumstances dictate