

Scope of the Policy

The aim of this policy is to set out a co-ordinated approach to access to the collections held by the Highland Archive Service (HAS) at the Highland Archive Centre, Skye and Lochalsh Archive Centre, Lochaber Archive Centre and Nucleus: The Nuclear and Caithness Archives. It will aim to clarify the access procedures to collections both in-person and remotely and will explain the ways in which HAS seeks to actively publicise, celebrate and promote the collections.

It should be read in conjunction with the Collections Management Policy which sets out the Vision, Mission Statement and Service Objectives as well as with the Engagement Policy and other policy documents.

Service Objectives

Archives

- To fulfil a custodial role in the preservation, acquisition and cataloguing of the Highland's archives.
- To publicise and celebrate the collections, providing opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to use the archives and to better understand and appreciate the documentary heritage of the Highlands.
- To develop and promote best practice in preservation and conservation by being an instructing office on the Archive and Records Association Conservation Training Scheme.
- To develop and support sustainable partnerships which enable communities and people to engage, explore and enjoy the archives.

Records Management

- To ensure that information and records sources are retained only for as long as is necessary for legal compliance and administrative need across High Life Highland (HLH) and The Highland Council (THC).
- To develop and promote best practice and legal compliance in the creation, use, maintenance and disposal of information and records.
- To manage records stores across the authority's area containing HLH and THC semi-current records and provide a retrieval service in respect of those records.
- To co-ordinate the selection and transfer of records from THC into the custody of HAS, contributing to the Council's corporate memory.
- To work with THC's Information Management Governance Board and HLH's Management Team to ensure compliance with legislation relating to information and record keeping.
- To provide professional input into the development and review of THC's Records Management Plan (RMP) required under the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011.

Our users

- We serve all of the stakeholders of our community, whether users or depositors of records, as effectively and efficiently as possible and make the collections in our care widely accessible to the community through a variety of means, both within and outwith the Highland area.
- We monitor the service we provide by means of the Public Services Quality Group (PSQG) Survey of Visitors to UK Archives, as well as through customer surveys and other data collection.
- We collect and analyse customer feedback from visitors who attend classes or events in our centres in order to ensure the continued improvement and the development of our services appropriate to the expressed wishes of the community.
- We make a conscious effort to publicise and facilitate access to our collections by holding classes, exhibitions, lectures and other events at our Centres and at other venues throughout the Highlands, and by the use and promotion of our newsletter and social media channels, whereby we inform our audience of upcoming events.

- We strive to make our activities inclusive for all members of our community regardless of age, disability, gender or religion.
- Please see the Engagement Policy for further information regarding our specific engagement aims and objectives.

Making our collections accessible: In-person users

Visitor Information

- All four Archive Centres have regular opening hours which can be found on our website, www.highlifehighland.com/archives-service alongside additional visitor information including details on car parking and access. All four Centres are wheelchair accessible.
- There is no need to make an advance appointment to visit any Centre and the collections of each Centre are held entirely on site and can be retrieved within 15 minutes (restrictions permitting – see below).
- There is no charge to access documents in our public searchrooms but users are advised that HLH is a charity and donations received to support the work of HAS are appreciated.
- On arrival visitors to the searchroom complete a registration form and will be required to place bags and jackets in lockers before entering searchrooms (applicable at Highland Archive Centre and Nucleus).
- All four of our centres are supervised by trained members of staff who are easily identifiable by name-badges and lanyards.

Accessing the collections

- Catalogues in our searchrooms list the collections held on site and staff will assist in advising visitors of archives which relevant to their area of research.
- 'How To' Guides, giving basic information about records series and resources are available in our public searchrooms and staff are also on hand to assist with further explaining, contextualising or interpreting documents.
- Any documents subject to access restrictions for reasons of data protection, depositor restriction, fragility or any other reason will not be produced, but the reasons for this will be explained clearly and sympathetically to the user.
- We are able to provide assistance to visitors who have a visual impairment by means of magnifying glasses/sheets.

Searchroom Rules

- One of our highest priorities, while giving access to our collections, is the long-term security and preservation of our documents for future generations.
- Searchroom Rules, publicly viewable in all our searchrooms, remind visitors of the irreplaceable nature of archives, advise on the appropriate method for handling documents, and outline prohibited behaviours such as bringing food and drink into the searchroom or using pens.
- The Highland Archivist, or those acting on their behalf, retains the right to preclude access to the collections.

Surrogates and provision of copies

- The archive collections in the care of HAS exist in a variety of formats, original archive material, microforms, digital, and other surrogates, and are for the most part available for consultation by visitors.
- Microfilm and microfiche readers are available in all Archive Centres and public access computers are available at three of our four Centres.

- Copying of archive material is allowed for personal research providing the item is sufficiently stable to permit it without being damaged and providing it is not subject to any copyright restriction. (We will explain the reasons for any restrictions on copying).
- Those requesting copies will be asked to complete a reprographics form. We are able to provide copies in paper or digital format, subject to the above considerations.
- Photography (self-service without the use of a flash) is permitted, again subject to the above considerations.
- Copying for publication in any format may be considered subject to the above.
- The costs of copying and photography are displayed in the searchrooms of the four Archive Centres.

Making our collections accessible: remote users

The Highland Archive Service recognises that many people with an interest in the collections held, and services provided by us may be unable to visit in person for a variety of reasons. We therefore offer an enquiry service to members of the public who seek advice by telephone, letter, email or via our social media platforms.

Remote Enquiries

- Staff provide basic information from our catalogues free of charge and also offer a paid service for members of the public who wish us to undertake commissioned research on their behalf.
- Searches are made of all of the records available to us, either in the original format, microfilm/fiche, printed or web-based and the results provided to the enquirer (subject to Data Protection legislation).
- The format of the response will be dependent upon the nature of the enquiry, and may take the form of photocopies, digital copies, family trees or family history reports.
- Details of our charges are displayed in all four Archive Centres, are available on our website and are clearly explained to enquirers before the research is undertaken.
- We monitor our remote enquiry service through the national Public Services Quality Group Distance Enquiry Services Survey as well as the CALM Enquiries database.

Websites and Social Media

- Highland Archive Service maintains and manages the Highland History and Culture website Am Baile which provides remote access to a wide range of historical material relating to the Highlands and Islands.
- Highland Archive Service is committed to maintaining high quality social media pages (currently Facebook and Twitter) and publishes regular newsletters about the work and collections of the service. In this way we are able to provide access to, and familiarity with, our collections to a wide-ranging audience.
- We also use these mediums to encourage attendance at our regular classes and public events where archive material will be displayed and interpreted.
- Our website, [//www.highlifehighland.com/archives-service/](http://www.highlifehighland.com/archives-service/) gives full contact details for each of our four centres and provides information on collections, conservation and records management functions, engagement and outreach activities, Am Baile, conference and business facilities and an online shop.
- The website also includes downloadable leaflets on the Highland Archive Service, Family History and the Conservation Service.
- Further details of our public events, the ways in which we seek to provide access to schools, colleges and universities for educational purposes, and the aim of the Highland Archive Service to increase diversity of users can be found in the Highland Archive Service Engagement Policy.

**Highland Archive Service
Access Policy**



Policy Review Schedule

This policy will be reviewed at least once every 3 years, or earlier if a response is needed to any changes in legislation.

July 2019