



Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

Tasglann nan Eilean Access and Engagement Policy

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**Tasglann
nan Eilean**

Archive



Tasglann nan Eilean Access and Engagement Policy

1. Introduction

This Policy is one of a suite of documents governing the service provided by Tasglann nan Eilean, the archive service of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. The Policy defines the principles under which access to the collections and services of Tasglann nan Eilean is provided.

It is submitted for the formal approval of the Comhairle.

This Policy has been prepared to comply with the local authority's obligations to properly preserve and manage its records under the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 and in accordance with best practice as set down by the National Council on Archives Public Services Quality Group's *A Standard for Access to Archives* (2008).

2. Purpose of Archive Service

The purpose of Tasglann nan Eilean (the archive service) is to identify, collect and preserve the records of the Comhairle and its predecessor bodies which need to be retained permanently for legal or historical reasons, as well as the archives of organisations, businesses, estates or individuals connected to the Outer Hebrides which have been gifted or deposited, and to make these accessible to the widest extent possible for research, education or enjoyment.

The Tasglann manages the historical records which have been entrusted to its care to professional standards, to ensure they are preserved for future generations. The archives provide a unique insight into the historical development of the Outer Hebrides, documenting the activities, people and events which have shaped the islands' heritage, and are a valuable and irreplaceable resource.

3. Definitions of Terms used in the Policy

Archive service

Tasglann nan Eilean is the archive service for Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and has an island-wide responsibility for archival records created by the Comhairle and its predecessors.

Archives

Original records which have been selected for permanent preservation because of their continuing value.

Depositor

A person or organisation that transfers custody of historical records to the Tasglann.

Community

For the purposes of this Policy, this refers to residents of the Outer Hebrides, as well as others with a research interest in the Outer Hebrides, whether or not they visit the Archive Service in person, and whether or not they currently use the service.

User

Any person who uses the archive service.

Researcher

Any person using the content of the archive specifically for research.

Stakeholders

Persons or groups with an interest in the present and future activities of the archive service, including Comhairle nan Eilean Siar members and staff, organisations which have awarded funding or grants to the service, local residents, current service users, depositors, or potential depositors, of archives and future users of the service.

4. Key Principles

Tasglann nan Eilean (the archive service) shall:

- provide access to the archives in its care as effectively and efficiently as possible, within available resources;
- aim to serve all of its community, devising a range of services appropriate to the community's stated or implied needs;
- aim to encourage as much access by researchers and users to original archives as is compatible with the permanent preservation of unique and irreplaceable material;
- provide access to the community on an equitable basis within available resources and in compliance with the Equality Act 2010;
- define the objectives it is seeking to achieve to provide and enhance access and to engage the community;
- consult, and be responsive to, the needs of the community, users and stakeholders in developing future plans for the service;
- ensure that procedures are in place to measure performance, gather stakeholder feedback and deal with complaints;
- deliver the service in line with, and in support of, the Comhairle's Gaelic plan and Customer Care standards;
- ensure that performance against its Access Policy is capable of being audited;
- take due account of relevant legislation and ethical codes in implementing the provisions of the Access Policy, including Data Protection legislation, the Public Records Scotland Act 2011, Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004, Equality Act 2010, Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994 and the Copyright, Designs & Patents Act 1988;
- gather and publish information about its performance through returns made to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA).

5. Access provisions

- Physical access to original documents contained in the archive collections is provided at the reading room facility of Tasglann nan Eilean, Lews Castle, Stornoway, Monday to Friday 9.30am to 5pm, by appointment.
- Information about opening hours, how to access the archives and the ways in which the archive service can be contacted is provided via the archive service's website and information leaflets.
- Information about the archive service is available in directories such as Discovery (an online gateway to archive repositories in the UK maintained by The National Archives) and the Scottish Council on Archives' website.

- Researchers are required to complete a registration form on their first visit and produce one form of photographic identification.
- Reading room rules and procedures, aimed at protecting unique archive material, are clearly displayed, and qualified or trained staff are on hand to assist researchers in the use and interpretation of archive material.
- Catalogues detailing the content of the archive collections are available via the archive service's website, and in hard-copy format in the reading room.
- The archive service aims to make archive content available to the community through exhibitions, websites, publicity, social media, presentations and education activities, as well as by direct access.
- The archive service offers an enquiry service via email, phone or post to users who prefer to access the service remotely or are unable to visit the reading room in person (detailed below).
- The archive service aims to support the work of local history societies, schools, colleges, and community groups in regard to using archives for education or enjoyment.
- Where digitised copies of archive material exists, these will be made available via the archive service's website.
- Where original archive material is held in Comhairle libraries, access will be provided under the supervision of a member of staff of the library, and the same rules and procedures will apply as in the archive reading room.

6. Enquiry Service

- Enquiries will receive an initial response within 5 working days, and will be fully responded to within 20 working days, in compliance with the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.
- Enquiries will be logged on a database to enable the information to be used for statistical purposes, and to manage and monitor the enquiry service.
- Up to half an hour of research time will be spent on each enquiry, at which point the user will be advised on what has been discovered and the options for further pursuing the enquiry.

7. Reprographic Service

- Tasglann nan Eilean will undertake to provide copies of archive material on request, for a fee, provided there are no restrictions as a result of copyright, condition issues or other restrictions imposed by the owner of the material;
- Users are required to complete a copy order form, and sign a copyright declaration form, prior to copies being provided;

- Users are permitted to take digital photographs of archive documents without flash, for research purposes, provided there are no copyright or other restrictions and an order form and copyright declaration form are completed;
- Information about the charges which apply for this service can be found on the archive service's website.

8. Access Restrictions

Whilst access to the records held is as unrestricted as possible, the provision of access must be balanced against preservation, security and legal requirements, and the rights of record owners.

- Access will not generally be granted to Archives which are classed as Closed.
- Archives will be classed 'Closed' for one of the following reasons:
 - There is a legal reason, for example to protect the privacy of individuals where records fall under the Data Protection Act;
 - The depositor of the records has placed specific bars to access for commercial or privacy reasons, as part of a Depositor Agreement;
 - The records are subject to an exemption under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002;
 - The archives are in a fragile physical condition and need to be closed for preservation reasons;
 - The records are not listed. Unlisted or partly-listed records will only be available at the discretion of the Archivist. Every attempt will be made to produce a summary listing of each collection within 3 months of it being received to enable some level of access.
- Occasionally it will not be possible to grant access to archives due to unavailability. This will usually happen as a result of them being on loan to another institution, on display at Museum or Taglann nan Eilean, or receiving conservation treatment.
- Exceptions can be made to allow access to records Closed under the Data Protection Act in particular circumstances specified in the legislation. Where application is made for access, the procedures will be explained to those making the request, and access will be at the discretion of the Archivist provided certain conditions are complied with.
- Users of original archive material have a responsibility to comply with reading room regulations. Any breach may result in access being withdrawn.

9. Loans

Requests for loans of original archive material by other heritage institutions for exhibition use will be considered in accordance with our Loans Policy.

10. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or earlier if required in response to changes in legislation. The next review is due in 2020.