Creative Cultures

NATIONAL ARCHIVES, IRELAND:
A COMPARATIVE MANAGEMENT
SURVEY

For **Fórsa**, Archivists' Branch

Creative Cultures and Associate

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NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF IRELAND

A COMPARATIVE MANAGEMENT STUDY FOR Fórsa

0.   Executive Summary

The Archivists' Branch of Fórsa, the trade union which represents professional staff commissioned Creative Cultures to undertake a comparative management study of the National Archives, Ireland (NAI), to assess the capacity of the record office to meets its statutory remit and service delivery, with special focus on the staffing capacity.

The study took place with the agreement and participation of the Director and included a review of the NAI and the production of a survey format, which the office completed and which was also undertaken by comparators, the National Records of Scotland, the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and the Rigsarkivit, the Danish National Archives.

The study was commissioned in 2018. In the course of the compilation of the report it was agreed that there would be a cut-off date for the NAI position and for other issues affecting the NAI. This was set at the end of February 2019. The date on the report is that of the final edit.

NAI's remit is set out in the National Archives Act, 1986 as amended by the National Archives (Amendment) Act 2018, which has introduced a twenty year period for the transfer of records, initially for selected pilot departments. The NAI is empowered to preserve the records of Departments of State, including courts, bodies named in the 1986 Act and committees of inquiry established by the Irish Government. The NAI's duties include the preservation, restoration, arrangement and description of archives, producing finding aids, making archives available to the public and providing educational services relating to archives. The NAI has also undertaken record surveys and contributes to continued professional development in the archive sector.

The NAI operates under the auspices of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG). There are now three main divisions in the office, covering Collection Care and Public Services, Archives and Government Services and Corporate Services and Information Technology. Human resources support is provided by DCHG. There is a four person management team headed by the Director. As at the point of survey in October 2018 there were 44.89 FTE members of staff and 14.6 FTE vacancies, however 4.68 FTE staff were in temporary posts. To form a basis of comparison with the three other national archives, the base used was 44.89 FTE staff out of an establishment of 54.81 FTE. This falls short of the minimum establishment of 60 put forward in the NAI's Work Force Plan of 2016.

Recruitment of archivist posts has tended to take place in waves in single years with long periods in between, Staff members thus become cohorts within the office. The exception is the Director's post, which since December 2014 is now a five year limited term post, with an option to extend the term at its end. Service officers, higher executive officers, executive officers and clerical officer posts form part of the wider Civil Service and are expected to look for promotional opportunities outside the NAI. This has impeded continuity within the office. The NAI has no technical grade staff, who would have the opportunity for internal promotion and more of an expectation that they would remain for longer periods in the office.

Contractors have been brought in to undertake specific tasks on project work. There is relatively little volunteering at the NAI.

The last Strategic Plan, which informs the production of business plans, available at the start of this study, covering the years 2015-2017 had five priorities for the office:

1. **Develop a secure footing for the National Archives**. To meet the capacity challenges of reduced staff, a building not completely fit for purpose and meeting statutory obligations to accept archives and make them publicly available, the NAI committed to work on Archives Repository building project, develop a staffing strategy to address the staffing deficit and contribute to the [then] planned review of archive legislation.

2**. Improve the visibility and accessibility of our services.** Meeting client requirements for archive access, make good use of the office's and other's specialisms, support departmental requests for advice , input to records management and develop a social media strategy to raise awareness of the holdings.

3. Transition to digital. Get ready for future digital record transfer and enhance service delivery through digital and electronic media.

4. Develop our people. Provide all staff with opportunities for professional development, broaden competencies and promote staff expertise within the civil service and to the broader community

5. Develop collaboration. Seek out partners in areas like technology, research and cultural heritage and partnerships where there is explicit benefit to the NAI. Offer expertise and knowledge to future civil service projects to develop exemplar best practices.

Key recent developments have included digitisation, the development of a new NAI website, and the Archive Repository project, to create capacity for the NAI to continue to be able to take in records transferred from departments

Key challenges for the NAI include

- Implementation of the twenty year rule for selected departments in an environment where there remain substantial backlogs of records across many departments and without the creation (as yet) of five FTE posts
- Providing sufficient training to departments in the transfer of records in an environment where a comprehensive records management programme is still at the discussion and development stage
- No capacity at the NAI to take in born-digital records
- Insufficient professional staff to fully meet the NAI's remit, including full participation in the planned government-wide records management strategy and the risk of loss of corporate knowledge with cohort recruitment also leading to cohort departures

The Comparator analysis covered the remit, holdings, document productions and staffing for all four offices. The key findings were:

- The NAI has fewer staff than the other three offices, whose remit is broadly similar, though the National Records of Scotland also includes civil registration and it and the Rigsarkivit, the Danish National Archives (DNA) have larger digitisation programmes than the NAI
- Full establishment levels and core staffing are disproportionately lower and the vacancy factor is higher than in the other comparators
- Productivity levels in the public service and rates of record transfer are higher at the NAI than in the comparators

The recommendations arising from the study are:

R1   Structure

R2   Establishment size

We have demonstrated that the NAI has fewer staff than other bodies with a similar remit judged by a number of measures. Staffing levels at NAI are considerably lower than the comparators compared to the population served.

Whilst the level of staffing at both the National Records of Scotland and the Danish National Archives (DNA) are very much higher than the NAI, the remits of these organisations are also greater. In order to make a fairer comparison, we have defined a 'core' offer spanning the transfer of archival material from government and other organisations, making that material accessible to the public and collections care, and have identified those posts within the establishments of the four archives which will contribute to these functions. Within these areas, too, the NAI is less well staffed than the comparators. The NAI has about 40% of the staff per capita compared to Scotland and only 25% compared to Northern Ireland or Denmark.

Of course population cannot be the only determinant to decide staffing– levels of business must be considered. Core staff productivity levels[1] in relation to both productions of documents and the number of hours open to the public are higher at NAI than any of the comparators, and in relation to visits are higher than both Scotland and Denmark.

We acknowledge that in complex organisations there may be factors which have an influence on staffing which cannot be identified through a high level analysis such as this, and we are certainly not making the case that the comparator organisations are inefficient in any way, but the consistency that these indicators show NAI at the lower end of the staffing

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[1] Calculated by dividing business levels by full time equivalent staff

league tables cannot be ignored. We have already identified significant backlogs in both transfers and making documents available to the public, as well as the future pressure of the introduction of the twenty year rule, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the capacity does not exist within the current framework to address these issues.

We therefore recommend that the staffing establishment is increased to at least the 60FTE identified in the Workforce Plan of 2016.

R1.2   Introduction of technical grades

We recognise that there is a high level of competition from other government departments for a limited pool of resources, and that an increase to that level of staffing may not possible. Whilst we believe that only more staff will alleviate the issue fully, there are a number of other changes that could be made to assist with this.

At the moment, the non-professional staff members within the NAI are on general clerical or administrative grades, often leading to high levels of staff turnover in those posts due to people seeking advancement elsewhere in the civil service, and taking with them a high level of knowledge specific only to the NAI. **The introduction of technical grade staff, in line with other government departments, would reduce pressure on archival staff by ensuring greater staff retention in para-professional roles**, as well as increasing opportunities for career progression

R 1.3   Delegation of management

We believe that there should be an increase in the delegation of management within the NAI. At the moment only a few more senior staff members have line management functions, and our observations indicate that this means that staff at Keeper level have little time for strategic thinking. This is particularly important when consideration is given to the fact the Keepers are the highest level of permanent staff, given that the Director is appointed for a five year term. Should para-professional posts be created, we recommend that some line management, should be delegated to archivists and that the potential of archivists taking on some line management duties of other non-professional staff be investigated . This not only has the benefit of allowing greater scope for strategy in the organisation, but also ensuring that the managerial relationship in small teams is strengthened. Any transition involving changes to archivists' job descriptions should be carefully planned and implemented, ensuring that adequate staffing and support resources are in place, including matching archivist roles to workload.

We also recognise that in a complex organisation like the NAI, individual members of staff may also need instruction and guidance from officers other than their line manager. We recommend that such 'dotted line' management arrangements are put in place.

These recommendations are based on our observations during the current study. However, a detailed review of staffing structure is outside the scope of this study and would require a more detailed assessment of staffing need. **We recommend that a further study is undertaken to identify the most efficient and effective structure at the NAI.**

R2   Recruitment

The evidence of past recruitment panels indicates that the NAI is inhibited from recruiting the professional staff it needs within a reasonable period of identifying need, or vacancies arising through promotion, very occasional resignations or retirement. Recruiting for specialist staff within the wider departmental framework is subject to the panel process and delays can and has resulted in potential recruits taking up positions in other departments. Closed competitions for senior positions have created generational banding, so that staff recruited as archivists rise together and retire close together, causing a generational loss of expertise. Open competitions would appear to suffer from the long delays between the request for and the approval of a panel – and then further long periods before the recruitment process can be completed.

NAI would greatly benefit from having the status to convene its own panels, wholly separate from the DCHG. This would not exempt the NAI from budgetary constraints but it would enable the NAI to meet assigned goals in programmes that form part of government-wide priorities, for example the implementation of the 20 year rule.

Having the right to run its own panels ought to include running open panels when appropriate. This would open up senior positions within the office to competition from external candidates. This is not to belittle the ability and dedication of long-serving staff, but to recognise that all organisations benefit from recruiting from outside their existing staff base from time to time. The quality of the current professional staff is likely to ensure that the bulk of promotional opportunities within the NAI would be filled internally. However new and specialist posts in areas like the management of electronic records, digital imaging and ICT systems may well be very suitable to open panels, while not precluding internal staff from taking up development opportunities requiring additional training in-post.

R 3   Corporate memory

Archives staff, whether engaged in public, repository or departmental liaison, build up a body of knowledge, and due to time restraints, this often remains unwritten. The panel system can result in vacancies due to staff leaving or retiring. Positions can remain vacant for considerable times, giving little opportunity for handover.

We recommend that, irrespective of any changes to the recruitment process, that the NAI devotes some time to capturing the specific expertise of staff, whether their retirement is anticipated shortly or not. As staff time is valuable, one recording technique to consider is short videos or podcasts, even if the eventual aim were to be a written document. In the longer term, a plan for producing appropriate finding aids and staff manuals should be produced. Finding aids for the public are available both online and in physical format and have the benefit of reducing the number of transactions between researchers and staff, and can be invaluable in reducing workload and are well worth the time taken to record them.

R4   Records Management and record transfer

Following a decision by Cabinet in 2016, the National Archives, in partnership with the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer, is to progress a government wide records management strategy, the Public Services Records Management Project (PSRM). This project will develop a consistent approach to the management of departmental records in all formats across the civil service, and will include a scoping strategy for the development of a digital repository for the National Archives. The PSRM and the initial phases of implementing the 20 year rule offer an opportunity for the NAI to seek to take a key role in supporting a better understanding of life-cycle management of paper and born-digital records. The Archives Repository Project will ensure the availability of archival-standard storage to

accommodate the transfer of backlogs of records currently held in government departments and agencies in order to increase compliance with the 30 year rule.

Our recommendations are:

R4.1   The NAI should make recommendations to the PSRM management on the importance of officers with proper responsibility for information management and the management of records in all departments, plus developing expertise on managing born-digital records

R4.2   The NAI should play a key role in creating the resources for life cycle training in Departments, either using its own staff or through appropriately qualified contractors to set up regular training for staff involved in or with responsibilities for managing records as well as those responsible for transfers. These resources will need to include new staffing posts or long-term contractors and online resources that departmental staff can refer to on a day to day basis once trained.

R4.3   Under current arrangements the NAI will not be able to reach the staffing capacity needed to meet its share of the work of PSRM, nor implement the 20 year rule. In the first instance, progress needs to be made to appoint the five posts identified as needed under the records management programme.

R4.4   Ensuring that the NAI has the staffing capacity to meet the PSRM and 20 year rule roll out commitments should then enable the NAI and departments to look at regular secondments or placements of departmental staff at NAI and if appropriate of NAI staff within departments, to the benefit of both parties. Staff going to NAI with records management experience and/a qualification could further benefit by working in the records management work and record transfers undertaken by the NAI.

R4.5   Estimating the backlog of records awaiting transfer under the 30 year rule ought to be regarded as a priority to help long-term planning to resolve the issue. To do this the NAI will need capacity to undertake survey work both to identify the backlog of 30 year plus records awaiting review and the next round of records subject to transfer under the 20 year review.

R4.6   These proposals are likely to require verification of the workload estimates to produce a list of new posts, agreed with the PSRM management and DCHG, with implementation taking place outside the DCHG recruitment processes, to ensure that filling the posts is not held up by the panel system or by any restrictions on recruitment within the DCHG.

R4.7   To implement tackling the backlog we propose that two teams be formed.
   - **One team would focus on 30 year plus record backlog** – initially survey work, then appraisal and transfer. This is a finite task but could take more than a decade. One or two teams to be formed, depending on budget moving from department to department. The programme would be kept under review by NAI as the team or teams would not be permanent parts of the NAI structure, but time limited once the size of the task and the years it would take are mapped out
   - **The second team to implement 20 year rule**, starting with the initial departments identified to date, then moving on as other departments are brought within the 20 year rule. The progress of this team would be kept under review by PSRM or a similar group, with the NAI Director or NAI senior management represented on the body.

R4.8 The NAI must have the staffing and ICT capacity to take in born digital records. Printing out of born digital records by departments is believed to have ceased and in many cases would not be possible. In order to preserve the archives of the last thirty years, the NAI must be able to take in, manage and make accessible born-digital records. Any increase in establishment in this area would be over and above the minimum increase of the establishment to 60 posts.

R4.9 A focus on the backlog of transfers should not be at the expense of continued progress with cataloguing historic deposits held by the NAI. These records should also be assessed and a programme drawn up with SMART targets set to ensure steady progress.

R5 **Online resources**

The new NAI website is scheduled to come on line in March 2019, after the completion of this report. **The opportunity should be taken to review targets to enhance the existing resources, both guides to the collections and consolidate some of the NAI's microsites.** There may also **need to be a capacity assessment** to confirm that expansion of content for departments is possible, should the NAI take on the creation of online advice on life-cycle records management and linked training programmes.

Developing an online repository and additional resources will require dedicated ICT staff. Again this is an area which could benefit from posts at different levels, including technical-graded staff.

R6 **Digital Imaging**

Recent project work has enhanced the NAI's capacity and the office has invested in equipment to carry out project work. To date this has depended on clerical staff and so the unit has experienced similar problems to other parts of the NAI as staff in these grades move on within the Civil Service.

Digital imaging would seem to be an ideal area for the introduction of technical grades to ensure continuity and maintain capacity in what ought to be an expanding area of work for the NAI.

R7 **Conservation**

There is insufficient conservation staff capacity at the NAI to support the display of documents, creation of online resources and manage externally funded projects in addition to maintaining core work to preserve the state archives and to ensure public access is maintained to the collections. The Senior Conservator needs the support of a Conservator post, which has been vacant since 2015.
The promotion of the Conservator to Senior Conservator in 2015 left a vacancy.

We recommend that staffing establishment in this area is increased as identified in the Workforce plan 2016 to at least one conservator to undertake critical tasks and ensure business continuity.

1.   The brief

The Archivists' Branch of Fórsa, the trade union which represents professional staff at the National Archives of Ireland (NAI) commissioned Creative Cultures to undertake a comparative management study of the NAI on behalf of the membership, assessing the capacity of the record office to meet its statutory remit and service delivery functions, with special focus on the capacity of current staffing. The commission stems from the perception of the client group that the NAI has insufficient staff to fulfil its remit and to meet forthcoming challenges, including archive legislative changes.

The study took place with the agreement of the Director of the NAI and included interviews and meetings with the Director and management and provision of key documentation from the NAI. A survey format would form the basis of measuring capacity and performance of the NAI compared to three national archive services from similar sized countries. Two of these were areas of the UK – the National Records of Scotland (NRS) and the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI). The third comes from the Rigsarkivit, the Danish National Archives (DNA). All participating archive services, including the NAI, would complete the survey form to provide matching data.

The study was commissioned in 2018. In the course of the compilation of the report it was agreed that there would be a cut-off date for the NAI position and for other issues affecting the NAI. This was set at the end of February 2019. The date on the report is that of the final edit.

Although the commission came from the Archivists' Branch of Fórsa, which represents all professional staff, Creative Cultures felt it would be important to include the work of general service staff in the NAI to provide as comprehensive a view as possible of the service and so be able to look at comparable levels of workload at different levels within the comparator services.

The report would consist of five sections:

- An overview of the NAI, including recent developments and the impact of new legislation
- An overview of the comparator data, with the focus on staffing levels, vacancy levels and workload
- Options for change to make the NAI more effective with better use of staffing resources
- Recommendations
- Appendices with the returns from each comparator archive service and relevant NAI data.

In order to provide an incentive for other national archive services to take part it was agreed that the survey data and the comparator section of the report would be shared with all contributor offices, subject to their individual permissions for the data to be so shared.

2.   Fórsa as the client for the management study

Fórsa is the second largest trade union in Ireland[2] and the largest trade union voice in the Irish civil and public service. Fórsa represents members in the public service, as well as the commercial sector, state agencies, some private companies and in the community and voluntary sector. The Archivists' Branch has been in existence for over forty years. Membership of the branch is comprised of archivists and conservators working in the civil and public service. Since its formation the branch has been an advocate on behalf of its members in relation to working conditions and also for the wider preservation of the archives of the State.

At the research stage for this report, Creative Cultures met with staff at Keeper and Senior Archivist level. The remit for the study was discussed with the Director. There was no other direct contact with other NAI staff. The work of the Corporate Services and Information Technology division of the NAI was included as it impacted on the work of the client group, but there was no direct contact with the Assistant Principal Officer or other divisional staff.

Three other union branches represent NAI staff. Service officers are members of the Service Officers Branch of Fórsa, clerical officers are members of the Civil and Public Servants Union (CPSU) while executive and higher executive officers are members of the Public Service Executive Union (PSEU). The CPSU and PSEU were once autonomous but recently merged with IMPACT as constituents of Fórsa.

During the commission the client group members were interviewed, either singly or in groups and their views were drawn on to inform the first three sections of this report. Members also facilitated the provision of internal NAI documents used in this report. This report indicates where client member views have informed statements where appropriate.

3.   National Archives, Ireland

3.1   Remit

The framework for NAI's remit is set out in Ireland's national archive legislation – currently the National Archives Act, 1986. A revision to change the period after which records can be transferred to the NAI and made available to the public was at its bill stage when the commission started and has now become law as the National Archives (Amendment) Act 2018. Initially this change will apply only to Anglo-Irish records, and will mean that they are transferred twenty years after creation instead of the current thirty years.

The NAI's current vision is 'To ensure the future of the public record, visibly contributing to the cultural life and memory of Irish society' and the office's mission is 'To collect, manage and preserve the public record of Ireland and ensure its availability both as a resource and to safeguard citizens' rights.'

The NAI's core remit is to preserve the records of
- Departments of State, including courts
- Bodies named in the schedule of the National Archive Act 1986[3]

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[2] In this report 'Ireland' refers to the Republic of Ireland, not the whole island of Ireland.
[3] The list of scheduled bodies in the 1986 Act is now outdated, as over 150 public bodies have been created since the Act and as a result many bodies have no legal protection for their records, though the NAI continues to provide guidance and respond to enquiries. The list includes seven North-South bodies. In the view of senior staff it may not be necessary to subject all of these bodies to the National Archives Act, however there are bodies like the Health Services Executive, together with its

- Committees and commissions of inquiry established by Government or government members or the Attorney General

To achieve this remit the NAI supports the legislative requirements of these bodies to transfer records to ensure their preservation at the NAI, which then makes them accessible to inform the idea of nation and statehood and to support government accountability and the preservation of citizens' rights. In addition the NAI collects records from other bodies with a national remit, where there is 'compelling reason for their preservation' and private records which complement official records.[4].

To achieve this remit the NAI undertakes

- The preservation, conservation, arrangement and description of archives
- The preparation of guides, lists, indexes and other finding aids
- Makes archives available for public consultation
- Makes and provides copies of archives
- Publishes archives, finding aids and other material on archives
- Provides educational services relating to archives

The Director of the NAI has an advisory role with regard to the management of other bodies, such as local authority archives. Under the current National Archives Act, any public service organisation can have its records declared as Departmental records and transferred to the NAI through inclusion in the schedule to the Act.

As part of a wider remit to promote and facilitate archival preservation, the NAI has also undertaken surveys of the records of other organisations. In 1997 two NAI staff were seconded to supervise a team of contract staff to survey the records of Irish local authorities to establish the scope and content of their records. This formed the preliminary stage for the preparation of a report by an oversight committee to recommend principles for the management of Irish local authority archives. In 2014/15 funding from the Wellcome Trust Foundation enabled the NAI to survey hospital and other health related records and again set out scope and content of holdings.

NAI has been proactive in preserving business records (through the Business Records Survey, ran latterly by the NAI), either taking in records or placing them with viable local authority archive services. As a result the NAI now has the largest set of business archive holdings in Ireland. Survey work also extended to local authority collections, for example the collections held by Wicklow County Council and Bray Urban District Council and other public bodies.

The NAI also makes an important contribution to continuing professional development in the Irish archive sector. In the past three years the office has hosted seminars on records management and on professional standards, and also contributes to Archives and Records Association and International Records Management Society events.

Lastly the Director and the Keepers review legislation which may impact on archives beyond the immediate responsibility of the NAI, for example the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2016, the Retention of Records Bill and the EU-wide GDPR legislation, and in so doing

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predecessor and associated bodies where the lack of statutory regulation of their records is a cause for concern.
[4] Hospital records are not included within the NAI remit and their preservation is not covered by national archive legislation however the NAI has saved some major hospital records, such as those of St Brendan's Mental Hospital, Grangegorman.

seek to ensure that legislation takes a consistent approach to archives and records and support preservation and access.

3.2   Structure

The NAI operates under the auspices of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG). Recruitment takes place in the wider context of the Department's budget and the State recruitment agency, the Public Appointments Service, who run recruitment competitions. A controversial proposal to merge the NAI with the National Library, first made in 2009 in the aftermath of the severe constraints on public expenditure, was the subject of an independent assessment completed in 2012, which formed the basis of the subsequent rejection of the proposal.[5]

The NAI is headed by a Director, currently appointed for a five year term. The current structure was introduced in 2016. There are now three main divisions of the office, the first two managed by Keepers, the third by an Assistant Principal Officer

- Collection Care and Public Services
- Archives and Government Services
- Corporate Services and Information Technology

Collection Care and Public Services includes three service areas:
- Public Services
- Archive Repository and Digital Management
- Conservation Services

Archives and Government services includes three service areas:
- Current Records
- Archives Management
- Crowley Bequest Project (formerly with the former Special Projects Division) to catalogue the Chief Secretary's Office Registered papers 1818-52[6]. Team members are contract staff employed for five years.

Corporate Services and Information Technology manages the financial, administrative and ICT functions of the office. These include procurement of general office items, such as stationery and office furniture, facilities management and technical support. Technical support includes procurement for ICT equipment and software.

A fourth division, Special Projects was abolished in 2016 following internal reorganisation.

Human resources support is provided by the HR Unit of the DCHG. The Director liaises with HR regarding provision of staffing, raising business cases for vacancies and proposed new posts, implementation of day to day people management is the responsibility of individual managers, who also take on specialised procurement for goods and services such as digitisation equipment, conservation services and supplies.
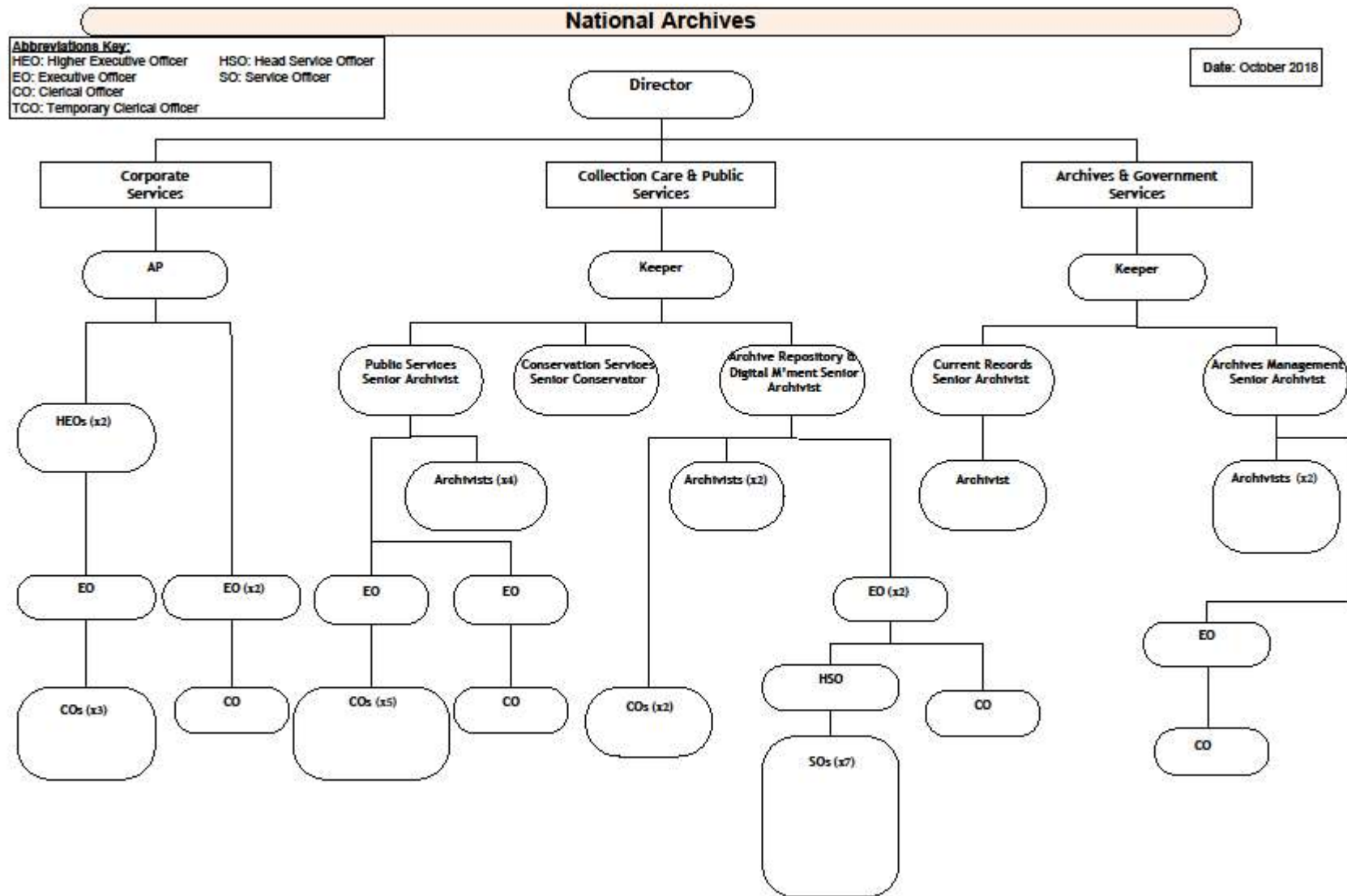
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[5] Assessment of the proposal to merge the National Archives of Ireland into the National Library of Ireland. Jim Power Economics Ltd 2012.
[6] Under a bequest made by the late Professor Francis J Crowley.
http://www.csorp.nationalarchives.ie/index.html

The four-person Senior Management Team consists of the Director, the Assistant Principal Officer, Corporate Services and the Keepers of Collection Care & Public Services and of Archives and Government Services.

The NAI structure is set out in the structure chart below. Names of post holders have been removed. Vacancies and posts where the holder is taking a career break or on secondment are marked.

National Archives

Date: October 2018

Director

Corporate Services

Collection Care & Public Services

Archives & Government Services

AP

Keeper

Keeper

Public Services Senior Archivist

Conservation Services Senior Conservator

Archive Repository & Digital M'ment Senior Archivist

Current Records Senior Archivist

Archives Management Senior Archivist

HEOs (x2)

Archivists (x4)

Archivists (x2)

Archivist

Archivists (x2)

EO

EO (x2)

EO

EO

EO (x2)

EO

COs (x3)

CO

COs (x5)

CO

COs (x2)

HSO

CO

CO

SOs (x7)

The staffing position at the NAI is complex. As of October 2018, there were 44.89 FTE[7] members of staff in post, and 14.6 FTE vacancies. However, 4.68 FTE of the staff in post were in temporary posts, the budget for which had been funded by part of the budget for temporary roles.

The detailed composition of the staff of NAI is shown in the table below:

	Senior managers	Professional archive staff	Professional conservation staff	resources and other support staff	Information technology staff	Archive assistants	Repository assistants	Other support staff	Corporate governance & compliance staff	Total
Established post - permanent contract	3.00	11.79	1.00	3.93	1.00	3.00	9.00	6.48	1.00	40.20
Established post - fixed term or temporary contract	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
Temporary post funded from core funding	0.00	4.00	0.68	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.68
Vacant permanent post	0.00	5.00	0.00	0.60	1.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	0.00	14.60
In post	4.00	16.79	1.68	3.93	1.00	3.00	9.00	5.48	1.00	44.88
Permanent and fixed term posts including vacancies	4.00	17.79	0.00	4.53	2.00	6.00	12.00	7.48	1.00	54.80
All staff in post plus vacancies	4.00	21.79	1.68	4.53	2.00	6.00	12.00	7.48	1.00	59.47

In order to compare staffing levels with the three other archives we have chosen as comparators, we must have a standard definition of both staff in post and of establishment.

It can be seen from the table that there are three possible totals from these figures – the staff now in post; the total of permanent and fixed term staff in post and permanent vacancies; and the total number of staff in post plus the vacancies. We have discounted the third

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[7] A full time equivalent post is defined as a person working 37 hours a week for 52 weeks of the year before annual leave and public holidays. Some NAI staff work for less than 37 hours a week and some for less than 52 weeks a year. In these cases we have calculated the proportion of a full time equivalent the person works and have used in in the totals shown.

method of arriving at a total to define establishment; this is because some of the temporary posts included within this total are funded from the budgets for vacant permanent posts also included within this total.

The figures that we have used are therefore 44.89 FTE staff in post and an establishment of 54.81FTE.

The present establishment has been increased successively since 1971, when there were 20 posts of which four were professional. By 1976 this rose to 33, 8 of which posts were professional posts and in 2000 to 35 of which 9 posts were professional.

3.3 Partnership and project working

The NAI has defined specific areas of work as projects. These consist of fully or partially externally funded work and internal projects, of which the most important example is the Archive Repository Project, which will see a physical expansion of the repository (see 3.9.3). Another major project is the cataloguing of the Registered Papers of the Chief Secretary's Office. Past projects have included the digitisation of the censuses for Ireland of 1901 and 1911 from microfilm, undertaken as a partnership with Library and Archives Canada. The partnership facilitated indexing and contextualisation as well as the digitisation process. The National Library of Ireland, The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and seven other organisations based in the island of Ireland provided supporting guides and source material for the project. The project has its own website, using the branding of the NAI.

When the present Director came into post the NAI was engaged in many projects. The Director conducted a review and concluded that in future projects ought to have a better fit with the stated long term goals of the office. The proliferation of projects may have reflected the availability of specific funding. The relative proportion of project work at this stage was reflected in the previous structure of the NAI, which included a Special Projects Division which has now been abolished. It also impacted on the work of the conservation and digital imaging units for other projects such as Century Ireland, 1916 Letters Project and Conflict Archives on the Internet (CAIN). In the past this was undertaken at no cost, but now the amount of work is capped and charged to the project. Other than these limited charges, the NAI received no commercial benefit from these arrangements.

Other current project work is mainly concerned with digitisation and associated conservation work, and includes a series of school records. External funding from the Wellcome Foundation has been provided to catalogue hospital records and external funding has also been received for the conservation of Valuation Office maps.[8] Work is currently underway to digitise a series of early Dáil Éireann material.

3.4   Staffing

The current staffing levels are set out in section 3.2. At the end of 2016 seven staff had been allocated to the NAI to fill vacancies and three departures were anticipated[9]. The Director's annual report of 2017 acknowledged that a shortfall in staffing meant that the NAI was unable to meet all its statutory requirements[10].

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[8] No conservation work being undertaken on Valuation Office maps at present, awaiting next phase of funding.
[9] NAI structural chart.
[10] NAI Director's annual report 2016 p11

In line with the commitment made in the NAI's Strategic Plan 2015-17[11], a revised Work Force Plan[12] was submitted to the Minister early in 2016 proposing a minimum establishment of 60.

The recruiting panel procedure tends to result in waves of professional recruitment taking place in single years with long period in between. These group years were 1973, 1981, 1994, 2003, 2008 and 2015. After the initial recruitment takes place, staff members tend to stay within their post for between three and seven years on average, although some remain for much longer. Appointment from the Archivist grade to the Senior Archivist grade to date has always been internal[13]. The selection process for the Director's post, combined with a five year limit to each appointment term, combine to make it highly likely post holders will be external candidates.

Service officers, executive officers and clerical officer posts are regarded as forming part of the wider civil service establishment, with the expectation that they will look for promotional opportunities within the DCHG and other government departments. Some individuals have chosen to remain in the NAI and have built up substantial expertise and experience, but the majority move on. Only one of the current senior managers at the NAI started there in a general service grade post before going on to qualify as an archivist and obtain an archivist post. It is common practice for support staff at general service grades to seek promotion elsewhere in government departments, leading to a perception for some professional staff that their time in post is insufficient to build up valuable experience and comprehensive knowledge of relevant NAI procedures. The NAI establishment lacks any technical posts, recognised as a career opportunity for promotion within the office and an incentive for staff interested in a career in the National Archives.

3.5 Contractor, project workers and intern roles

In addition to staff on permanent or time-defined contracts which are included in the establishment figures, there have been also a number of recent contract positions, undertaking specific tasks.

- Two contractors carried out conservation work with funding from the NAI current budget. These consist of one conservator and one preservation assistant. This work concluded in 2018.
- Five contractors were working on assorted projects, which include preservation and digitisation of Dáil Éireann early material and cataloguing of 1917-19 Chief Secretary's Office papers. These consisted of one archivist and four preservation assistants. The project finished in January 2019.
- One contractor is carrying out correction work to the census website; this individual is a professional genealogist, the contract is due to end in March 2019.

The NAI has also offered a free genealogical advice service since 2003, which is provided by an external agent through a contract for services[14].

3.6 Position on using volunteers

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[11] See 3.9.1 below

[12] Work Force plans are submitted annually as a normal reporting procedure

[13] Senior Archivist posts were only established in 1999 when staff at archivist grade since 1974 finally got an opportunity for promotion. To date there have only been 3 senior archivist competitions and they were all internal. Information from senior staff.

[14] Director's report, 2016 p14

There is no culture of using volunteers at the NAI and considerable feeling among the management that using volunteers should not be an alternative to the retention of existing FTE posts or the creation of new ones.

The NAI itself joined the National Archives of the UK in endorsing the Archives and Records Association's Policy on Volunteering in Archives, issued in 2011.[15] The policy recognises that "Volunteers provide much needed 'added value' support for archives by helping, for example, to enhance access and improve the preservation of collections. They also help strengthen links with local communities and offer effective learning and networking opportunities. The use of volunteers has also to be seen within the wider context of providing effective, efficient and sustainable services and as a critical but not the sole building block for delivering such services." The policy balances the value of volunteers in archives with the proper caveat that the ARA "does not consider that volunteers can or should be used to replace appropriately experienced professional or para-professional staff as the principal stewards of the United Kingdom and Ireland's unique documentary heritage."

Developing a proactive volunteer policy can only take place in the context of improved professional staffing. As the ARA Volunteering policy, cited above, emphasises, volunteers cannot ever be seen as substitutes to undertake work that properly belongs with professional posts, or should be carried out by support posts. But should there be appropriate increases in professional staff and the kind of project that would ideally require transcription of documents to make them more accessible online, then the NAI could benefit from the input of volunteers. This could be of use in drawing on Irish diaspora communities attracted by family history interests.[16].

NAI is often approached by people with an interest in history or archives who want to contribute to the NAI's work and from graduates seeking archive experience in advance of making a career in archives. NAI does take in placement students and those seeking a career in archives. However, requests from general volunteers have been refused on the basis that the NAI lacks a professional member of staff to manage and supervise volunteers, or to co-ordinate a programme of volunteer work, or even individual volunteer placements. The NAI depends on human resource functions provided by the DCHG and so also lacks the policy framework to run a volunteer programme.

However the NAI has benefitted indirectly from volunteer work when the Church of the Latter Day Saints (Genealogical Society of Utah) undertook the microfilming of Irish census returns, which in turn then benefitted the later digitisation from microfilm[17].

After the majority of the research for this report was completed the Human Resources Unit of the DCHG issued a directive on 30 April 2019 prohibiting the use of volunteers on the basis that there is no exemption in law to pay a wage under the National Minimum Wage Act for those undertaking work experience placements, work trials or internships. The prohibition has been extended to anyone undertaking what would be regarded as a work task. Volunteering in the future would only be possible in the event that the scope of the directive is reviewed.

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[15] https://www.archives.org.uk/careers/volunteering.html

[16] An example in the UK which used remote volunteers working from other countries can be found athttps://www.library.wales/digitisationprojects/places-of-wales/about-places-of-wales/
[17] Consultants' report on the Repository [Warehouse] Development Project, 2013, p20.

3.7 Recruitment procedures

The NAI is subject to the recruitment procedures of the civil service. Recruitment takes place under the auspices of the DCHG and is in effect a competitive process. The process of filling NAI's vacancies takes place in the context of vacancies across the Department as a whole and in response to available funding in any given year.

Once a post holder leaves or retires, the NAI has to seek permission for a competition to commence. There can be long intervals between the sanctioning of a competition and filling a vacancy, especially if there is more than one vacancy as a result of internal promotion or restructuring. In one example the competition was sanctioned late in 2013, but the vacancy was not advertised until March 2015. Thereafter interviews followed in May 2015, a normal interval and the first person on the panel took up their role six months later – again comparable with the time taken to appoint external senior posts in general, though perhaps excessive for an internal recruitment. An archivist competition took place in May 2018 and a panel was established. However due to budgetary constraints one archivist will start in post on 11 February 2019 and another in March 2019.

As noted above, the panel process tends to result in professional appointments being made in batches, so that generational cohorts develop and tend to move up together as promotional opportunities occur. This can and has posed problems within the office as management and professional staff then often retire at the same time, with the potential for the office to lose valuable experience and expertise.

3.8 Vacancies

The appointment of two senior archivist posts took between six and eight months from the retirement of the previous post holder. The appointment of the present director took two years from the retirement of his predecessor in January 2012[18]. The filling of other posts – the APO Corporate Services and the APO ICT manager (which was replaced by an HEO graded post) took sixteen months and seven months respectively.

3.9 Recent developments

3.9.1 Business Plan

The NAI produced a Strategic Plan in 2015 for the ensuing two years, based on the four key values of professional standards, excellence in service, commitment to professional development and good governance. In turn these values informed five priorities:

1. **Develop a secure footing for the National Archives**. To meet the capacity challenges of reduced staff, a building not completely fit for purpose and meeting statutory obligations to accept archives and make them publicly available, the NAI committed to work on Archives Repository building project, develop a staffing strategy to address the staffing deficit and contribute to the [then] planned review of archive legislation.

2**. Improve the visibility and accessibility of our services.** Meet the varied client requirements for archive access, make good use of the office's and other's specialisms, support departmental request for advice, input to records management and develop a social media strategy to raise awareness of the holdings.

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[18] There was an Acting Director in post from January 2012 until June 2014.

3. Transition to digital. Get ready for future digital record transfer and enhance service delivery through digital and electronic media.

4. Develop our people. Provide all staff with opportunities for professional development, broaden competencies and promote staff expertise within the civil service and to the broader community[19].

5. Develop collaboration. Seek out partners in areas like technology, research and cultural heritage and partnerships where there is explicit benefit to the NAI. Offer expertise and knowledge to future civil service projects to develop exemplar best practices.

The priorities of the Strategic Plan inform the annual business plan. The last business plan available when this report was drafted was the 2017 plan, which sets out six key tasks, with assigned deliverables for each task area and the target year quarter for delivery. The summary below picks out service development, rather than the necessary continued service delivery aspects of the work of the NAI.

- **Meeting key challenges**, includes an NAI records management project based on the outcome of a pilot records management project undertaken in the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
- **Secure foundation**, includes progressing the Archive Repository Project, plan the redevelopment of the fifth floor of the office, develop a staff structure following the 2016 review, input to the proposed changes to national archive legislation, ensuring the integrity and condition of collections and develop the public services and spaces plan.
- **Improving the visibility of our services**, includes a review of the recall service, progressing the Public Service Records Management Plan for the civil service (PSRM) Plan and educational and outreach activities.
- **Transition to digital**, includes developing the new website, review the genealogical offer, increase collections within the image bank, assess digital work and develop an NAI intranet.
- **Develop our people**, includes training, service development through the Know All system, develop an internal communications strategy and develop the office library.
- **Develop collaborations**, includes working with specified partners, including the Council of National Cultural Institutions (membership includes the NAI), the Digital Repository of Ireland and the Irish Manuscripts Commission, work on genealogical delivery with the National Library and collaborate with University College Dublin (UCD), the School of History at UCD and the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. To develop collaborative projects with the Houses of the Oireachtas regarding the Dáil Éireann project.

3.9.2   Digitisation

The period 2015-2016 saw continued work to improve the capacity and robustness of the NAI's IT network[20] The review of the NAI website led to the development of a new website, which was still to be implemented at the time this report was produced, so that old and outdated information, including the structure of the office, remain in the public domain. The Decade of Centenaries was launched with the first of a series of online exhibitions, which focused on the Easter 1916 Rising. The Decade of Centenaries began in 2013 and will end

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[19]Knowall, a correspondence management systent system, comes within the remit of this area of service development
[20] http://www.nationalarchives.ie/about-us/publications/annual-reports-of-the-director-of-the-national-archives/

in 2023, with the centenary of the Civil War. NAI identifies records in their holdings relevant to key events in these years and endeavours to digitise and highlight these topics as they arise. For instance for November 2018 the documents of the month are soldiers' wills from the First World War to commemorate the ending of the war and the influenza pandemic of 1918-19.

The review of the digital image holdings of the office was completed and the Digital Imaging Unit continued existing programme work on the National School applications, images to support the Crowley Bequest Chief Secretary's Office papers, and Cabinet Minutes and selected departmental records released under the 30 year rule. The Unit also digitised images for the Decade of Centenaries and other project work, including the document of the month series. Two major digitisation projects were completed in 2016, the Property Losses (Ireland) Committee 1916 files, now accessible via an online database and the 17th century Books of Survey and Distribution recording Irish landowners[21].

As of February 2019, two of the three clerical posts undertaking digitisation are vacant, severely limiting what the unit can undertake.[22]

Born Digital Records
By the end of 2016 no progress had been made in developing capacity in electronic records management, despite 'vocal demand'[23] for the appraisal, accession and preservation of electronic records, including the production of guidelines for their management and transfer to the NAI. No capacity has been developed within the National Archives to accession born digital records. Successive Directors have highlighted this issue with the Department, as evidenced in their Director's Reports from 2000 onwards.

3.9.3   Archive Repository Project

A cost benefit analysis to evaluate the necessity of undertaking the building of a repository at the National Archives in Bishop Street was undertaken in 2013. A report was subsequently commissioned on the feasibility of the Archive Repository Project [24]. At that stage the NAI was suffering an acute records storage problem. Capacity comprised:

- Bishop Street Front building: 124,000 boxes of archives stored on five floors with no capacity for new accruals.
- Four Courts: 90,000 boxes of archives and records stored in premises which have been upgraded.
- Bishop Street warehouse: 114,000 boxes of records stored in a warehouse which had no environmental controls.
- Commercial record storage: 1,800 boxes in commercial storage, subject to an annual rent charge and retrieval, transport and return charges for departmental access and for staff and public requests.

The lack of capacity has severely limited the NAI's ability to fulfil its statutory duties to ensure the transfer of departmental records under the thirty year rule, a fact that was acknowledged

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[21] The digitisation work for the Books of Survey and Distribution and the Property Losses (Ireland) Committee files was outsourced and carried out at the NAI by external contractors supervised by NAI staff.
[22] Information from NAI management.
[23] Quotation from NAI management, which did not identify departments. However, "all departments are asking, it is a general demand from departments of state."
[24] This section draws on the consultants' report on the Archive Repository Project outline notes for discussion, produced on 4 October 2013. Commercially sensitive information on costs has been excluded from this report.

in the Director's annual report of 2017. In 2012, only four of the eighteen departments have deposited all their records with the office. Five other departments have transferred some records but eight had transferred nothing, with the latest dates of material held by the NAI for these departments ranging from 1962-1980. Under the 30 year rule all departmental records for 1988 should have been transferred to the NAI in January 2019.[25]

The combination of lack of accrual space and staffing capacity has reinforced this position, so that the NAI is only able to say it provides a comprehensive service to four departments. There is a perception among some departments that their obligations under the National Archives Act do not need to be met due to the inability of the National Archives to accept transfers of records. Without additional storage capacity, even if there were staff to take a proactive stance towards departments transferring occasionally or not at all, the only resort to meet the new storage requirement would be additional commercial storage, with the resultant impact on the Office of Public Works' budget.

The 2013 consultant's report looked at annual accruals and estimated:

- 5000 boxes would come from the four departments transferring regularly
- 2000 boxes would come from emergency or one off transfers by other departments
- Amending the 30 year rule to become a 20 year rule, as has now been ratified under the 2018 archive legislation, was estimated to produce a further 5000 boxes of records per annum over the period 2019-2028

The report supported the proposal to convert the Bishop Street warehouse to become a repository with environmental controls and with capacity for 324,608 boxes. This will provide the capacity for taking in considerable parts of the backlog of records, obviate the need for using commercial storage and meet the projected increase in archive intake following the implementation of the 20 year rule. Work is currently underway by the NAI to decant records from the warehouse site to temporary storage secured by the Office of Public Works (OPW) to facilitate the building project. Site investigation works and tendering is scheduled to be carried out by OPW in mid-2019 with building to commence in late 2019.

The Archive Repository Project will enable the NAI to have the physical capacity to take on backlogs of transfers and change the current position of having to take a passive stance to acquisitions from departments. To meet statutory duties the NAI has completed new guidance for records management and record transfer procedures for departments. The office will also need sufficient professional staff to manage preparation for and the transfer of records and engage with those departments who have ceased to make regular record transfers. This will be a gradual process over a number of years.

The calculations supporting the assessment that the Warehouse conversion will provide sufficient future capacity are based on the continued transfer of records in paper form. The 2013 Report notes that even born digital records are still printed out and it is the paper form that is transferred, not the digital file. While it is still government policy to have all records for long term preservation in physical format, even those created digitally, not all are doing so, and some rely on electronic storage only.

There are departments of state that had already moved some functions into digital formats in 2013 – the Companies Registration Office and District Court files were cited as examples. There is a current initiative by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) to spread the use of e-Docs, a customised electronic documents and records management system built on a Microsoft Sharepoint platform to departments. The

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[25] Management know that some departments still hold 19th and early 20th century records

involvement of the NAI started with consultation with the Director, and has now progressed to negotiations for a role for NAI in the roll out of e-Docs to all government departments.[26]

3.9.4 Conservation

NAI management feel that the current emphasis on supporting the display of documents, the creation of online resources and managing external projects has diminished the time that can be spent on preserving state archives and ensuring public access to the collections is maintained at a proper level. While the promotion of the Conservator to Senior Conservator in 2015 was a welcome development, the Conservator post was left unfilled.

The Workforce plan of 2016 identified the need to replace the Conservator post and we support this proposal to ensure that new and long standing conservation service delivery priorities can be met.

3.10   Issues facing the NAI

3.10.1 Twenty year rule

Changes in the UK in 2013 which saw the age at which public records are normally transferred from departments to the National Archives change from thirty years to twenty years, prompted the Irish Government to consider a similar change in Ireland, with the prospect that UK records on Anglo-Irish issues for recent periods would be available to the public when the equivalent Irish records would still be closed. The National Archives (Amendment) Act 2018 has amended the National Archives Act, 1986 to change the transfer date for Irish public records from more than thirty years to more than twenty years. In the first instance this will focus on Anglo-Irish records only.

Implementation will pose a considerable challenge to the NAI. Initially this will be selective, confined to the departments of the Taoiseach, Foreign Affairs and Trade, Justice and Equality and the Office of the Attorney General. An implementation group drawn from the four departments was formed in the autumn of 2016 working with the NAI, with an initial aim of conducting a survey to estimate the potential quantity of files that would be transferred under the new rule.

The challenge for the NAI will be the implementation of the new rules in departments which have transferred only some of their records older than thirty years - or who have made no transfers at all in recent years. It will not just be the timing for completing the Archive Repository Project – but also having a strategy in place and staffing capacity to change the position of the NAI from discouraging transfers to proactively working with departments to move to regular transfers and clear backlogs.

This will also be affected by the implementation of dedicated records management in departments, led by the Department of Expenditure and Reform and discussed below.[27]

In the Report of the 20-Year Rule Implementation Group[28] there was an initial estimate that the NAI would require an additional two archivist posts to meet the requirements of the National Archives (Amendment) Act 2018, based on a projected accelerated release in four departments, over a ten-year period. At the time of writing this report there was a shortfall of three archivist posts in Archives and Government Services (AGS) which are needed to keep

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[26] Information from management. Position as at February 2019.
[27] See 3.10.4
[28] Cited by Senior staff but not seen by Creative Cultures

pace with current rates of transfers under the 30 year rule. Those three government departments and the scheduled body initially affected by the first stage of the implementation of the 20 year rule will also require increased staffing and resources, ideally including one archivist post in each department to ensure the smooth running of the proposed change. Management members at the NAI estimate that any extension of the 20 year rule to encompass the full range of records from all government departments currently transferring records would require ten additional archivist posts.

3.10.2 Historical backlog

The NAI has an internal backlog of records waiting processing. These consist of:

- Departmental records transferred more than ten years ago were not listed before transfer and so need additional work to make them accessible
- Historical material held in the Bishop Street warehouse which includes non-governmental records that has never been listed

Of the current intake of departmental records, 75% pre-date the National Archives Act of 1986. Some of the departmental holdings will require further review work with the transferring departments.

3.10.3 Departmental backlogs

The combination of lack of NAI storage space, NAI staffing capacity and the arrangements for transfer of records within departments have all combined to produce an extensive backlog of records which should have come to the NAI for appraisal, cataloguing and to be made publicly accessible. At the beginning of 2017 the NAI remained unable to accession large quantities of records due for transfer from the majority of the 61 bodies listed under the National Archives Act [29]. Only six departments transfer records regularly and only four are more or less up to date with transfers. There are large numbers of requests to transfer from departments, who are under pressure to reduce their storage costs, especially where records are in commercial storage.

At departmental level there are issues with allocation of staffing resources. There is no system of departmental record officers in Ireland[30]. NAI staff believe that the management of records tends to be delegated to relatively junior staff, with no career path to develop information management skills – and think that in some departments there would appear to be no delegation at all. Management members at the NAI have noted that departments appear reluctant to allocate adequate resources to the preparation processes needed to transfer records to the NAI[31].

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[29] Director's annual report 2016 p16

[30] In the UK departments of state have dedicated posts responsible for records management and working with the UK's National Archives (TNA) on the identification and transfer of records identified for permanent preservation to TNA.

[31] In 2016 sixteen staff in one department received a day's training from three staff members from Archives and Government Services. However, only fifteen files were transferred in the period after the training had taken place. The exercise was felt to be a poor use of staffing resources by senior staff at the NAI, but reflected the relatively low priority given to the legal obligations of departments under the National Archives Act.

NAI staff also assert that there is no linkage in Departments of State between data protection, freedom of information and records management – and above all no clear concept of the importance of strategic information management.

There have been attempts to put the management of records into a wider context. In 2017 there was a pilot project between the NAI and the DCHG, with the idea of using generic documents to train staff, but the project finished without an implemented programme of work and procedures in place. The Director's report of 2016 reported the ratification of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's Records Management Plan by the Cabinet. The lead department will be the Department of Expenditure and Reform (DPER), not the NAI. Statutory responsibility for records management rests with the DPER not the NAI.

Without the implementation of comprehensive guidance on records management, and with the current limited capacity of the NAI, the emphasis is on the transfer of paper records and the selective identification by some departments of documents they consider of historic value. Pressure has also been placed on the NAI to give overall consent for records destruction without proper appraisal procedures. This is in response to costs to departments of the commercial storage in which records awaiting assessment are held.

At present there appears to be little or no recognition in many departments of the role that effective records management could play in reducing storage costs. As a recent example of what can be achieved, from May 2018 to February 2019 thirty two disposal certificates were issued, resulting in the disposal of around three million records. A substantial proportion of these records had been held in commercial storage for a significant period of time beyond their allocated business or time limit for legal retention. Investment in staffing resources by departments to ensure that records are disposed of through due processes rather than wholesale without proper review would contribute to further savings in unnecessary record storage costs[32].

3.10.4 Records management and transfer procedures in departments

The capacity limitations of the NAI impacting on the transfer of departmental records and engagement with the processes for managing records within departments have already been noted[33]. When the Archive Repository Project is completed, the physical capacity to accept a greater number of transfers will exist, but only if there are sufficient staff in post to undertake the additional work. This would include working more closely with departmental staff on record transfers, which NAI management would welcome, subject to having the capacity to do so[34].

The NAI has produced guidance for departments on the procedures for transfer under the provision of the National Archives Act, 1986 and Regulations 1988 3(1)[35]. In summary, each department must appoint a Certifying Officer, at Principal Officer grade, or equivalent level,

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[32]This came about through the formation of the Current Records unit in the NAI in early 2018 to undertake appraisal work. An outline of the processes the unit undertakes forms the penultimate paragraph of this section. Information from NAI management.
[33] Section 3.10.3
[34] Enhancing the NAI budget to achieve this capacity would be easier to achieve if there was some degree of statutory recognition of the NAI's part in records management within government.
[35] These are: [Role and] Duties of a certifying officer; [Role and] Duties of a Consenting Officer; [Role and] Duties of a Requisitioning Officer; Responsibilities of transferring bodies; How to transfer of records to the National Archives; Disposal of departmental records; Retention of departmental records; and Withholding departmental records. These have been recently edited and augmented to provide additional guidance and expand the role of the NAI, which now requires to be informed of any changes to certifying consenting and requisitioning officers. See following paragraph for other changes.

with responsibility for the process of transferring records and for signing certificates for the retention or withholding of records. Certificates to withhold or retain records need to be approved by the Consenting Officer, an officer of at least Principal Officer grade in the Department of the Taoiseach. The framework for the responsibilities and nature of records to be transferred is set out in guidance to transferring bodies and includes the conditions under which records can be withheld from public inspection, when a case can be made for retaining records by departments and when records can be withheld – effectively for a five year period at the end of which a further review takes place. Each department, defined as any body staffed by civil servants, must appoint a Requisitioning Officer, of at least Executive Officer grade for the recall and return of any records already transferred to the NAI.

The guidance notes, which have been recently revised, now emphasise that all departments, court offices or scheduled bodies covered by the legislation must have had appropriate staff trained in the procedures to transfer records to the NAI. The notes outline the stages of transfer and cover the release of documents for public inspection, responsibilities under legislation, retention of departmental records and the withholding of departmental records from public inspection. The guidance makes clear that 'records' as covered by the procedures includes electronic records, which, like paper records, might require a survey before destruction is authorised. The guidance notes also indicate the authority of the Director of the NAI to refuse the transfer of records less than thirty years old, should the National Archives not have the space to store them[36].

Until recently, lists of records were prepared by departmental staff, then checked by NAI staff, and if need be returned to departments if there is insufficient information or the listing work is seen as sub-standard. The quantity of support required from NAI staff varies considerably between departments – in part a reflection of the capacity of the NAI to provide procedural guidance for preparing lists and again an issue of the capacity and role of the NAI.

In 2017 a new unit was established to streamline the process of applying for disposal of records unworthy of permanent preservation (under section 7 of the National Archives Act, 1986) and to provide advice to government departments and agencies on the management of their records. The unit consists of the Senior Archivist for Current Records, with the support of an archivist from Current Records and half the time of an executive officer[37].

The unit now oversees the following successive stages in the appraisal process:

- The relevant transferring department completes an application form, with details about the series of records for which disposal authorisation is sought, which include the function of the records, quantity, location and format.
- NAI staff members arrange a follow up survey, the time taken to complete the survey depends on the quality of application form. The surveying officer may also be asked to inspect other record series or provide advice on records for which permission to dispose could be sought in future.
- The surveying officer prepares a detailed report for the NAI director, with a recommendation for disposal or retention.

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[36] Guidance notes. How to transfer records to the National Archives, section on preparing documentation. The guidance notes were compiled before the passing of the National Archives (Amendment) Act 2018. Presumably exceptions will have to be made by the limited series of records less than thirty but more than twenty years old covered by the Act. The revised versions seen for the compilation of this report will be accessible via the new NAI website, once approved. The web site itself is scheduled to be launched in March 2019.
[37] Shared with Archives Management

- If the Director signs off on the disposal, the NAI issues a disposal certificate to the requesting department, which may include specific conditions, for example on the retention of associated electronic data bases.
- The certificate must then be signed by the departmental Certifying Officer and countersigned by the NAI Director. The original certificate is retained by the department and a copy by the NAI.

The time the whole process takes is variable, depending on the efficacy of co-ordination within departments. Following the introduction of GDPR, it has been made more effective where departments have co-ordinated disposal applications through their Data Protection unit, which arranges the completion of the initial application, site visits and the signing of disposal certificate. This has been especially helpful in cases where the location(s) of records requested for disposal may not always be immediately known by departmental staff[38].

In the months since the unit was created, management at the NAI feel that its work to date has resulted in substantial savings for departments in record storage costs. There will be a review of the unit's work after one complete year of activity, with a view to publicising these figures. This will support the case for additional resources to be allocated to the NAI in the important area of records transfer.

A government-wide records management strategy, the Public Services Records Management programme (PSRM) led by the DPER, will offer opportunities for the NAI. These could include planned programmes to tackle historical backlogs in departments[39], once the Archive Repository Project is complete, tested out in the form of pilot projects with one or more departments. PSRM also includes plans to develop a digital records framework alongside the management of paper records and test this out through selected pilots, but relevant departmental staff may well need persuading that the e-Docs programme used across government lacks the tools for comprehensive management of born-digital records. However eDocs will not support non-standard specialised formats and so could not have a programme to support the management of digital records incorporated into it.

The Director has used the opportunities offered by PSRM to open discussions with the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO), but the OGCIO may lack staff with records management knowledge or expertise.

The staff capacity of the NAI is critical to the wider development of good practice in the management of records, both paper and digital. Ideally the NAI should be working proactively, starting with raising awareness in those departments not undertaking regular transfers of their responsibilities under National Archives legislation and ensuring that training staff in life-cycle records management, not just the transfer process, is not lost through staff transfers or promotion. Regular training sessions would also need to be backed up by on-line resources. Training will require staffing resources, and support at senior levels in departments to ensure that transfers take place on a regular basis after training, and not as a one-off exercise. Life-cycle records management training could also be tested out through pilots, with the support of the PSRM.

Where appropriate, short-term placements of departmental staff whose job descriptions or duties include a substantive responsibility for the management of records could be arranged at the NAI, and vice-versa. Similarly additional staffing capacity at the NAI might also allow

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[38] Information from NAI management.
[39] NAI management have cited the co-ordinated and centralised approach of the Department of Agriculture as an example of how disposal processes could be managed in other departments.

for short-term placements of professional staff in departments, though not at the expense of impeding professional records management duties carried out by NAI staff.

The extent of the backlog of records awaiting transfer has been presented by management as a major issue, and not one that can be easily quantified at present. The PSRM project ought to be able to offer the opportunity for pilot surveying work in one of the departments which has had the least contact with the NAI in recent years, with a view to commissioning surveys to fully assess the backlog. This mapping exercise would then form the basis of drawing up an annual programme of backlog transfers and for estimating the number of years needed to fully clear all backlogs across departments and agencies.

For the future there are four challenges which the NAI needs to meet:

- Having sufficient capacity to meet the future requirements for storage of transferred records under the 30 year rule and under the new 20 year rule.
- Having sufficient staff to take a proactive role in working with departments on their internal management of records, to improve the process of transfer and to train staff on life-cycle records management.
- Engage with the introduction of a government-wide records management strategy led by the DPER.
- Have the staffing and system capacity to take in born digital records and a role in changing the current predilection for transferring all records in paper form[40].

In the short-term some of these challenges may require the completion of pilot projects and the NAI should make the case for staff on these projects as part of the PSRM work.

3.10.5 Transfer rates from departments

In 2013, the NAI estimated that the current rate of transfer from the four departments that work closely with the office and irregular transfers from other departments amounted to 7,000 boxes per year[41].

In addition in 2013 the backlog included the equivalent of 25,000 boxes of space needed for historic Ordnance Survey maps and totalled 141,000 boxes. 338,000 boxes were already held in the Bishop Street front building, at the Four Courts or in the Bishop Street warehouse. There was no estimate of the backlog held by departments that have not transferred for many years – which would be over and above the estimation of an additional 5000 boxes per annum arising from the change to the 20 year rule.

3.10.6 Format position for departmental record transfers

To date all departmental records transferred are in paper format. There is no current capacity to accept transfers of born digital records.[42]

Modern archival practice now places great emphasis on digital preservation, linked to electronic records management practice (ERM). Adopting the principles of digital

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[40] NAI management believe that most departments have ceased to print out records, so unless the NAI can be given the capacity to take in born-digital records, the office will not be able to fulfil its key remit of ensuring that properly appraised government records survive as archives in future.
[41] Consultants' report on Repository [Ware house] Development 2013 p4
[42] There was formerly a practice to print out paper copies of born-digital records. NAI management now believes this has largely ceased.

preservation and impending ERM ought to be a government-wide goal. [43] No provision for any change of position was included in the National Archives (Amendment) Act 2018, though there may be opportunities should the planned government-wide records management scheme be adopted.

3.10.7 Reduction in physical visits and growth of document requests per user

There was a drop in the number of visitors at the Bishop Street Reading Room in 2017 – down by about 3% to 8,521 from 8,746 in the previous year. The National Museum of Ireland (all four sites) and the National Library saw visitor numbers drop by 10.6% and 12% respectively.

In the case of the NAI some of the drop may be attributable to the availability of some record classes online. Other key comparator figures are:

Data	2016	2017
Document production	17,330	20,438
Reprographic copies	16,028	9,475
Web site visits	2,688,710	7,469,892
Research queries	4,378	5,654

The NAI staff perception is that document production has risen with users being better informed about holdings in advance of a visit, through using the online catalogue. With users who are better informed, there has been a rise in advance document ordering requests. Better informed users have, however, contributed to additional work for staff as they request documents from more obscure sources.

3.10.8 Staffing issues

The combination of the size of the staff establishment and the recruitment process has posed a series of problems, which as perceived by the management are:

- Insufficient numbers of professional staff inhibits the development of long-term strategic thinking and enforces a constant state of fire-fighting to deal with problems. Professional staff members feel they make considerable commitment to the work of the NAI, regularly working beyond their allocated hours during the working week, and working at weekends.
- Loss of corporate knowledge arising from management leaving at the same time. The effect of panel recruitment in building in generational bands of professional staff has been noted above.
- The divisional structure within the NAI can inhibit effective working. There is no culture of putting together teams from the different divisions, and no arrangements where line management is supplemented by a staff member working to another senior professional post for specific purposes.

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[43] Successive NAI Directors have in their annual reports raised the issue of electronic records for more than ten years. Information from NAI senior staff, also noted in Director's Annual Reports from 1999 onwards.

- Retention of general service grade staff, including those undertaking para-professional duties. The limitations for promotional opportunities within the NAI for non-professional staff result in a high turnover in staff, with departures for other posts within the civil service being seen as an expected career move, though there have been exceptions with some staff staying for their entire careers with the NAI.
- Professional staff feel that they lack the time to invest in training non-professional staff in complex tasks, who are then likely to move on to other positions outside the NAI. In turn, this has resulted in a reluctance to delegate duties which would then be overseen by professional staff, rather than form a direct part of their duties.
- There have been demarcation limits set on the extent to which archivists can undertake managerial work, rather than supervisory duties. With the current level of staffing, there would be inequality of experience as there are so few general service staff to manage, not every archivist would get managerial experience. It is the view of the professional staff that until there can be equality of experience, it would be unfair for one or two archivists to get managerial experience, thereby giving those individuals unfair advantages in the event of a promotional competition.
- Senior staff perceive there to be a communication problem within the NAI. This is partially a consequence of the hierarchical nature of the organisational structure. Although quarterly meetings are held, staff at all levels and grades feel that these are more for the dissemination of information as opposed to a forum where constructive discussions about work related issues can take place. Any discussions regarding work related matters or concerns currently take place at line manager level only.
- Management believe that the logic of allocating staff to divisions does not seem to meet the business need of the organisation. Staff shortages have meant that filling of vacant posts is not always a consideration, rather staff members have been allocated to roles to address short term business demands.

3.10.9 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) implementation

The NAI is currently reviewing its own business records to ensure compliance. Retention policies relating to public access function material are also being reviewed, and staff training will be arranged. It is possible that the number of subject data requests will increase as a result of GDPR, but to what degree is unknown at the time this report was compiled.

GDPR has focussed departments on records management issues, as they strive to be compliant. There has been an increase in the requests for guidance on data protection issues from government departments. Although the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is ultimately responsible for government records management, there is no guidance available to departments. There is no reference to GDPR in the National Archives (Amendment) Act, 2018, which may lead to a lack of clarity of process. There has also been an increase in requests for training on GPDR for departmental staff to the NAI. Requests to dispose of records series have already increased, and this may also mean that the pace of transfer may be increased, especially to address historical backlogs.

GDPR is likely therefore to produce a short term spike in the workload of the NAI in terms of departmental guidance and training, but also a longer term trend in increased transfers and the associated work. Whilst this is to be welcomed in terms of preservation and access to material by the public, it is likely to have staffing implications for the NAI, although it is not yet possible to predict their extent.

3.10.10 Events and activities

The NAI has small areas for document display within the Bishop Street front building which are updated regularly. There is also a document of the month. A review of all public facing activities in 2016 resulted in the discontinuation of the annual open day, and a resumption of participation in the Ireland-wide Culture Night in September, when there was a programme of tours and talks[44]. The NAI also participates in a range of historical and genealogical events. The 2016 review also included a new social media strategy and by the end of 2016 there were over 2000 Twitter followers. Twitter was also used to publicise the weekly release of Dublin Metropolitan police files in the run up to the anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising and to better promote the document of the month[45]. Besides the main NAI website, there are also a number of microsites containing digitised documents, mainly of genealogical interest, but also created to showcase archival sources for the Decade of Centenaries (below)[46].

The commemoration of the Easter Rising forms part of the Decade of Centenaries, covering the formation of the Irish state from 1913-1923, to which the NAI is committed to full participation.[47] The programme of events includes annual commemorations and is also seen as an opportunity to provide access to historical sources and primary records of the period, for the production of exhibitions and public discussions. The NAI will be a partner in a project to digitise a series of early Dáil Éireann records in conjunction with the Houses of the Oireachtas. The NAI is also working with Beyond 2022 https://beyond2022.ie to reconstruct virtually the original building of the Public Records Office of Ireland which was destroyed in the civil war in 1922 including provision of contextual material and digital surrogates of records which survived the destruction. All these projects involve the time and resources, especially for of the Digital Imaging Unit and Conservation.

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[44] The 2016 event took place on 16 September. Directors' report 2016, p14. The NAI activities benefit from nationwide advertising and promotion for all cultural institutional activities.
[45] Ibid
[46] Information from NAI senior staff members
[47] Ibid p3. The Decade of Centenaries website has details of   http://www.decadeofcentenaries.com/ . NAI website http://centenaries.nationalarchives.ie/centenaries/
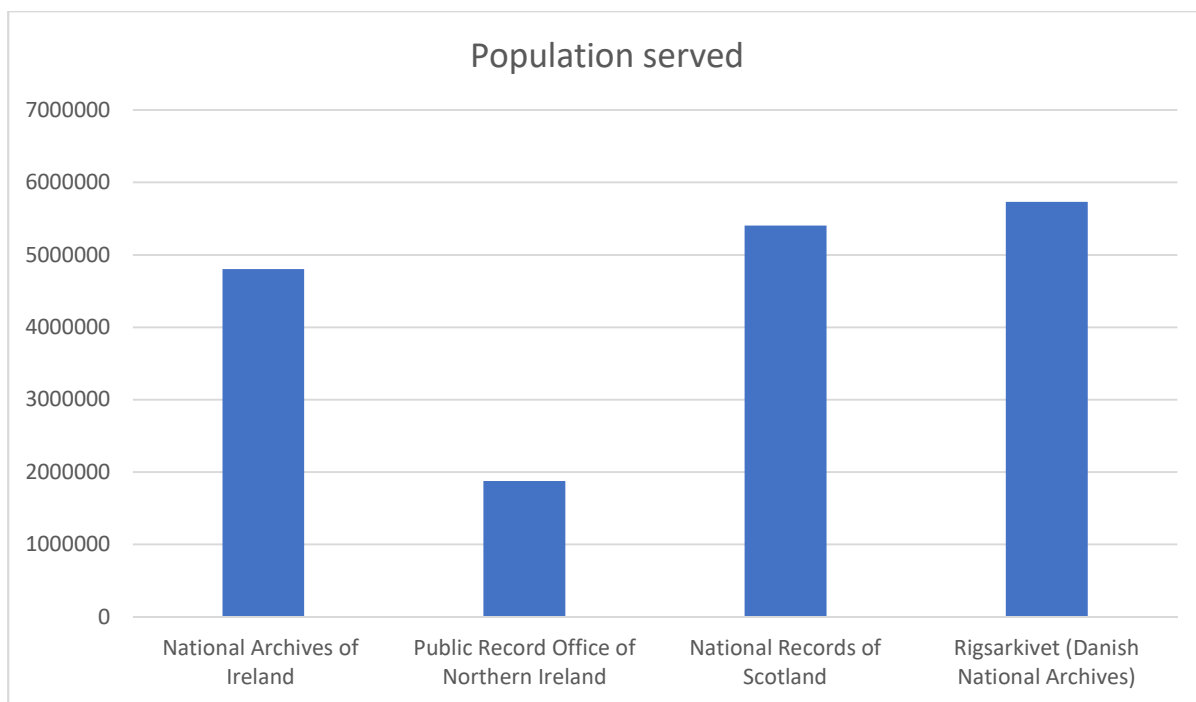
4.   The Comparator Analysis

4.1 National Archives of Ireland Comparator Survey – Key themes and overall methodology

- This report was commissioned by the Archivist Branch of Fórsa, the union representing archivists in the Civil and Public Service which provided staffing data and a great deal of supporting information on the National Archives of Ireland.
- Three other national archives kindly assisted in providing statistical and other data. Creative Cultures is most grateful for the time and thought that these bodies gave freely.
- The four organisations which took part are diverse both in their workload and also in their remit.
- The data in the comparator section of the report was compiled by each of the four record offices in response to an initial questionnaire, which was then followed by supplementary sets of questions for each record office.
- The objective of the questionnaires was to provide measurable data to produce like for like comparisons where possible, though taking into account differences in remit and function of the four services.

4.2   Area served and functions

- **The Rigsarkivit – the Danish National Archives (DNR)** serves a population of 5.7 million, **the National Records of Scotland (NRS)** 5.4 million, **the National Archives of Ireland (NAI)** 4.8 million and **the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)** 1.9 million

  This is shown in figure 1:

Population served

	A major part of work	Carried out but not a major part of work	Not part of work
Hold and collect archives of central government	All		
Hold and collect archives of other official bodies (for example law courts, health agencies etc)	All		
Hold and collect archives of local government (for example municipalities, local councils)	PRONI, Denmark		Ireland, Scotland
Hold and collect archives of non-official bodies (for example businesses, religious organisations)	PRONI, Scotland, Denmark	Ireland	
Hold and collect semi-current records of central government	PRONI	Ireland	Scotland, Denmark

The principle remit of the different services varies and is shown in the table below

Oversee or contribute to national policy on archives	All		
Monitor and accredit standards for other archival bodies	Ireland, Denmark	PRONI	
Provide advice to government departments on records management	All		
Provide advice to other archives professionals	Scotland	Ireland, PRONI, Denmark	
Provide advice to non-official bodies or individuals on the keeping of archives	Scotland	Ireland, PRONI, Denmark	
Make archives available to the public in physical format	Ireland, PRONI, Scotland		
Make archives available to the public in digital format	PRONI, Scotland, Denmark	Ireland	
Education and outreach	Denmark	Ireland, PRONI, Scotland	

4.3 Holdings and business levels

- The NAI, PRONI and the NRS hold roughly the same amount of material, but the DNA has over seven times more than this.

This is shown in figure 2:

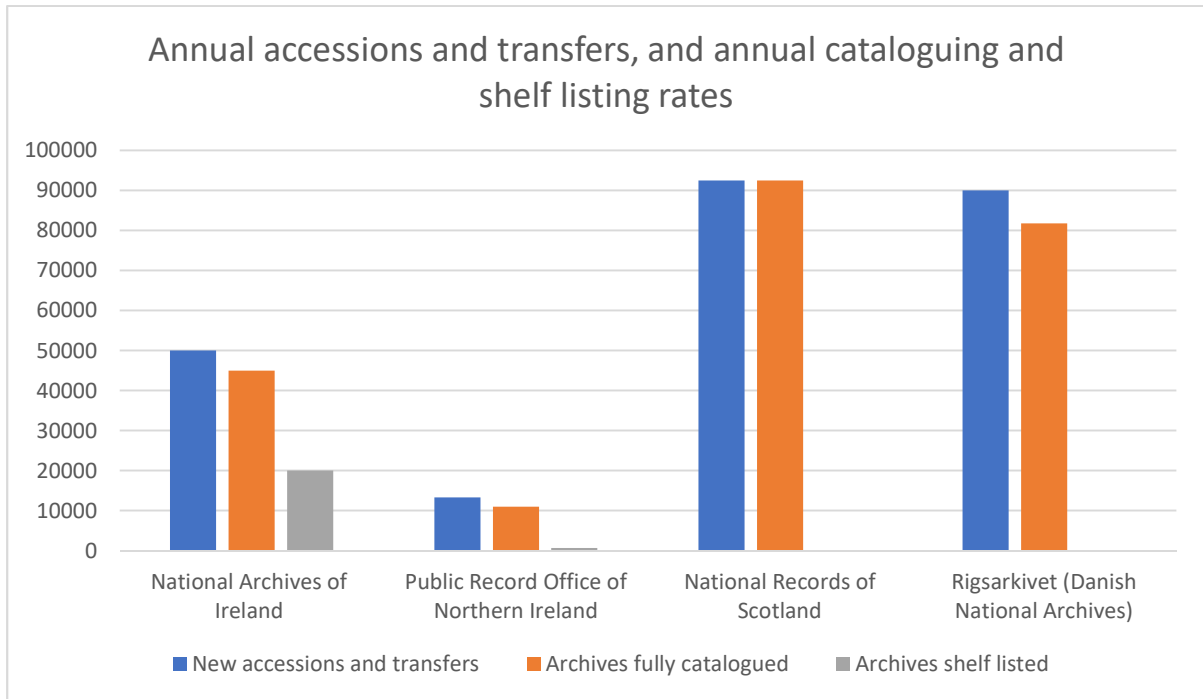
Total archival holdings in cubic metres
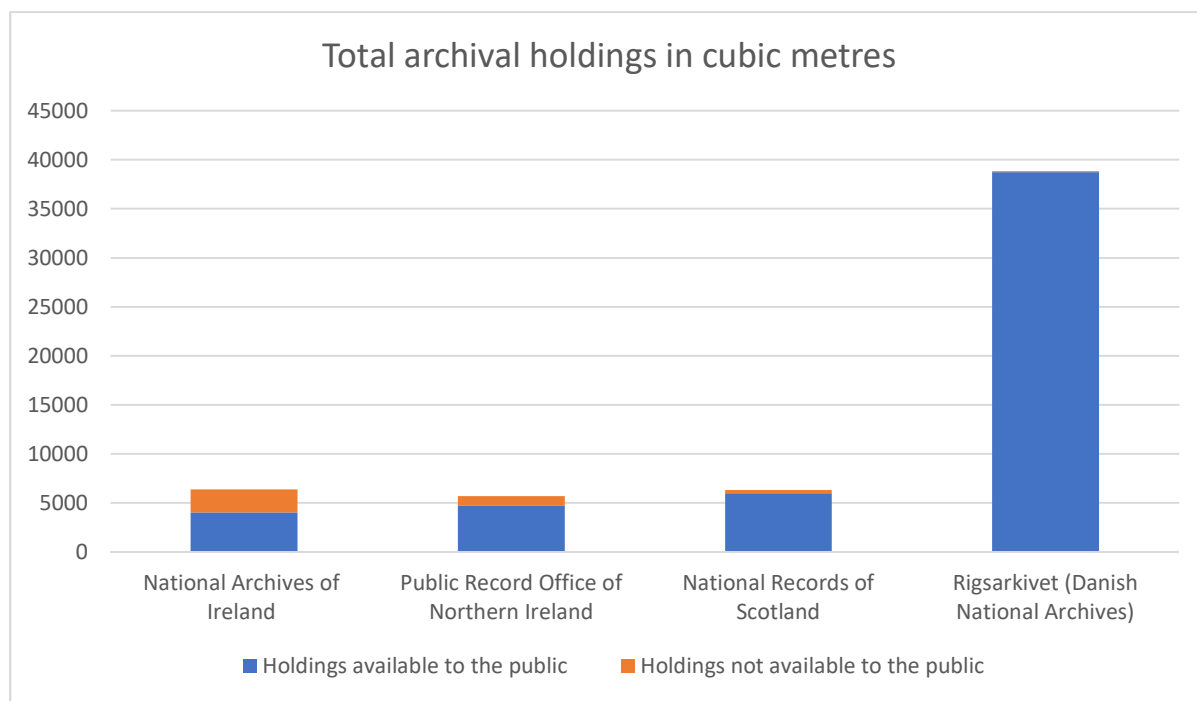
- Over a third of the material held by NAI is uncatalogued, and around one sixth at PRONI, but only one twentieth at NRS and almost none at DNA.
- The number of annual accessions and transfers is considerably higher at NRS[48] and DNA than at NAI, and much higher than at PRONI.
- The number of archives fully catalogued from records transferred each year varies between 82% of the material accessioned or transferred at PRONI to close to 100% at NRS and DNA. The figure for NAI is 90%, and more records there are being fully catalogued or shelf listed[49] than are accessioned or transferred[50].

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[48] The National Records of Scotland gave a figure in linear meters. To enable a like for like comparison, the number of records catalogued at the NRS has been used in figure 2
[49] Shelf lists normally record accessioned records or act provide location data for all records, but do not provide any cataloguing details, should these exist.
[50] NAI senior staff state that the figure for cataloguing includes backlogs. 50,000 records are transferred every year. 45,000 are fully catalogued and 20,000 shelf listed (i.e. location data recorded for each archival document)

Figure 3:

Annual accessions and transfers, and annual cataloguing and shelf listing rates

Legend: ■ New accessions and transfers ■ Archives fully catalogued ■ Archives shelf listed

- The annual number of visitors is shown in figure 4 below. Interestingly, the visits are highest at PRONI, which serves the smallest population.

Annual Visits 2017
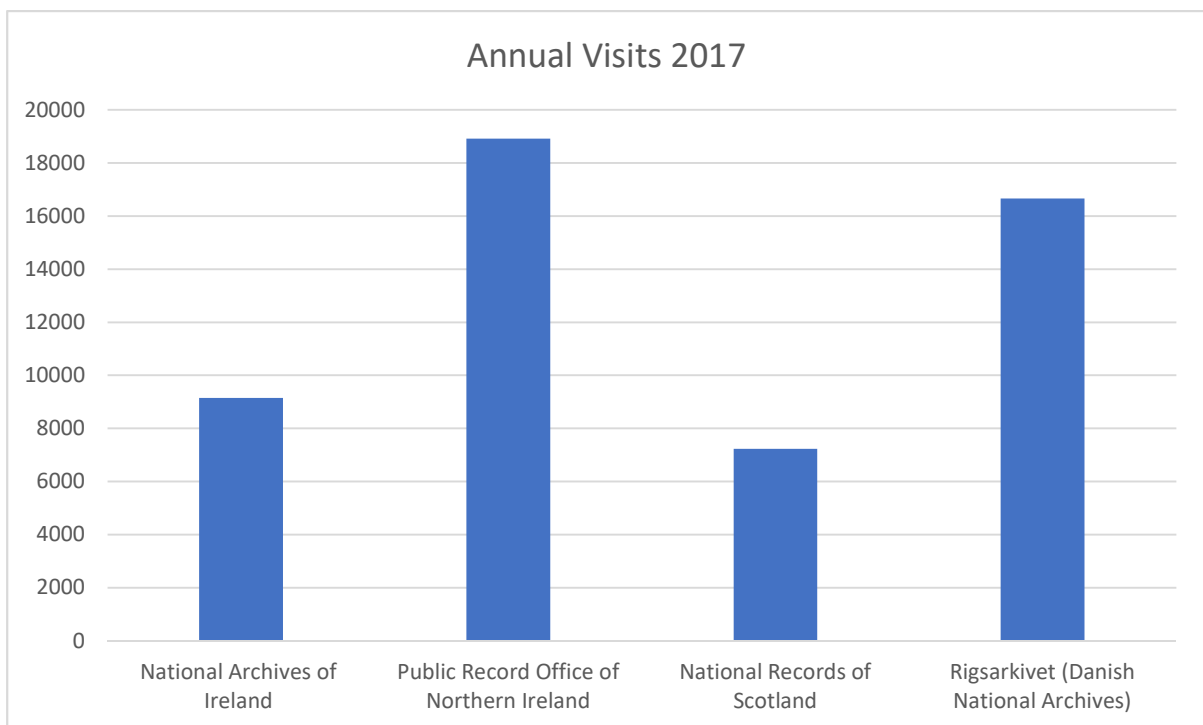
- The number of productions of original archives to the public is shown in Figure 5 below:

Annual number of productions of orginal archives to members of the public
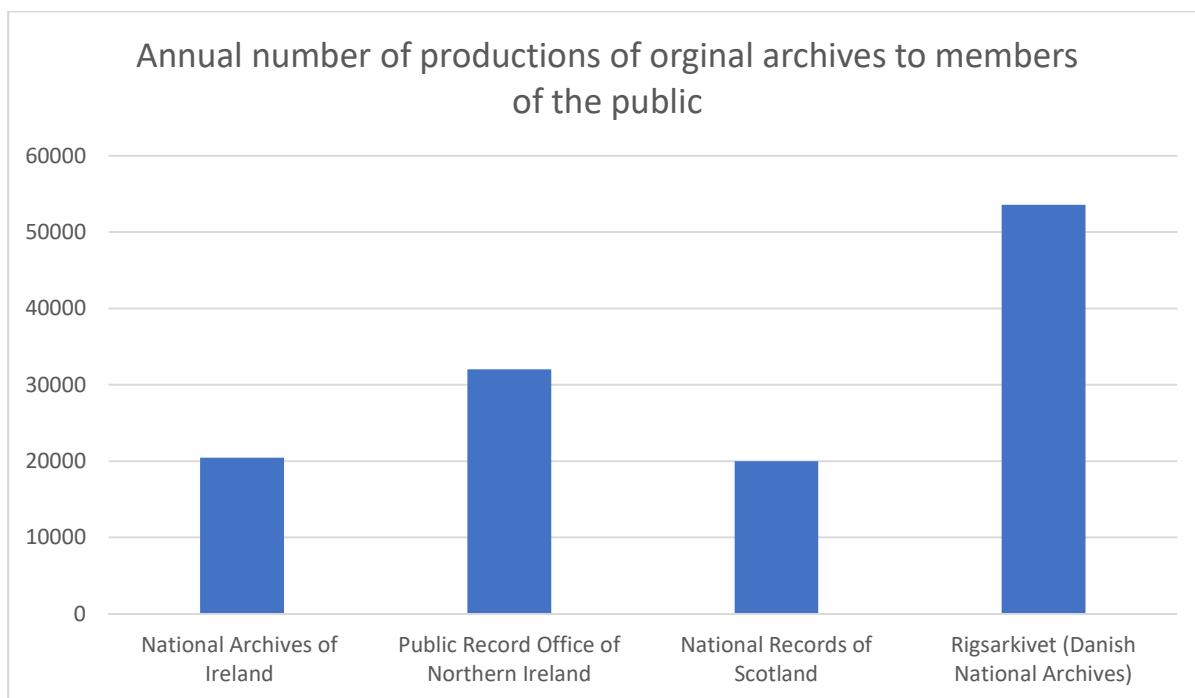
- Here, the higher level of productions at DNA reflects the greater number of total holdings.
- NAI and PRONI are open to the public for 38.75 and 38.25 hours respectively. The NRS with two sites is open for an aggregate of 70 hours. The DNA, with four sites, is open for an aggregate of 66 hours.

4.4 Staffing

- For all four record offices the staffing establishment consists of three elements: permanent contract posts, fixed term contract or temporary posts and permanent posts which were vacant at the time of the survey. Temporary posts funded from core funding were omitted from these figures.
- The staffing establishment of the organisations varied from 54.8 FTE at NAI to 226 FTE at DNS. This includes vacant posts.
- The situation at NAI is complicated by the fact that, whilst there is a total of 13.6 FTE vacant posts at NAI, 4.68 FTE temporary posts have been created beyond the establishment. This means that there is a net total of 8.96 FTE vacancies at NAI.
- Taking this into account, the breakdown of the staffing establishments is shown in the table below

	National Archives of Ireland	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland	National Records of Scotland	Rigsarkivet (Danish National Archives)
Establishment				
Senior managers	4	5	6	4
Professional archive staff	16.8	24	36	12
Professional records management staff	0	0	2	65

Professional conservation staff	1	2	9	1
Education and learning staff	0	0	5	8
Finance and human resources staff	4.5	6	39	24
Information technology staff	2	8	74	15
Archive assistants	6	21	27	51
Repository assistants	12	10	21	19
Records management assistants	0	0	1	17
Other support staff	7.5	0	42	7
Corporate governance & compliance staff	1	0	5	3
Total	54.8	76	267	226

This is shown graphically in figure 6:
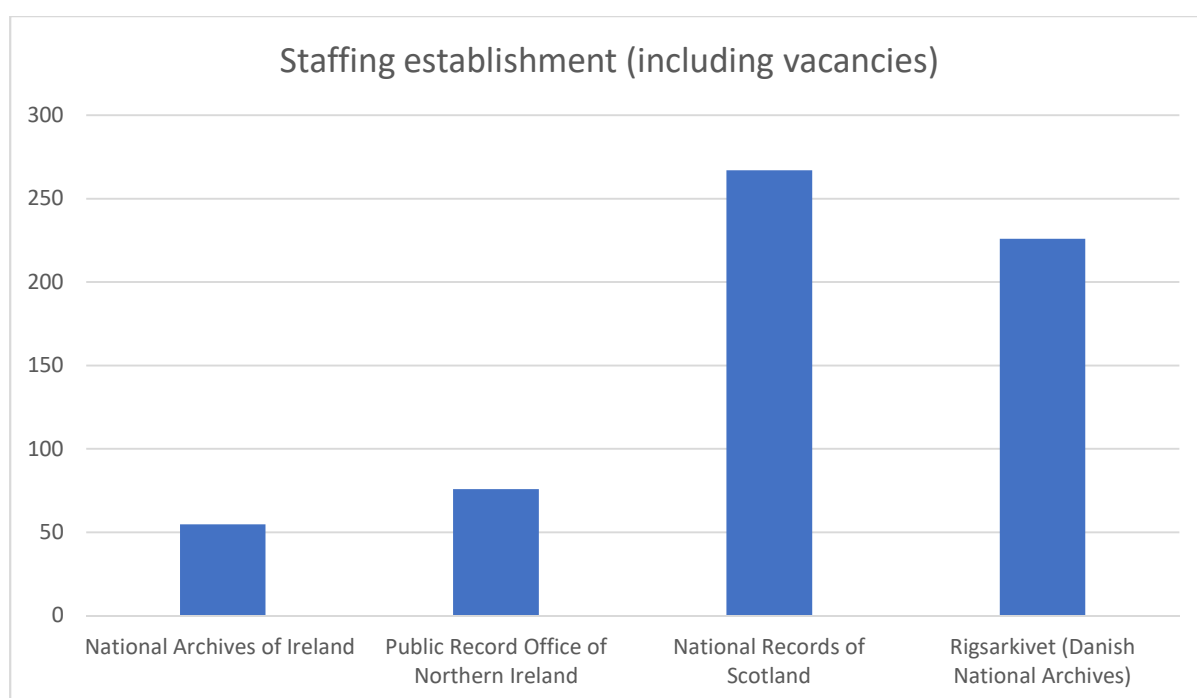
Figure 6

- The level of vacancies also varies. Only 84% of established posts at NAI were filled on any basis (permanent, temporary or externally funded). At PRONI the figure was 92% and at NRS over 96%. The establishment at DNA is adjusted so that vacant posts are removed, and therefore 100% of posts are filled.
- At this high level of analysis, there appear to be considerable variations between the organisations in the provision of staff and the populations served. The NAI has only 27% of the staff per head of population compared to the NRS. This is shown in figure 7 below:

## Staffing establishment per 100000 population
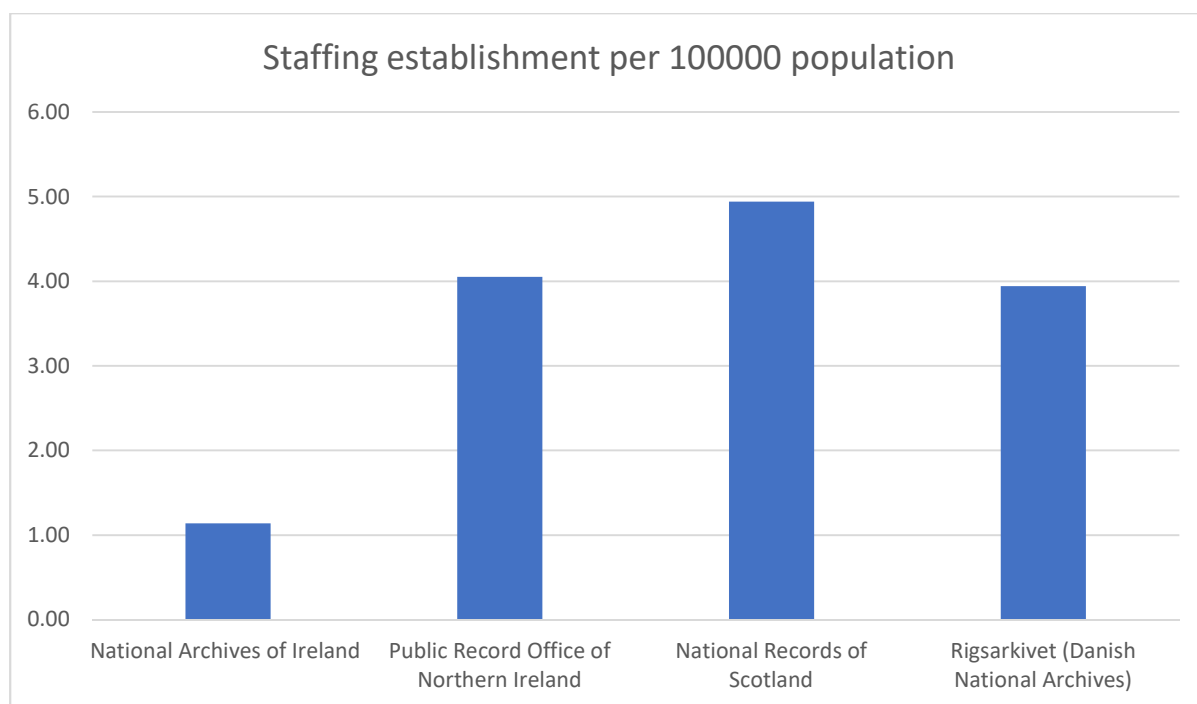
4.4.1   Methodology for staffing comparisons

- However, the true situation is more complex. The remit of the comparator organisations varies.
- Whilst the NAI and the DNA are the repositories for all of the records of central government in their respective areas, PRONI and the NRS serve in parallel with the UK National Archives which is the repository for the Westminster government, the powers of which are not all devolved to the UK home nations.
- The NRS is responsible for Scotland's decennial census, for processing and producing population statistics, and for providing vital events registration services (births, deaths, marriages etc). However, we have not been able to obtain figures for the division of labour between what could be regarded as purely archival work and these wider functions, but this certainly contributes to the number of 74 information technology staff there, far higher than in the comparator organisations.
- Both the NRS and the DNA are engaged in extensive digitisation programmes (producing 700,000 and 1,030,000 digital images respectively in the last year) compared to some 6000 at NAI and less than a thousand at PRONI .
- Neither the NAI nor PRONI have any dedicated educational staff, but there are 5 at NRS and 8 at the DNA.
- Even within the respective organisations, without a great deal more work it is difficult to disaggregate the numbers of staff engaged on each element of the activity of the organisations, particularly as there is often a cross over in staff function, so that the same person may be working on accepting transfers from government departments and cataloguing new acquisitions
- Furthermore, the arrangements in place for support from other government departments to each archive service vary. For example, at the NAI human resources and recruitment functions are provided at the departmental level (the tier of the civil service above that of the NAI), whilst this is not the case at other comparator organisations.
- This means that to compare the four organisations is not to compare like for like

- To eliminate the inconsistencies that this creates, we have focussed on the provision of what we have called core staff – professional archivists[51], records managers and conservators – and archives, repository and records management assistants[52]), and to compare these against the workload generated by services to the public, the transfer of records from central government and the preparation of records for production.
- We have included in the core staff both posts that are permanently filled and also temporary appointments
- Even adopting this simplified methodology can only produce broad brush results, but significant differences in the results from each organisation can be identified

4.4.2 Core staffing
- The core staffing levels are shown in figure 8 below:

Core posts (FTEs)
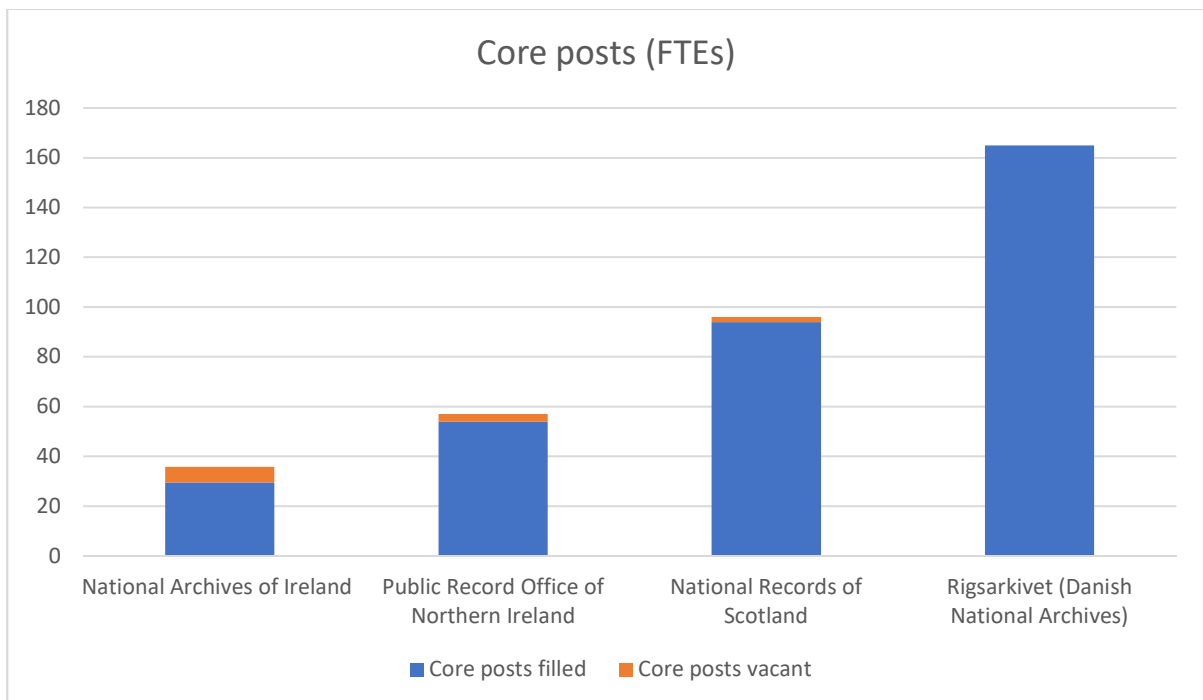
- When compared to the populations served, some differences are apparent as demonstrated in figure 9 below:

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[51] The DNA has a different structure from the other organisations – all archivists are considered junior managers, and there is a high number of records management staff.
[52] Senior managers are not included for the purposes of this model

Core staff in post per 100000 population
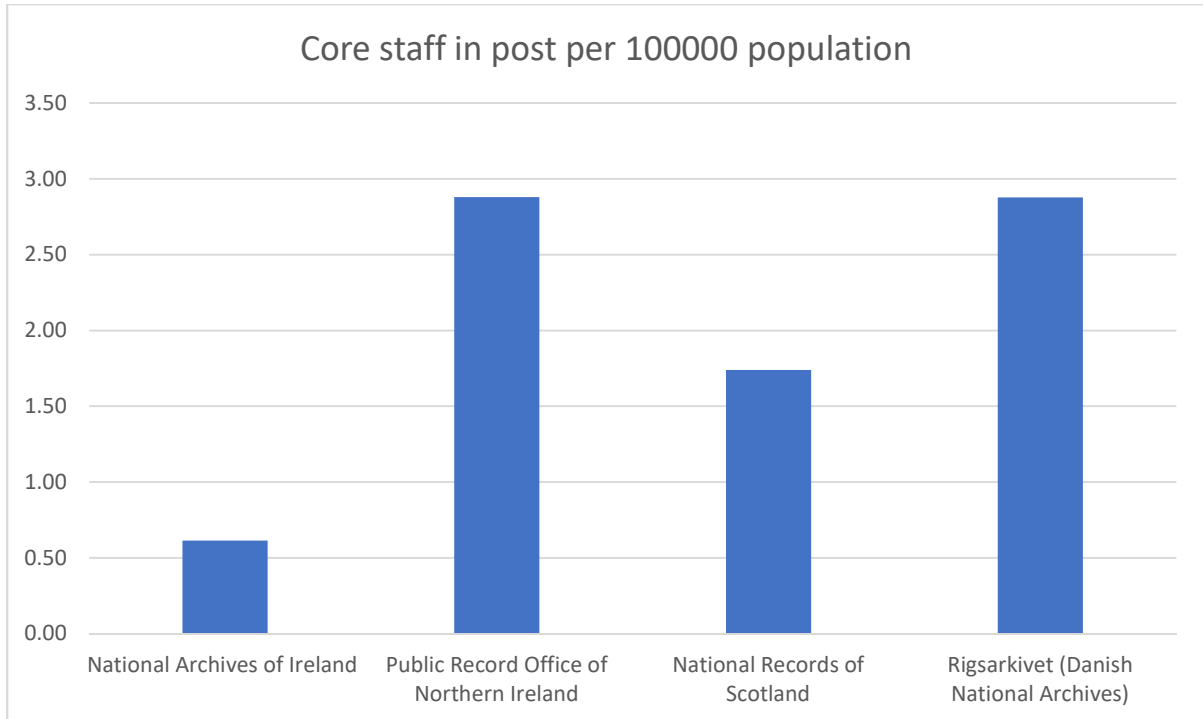
- The percentage of core posts vacant is 17.6% at NAI, well above the 5.2% at PRONI or 2.1% at NRS. There are no vacancies at DNA due to the reasons stated above.

4.4.3 Core staff compared to business levels
- The number of visitors and items produced to them per member of core staff is higher at NAI and PRONI than the other organisations, as shown in figure 10 below:

Annual visits and productions per FTE of core establishment
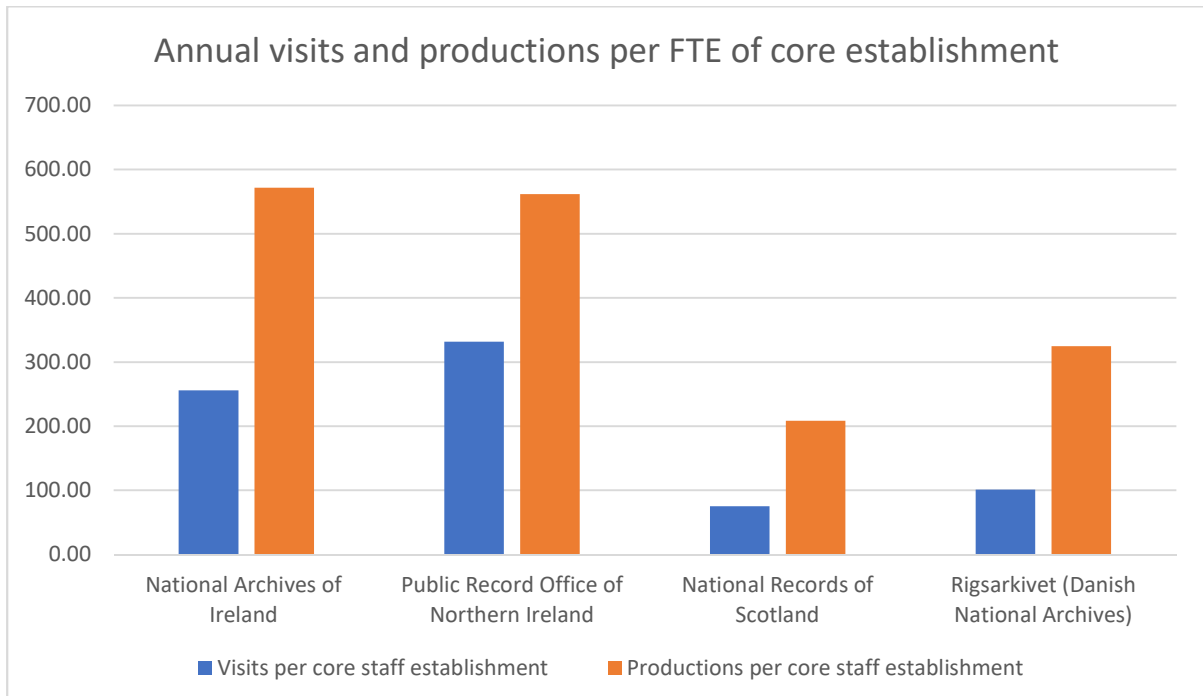
- The number of hours open to the public divided by the core staff establishment is shown in figure 11 below. Despite the longer hours offered by NRS and DNA, there are more staff available than at NAI in particular and PRONI.

Weekly hours per core staff establishment
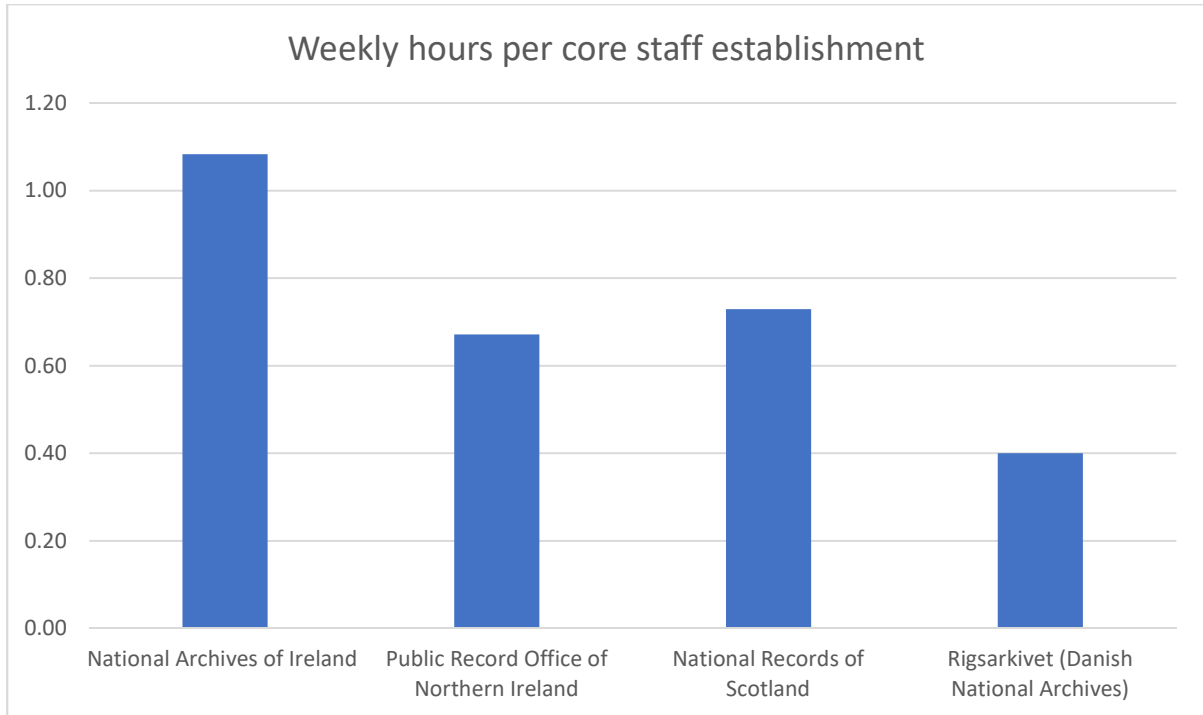
- The number of accessions and transfers received in 2017 and the number of archives catalogued divided by the core staff establishment are shown in figure 12 below. It should be noted that only at PRONI are transfers entirely unlisted on arrival. At NAI and NRS they are partially listed and at DNA they are fully listed.

Rate of accessions and transfers and of full cataloguing per core staff establishment 2017

■ New accessions and transfers per core staff establishment
■ Archives fully catalogued per core staff establishment
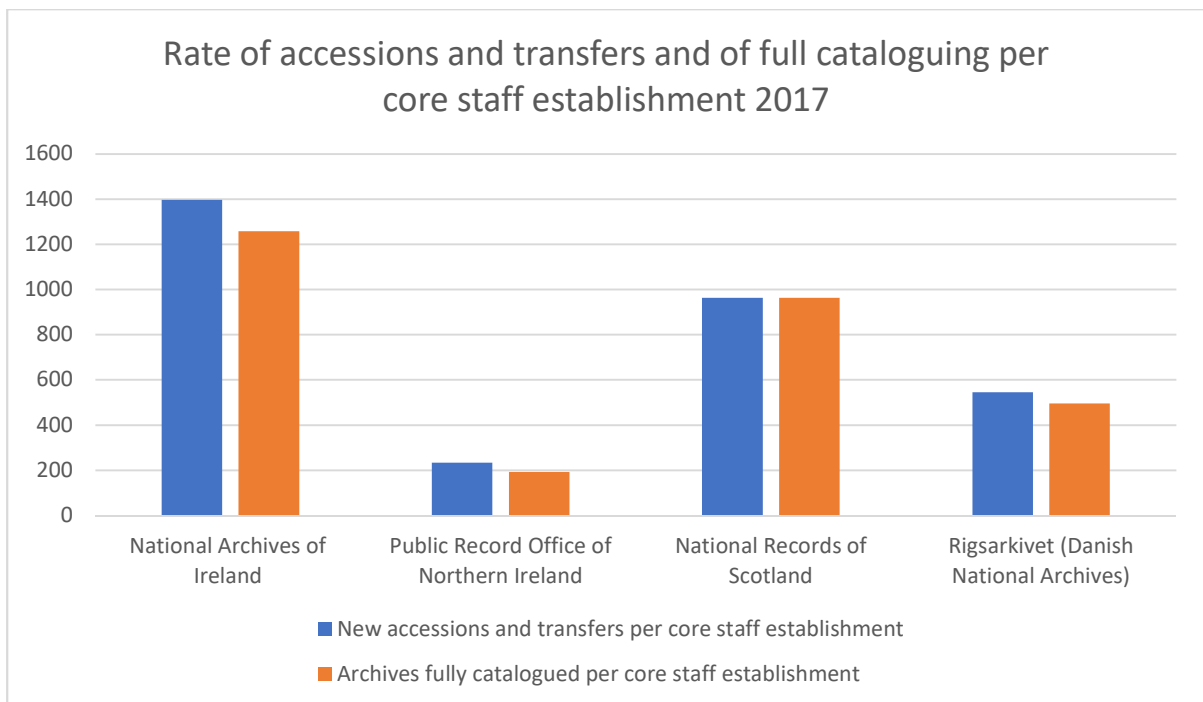
4.5. Overview of the survey outcomes and analysis

- Comparisons are odious! The approach we have taken is necessarily high level and ignores the huge digitisation programmes at the NRS and the DNA, which will undoubtedly consume some of the time of core staff. The number of visits does not always equate to the amount fof staff time required to help researchers.

- Nevertheless, it is clear that both full establishment and core staffing levels are disproportionately low at NAI that the vacancy factor is higher than elsewhere and that productivity levels in public service and transfers are high.
- The lack of staff in IT at NAI is reflected in the comparatively tiny digitisation programme, and and creating interpretation and learning posts in any wider digitisation and access programme could help to free up any archivists' time which could be needed in individual projects.
- It is clear from the budgetary figures obtained from the four organisations that different accounting procedures apply in each, and we have not been able to make meaningful comparisons. As cited above (4.4.1) this is due to differences in scope between the offices, and insufficient information to disaggregate staffing costs in some non-archival areas, including human resources. We have also had to set limits to the comparator study to keep it within budget and deliver it in as timely a fashion as possible and this has precluded further extrapolation based on considerable guesswork for these areas.

5. Recommendations

R1   Structure

R1.1   Establishment size

We have demonstrated that the NAI has fewer staff than other bodies with a similar remit judged by a number of measures. Staffing levels at NAI are very considerably lower than the comparators in relation to the population served. There are only one quarter of the staff per head of population compared to Northern Ireland and Denmark and less than that when compared to Scotland.

Whilst the level of staffing at both the National Records of Scotland and the Rigsarkivit, the Danish National Archives are very much higher than the NAI, the remits of these organisations are also greater (the NRS supports a large digitisation programme and also has civil registration functions, and the DNA also has a major digitisation programme). In order to make a fairer comparison, we have defined a 'core' offer spanning the transfer of archival material from government and other organisations, making that material accessible to the public and collections care, and have identified those posts within the establishments of the four archives which will contribute to these functions. Within these areas, too, the NAI is less well staffed than the comparators. The NAI has about 40% of the staff per capita compared to Scotland and only 25% compared to Northern Ireland or Denmark.

Of course population cannot be the only determinant to decide staffing– levels of business must be considered. Core staff productivity levels[53] in relation to both productions of documents and the number of hours open to the public are higher at NAI than any of the comparators, and in relation to visits are higher than both Scotland and Denmark.

We acknowledge that in complex organisations there may be factors which have an influence on staffing which cannot be identified through a high level analysis such as this, and we are certainly not making the case that the comparator organisations are inefficient in any way, but the consistency that these indicators show NAI at the lower end of the staffing league tables cannot be ignored. We have already identified significant backlogs in both transfers and making documents available to the public, as well as the future pressure of the introduction of the twenty year rule, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the capacity does not exist within the current framework to address these issues.

We therefore recommend that the staffing establishment is increased to at least the 60FTE identified in the Workforce Plan of 2016.

R1.2 Introduction of technical grades

We recognise that there is a high level of competition from other government departments for a limited pool of resources, and that an increase to that level of staffing may not possible. Whilst we believe that only more staff will alleviate the issue fully, there are a number of other changes that could be made to assist with this.

At the moment, the non-archival staff members within the NAI are on general clerical or administrative grades, often leading to high levels of staff turnover in those posts due to people seeking advancement elsewhere in the civil service, and taking with them a high level of knowledge specific only to the NAI. **The introduction of technical grade staff, in line**

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[53] Calculated by dividing business levels by full time equivalent staff

with other government departments, would reduce pressure on archival staff by ensuring greater staff retention in para-professional roles. This could also lead to a path of career progression for para-professional with the opportunity to gain archival qualifications whilst in post.

R1.3 Delegation of management

We believe that there should be an increase in the delegation of management within the NAI. At the moment only a few more management have line management functions, and our observations indicate that this means that staff at Keeper level have little time for strategic thinking. This is particularly important when the fact the Keepers are the highest level of permanent staff, given that the Director is appointed for a five year term. Should para-professional posts be created, we recommend that some line management, should be delegated to archivists and that the potential of archivists taking on some line management duties of other non-professional staff be investigated . This not only has the benefit of allowing greater scope for strategy in the organisation, but also ensuring that the managerial relationship in small teams is strengthened without the need to refer to a more senior member of staff who may not be involved in the day to day running of the team. This ought to be in the context of increasing the number of archivist posts and should be preceded by an assessment of the archivist posts' workload. The NAI would also need to ensure that supervisory experience is properly logged to ensure that all experience of directing junior staff is recorded. Staff members can then make full use of both supervisory and management experience to support promotional opportunities.

We also recognise that in a complex organisation like the NAI, individual members of staff may also need instruction and guidance from officers other than their line manager. An example is the need to ensure good conservation and preservation is at the heart of all the work of the NAI, and hence some direction from the conservation department to staff in all relevant areas would be beneficial. We recommend that such 'dotted line' management arrangements are put in place.

These recommendations are based on our observations during the current study. However, a detailed review of staffing structure is outside the scope of this study and would require a more detailed assessment of staffing need. **We recommend that a further study is undertaken to identify the most efficient and effective structure at the NAI**.

R2 Recruitment

The evidence of past recruitment panels indicates that the NAI is inhibited from recruiting the professional staff it needs within a reasonable period of identifying need, or vacancies arising through promotion or retirement. Recruiting for specialist staff within the wider departmental framework is subject to the panel process and delays can and has resulted in potential recruits taking up positions in other departments. Closed competitions for senior positions have created generational banding, so that staff recruited as archivists rise together and retire together, or very close together, causing a generational loss of expertise. Open competitions would appear to suffer from the long delays between the request for and the approval of a panel – and then further long periods before the recruitment process can be completed.

NAI would greatly benefit from having the status to convene its own panels, wholly separate from the DCHG. This would not exempt the NAI from budgetary constraints and would in the first instance require funding to be found for a dedicated human resources team. But it would enable the NAI to meet assigned goals in programmes that form part of

government-wide priorities, for example the PSRM and the implementation of the 20 year rule.

Having the right to run its own panels ought to include running open panels when appropriate. This would open up senior positions within the office to competition from external candidates. This is not to belittle the ability and dedication of long-serving staff, but to recognise that all organisations benefit from recruiting from outside their existing staff base from time to time. The quality of the current professional staff is likely to ensure that the bulk of promotional opportunities within the NAI would be filled internally. However new and specialist posts in areas like the management of electronic records, digital imaging and ICT systems may well be very suitable to open panels, while not precluding internal staff from taking up development opportunities requiring additional training in-post.

R3   Corporate memory

In the same way that many new transfers remain unlisted and unavailable to the public for some time after transfer, much knowledge remains in the heads of key members of staff awaiting a time when it can be recorded. Archives staff, whether engaged in public, repository or departmental liaison, build up a body of knowledge, and due to time restraints, this often remains unwritten. The panel system can result in vacancies due to staff leaving or retiring vacant for considerable times, giving little opportunity for handover. Interviews with Forsa members have confirmed that a loss of corporate memory is seen as an issue.

We recommend that, irrespective of any changes to the recruitment process, that the NAI devotes some time to capturing the specific expertise of staff, whether their retirement is anticipated shortly or not. As staff time is valuable, one recording technique to consider is short videos or podcasts, even if the eventual aim were to be a written document. In the longer term, a plan for producing appropriate finding aids and staff manuals should be produced. Finding aids for the public can be available both online and in physical format and have the benefit of reducing the number of transactions between researchers and staff, thus freeing up staff time for other activities. Staff manuals do not need to be comprehensive – many staff will be familiar with commonplace issues relating to classes of archives, but nuances, experience of what went well or badly, and useful but less obvious contacts can be invaluable in reducing workload and are well worth the time taken to record them.

R4   Records Management and record transfer

Following a decision by Cabinet in 2016, the National Archives, in partnership with the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer, is to progress a government wide records management strategy, the Public Services Records Management Project (PSRM). This project will develop a consistent approach to the management of departmental records in all formats across the civil service, and will include a scoping strategy for the development of a digital repository for the National Archives. The PSRM and the initial phases of implementing the 20 year rule offer an opportunity for the NAI to seek to take a key role in supporting a better understanding of life-cycle management of paper and born-digital records. The Archives Repository Project will ensure the availability of archival-standard storage to accommodate the transfer of backlogs of records currently held in government departments and agencies in order to increase compliance with the 30 year rule.

Our recommendations are:

R4.1   The NAI should make recommendations to the PSRM management on the importance of officers with proper responsibility for information management and the

management of records in all departments, plus developing expertise on managing born-digital records

R4.2 The NAI should play a key role in creating the resources for life cycle training in Departments, either using its own staff or through appropriately qualified contractors to set up regular training for staff involved in or with responsibilities for managing records as well as those responsible for transfers. These resources will need to include new staffing posts or long-term contractors and online resources that departmental staff can refer to on a day to day basis once trained.

R4.3 Under current arrangements the NAI will not be able to reach the staffing capacity needed to meet its share of the work of PSRM, nor implement the 20 year rule. In the first instance, progress needs to be made to appoint the five posts identified as needed under the records management programme[54] in the first instance.

R4.4 Ensuring that the NAI has the staffing capacity to meet the PSRM and 20 year rule roll out commitments should then enable the NAI and departments to look at regular secondments or placements of departmental staff at NAI and if appropriate of NAI staff within departments, to the benefit of both parties. Staff going to NAI with records management experience and/a qualification could further benefit by working in the records management work and record transfers undertaken by the NAI

R4.5 Estimating the backlog of records awaiting transfer under the 30 year rule ought to be regarded as a priority to help long-term planning to resolve the issue. To do this the NAI will need capacity to resume survey work both to identify the backlog of 30 year plus records awaiting review and the next round of records subject to transfer under the 20 year review.

R4.6 These proposals are likely to require verification of the workload estimates to produce a list of new posts, agreed with the PSRM management and DCHG, with implementation taking place outside the DCHG recruitment processes, to ensure that filling the posts is not held up by the panel system or by any restrictions on recruitment within the DCHG

R4.7 To implement tackling the backlog we propose that two teams be formed.
- **One team would focus on 30 year plus record backlog** – initially survey work, then appraisal and transfer. This is a finite task but could take more than a decade. One or two teams to be formed, depending on budget moving from department to department. The programme would be kept under review by NAI as the team or teams would not be permanent parts of the NAI structure, but time limited once the size of the task and the years it would take are mapped out
- **The second team to implement 20 year rule**, starting with the initial departments identified to date, then moving on as other departments are brought within the 20 year rule. The progress of this team would be kept under review by PRSM or a similar group, with the NAI Director or NAI senior management represented on the body

R4.8 The NAI must have the staffing and ICT capacity to take in born digital records. Printing out of born digital records by departments is believed to have ceased and in

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[54] 3.10.2 above.

many cases would not be possible. In order to preserve the archives of the last thirty years, the NAI must be able to take in, manage and make accessible born-digital records. Any increase in establishment in this area would be over and above the minimum increase of the establishment to 60 posts.

R4.9   A focus on the backlog of transfers should not be at the expense of continued progress with cataloguing historic deposits held by the NAI. These records should also be assessed and a programme drawn up with SMART targets set to ensure steady progress

R5   **Online resources**

The new NAI website is scheduled to come on line in March 2019, after the completion of this report. **The opportunity should be taken to review targets to enhance the existing resources, both guides to the collections and consolidate some of the NAI's microsites.** There may also **need to be a capacity assessment** to confirm that expansion of content for departments is possible, should the NAI take on the creation of online advice on life-cycle records management and linked training programmes.

More generally, online resources can be seen as an opportunity not only to extend the reach of the NAI, but also as a means to enable customer self-help and this to reduce the level of staff-customer transactions, especially where digitised archives are concerned. This does have implications for both the resources allocated to digitisation programmes and to ICT support, but could generate both financial and non-financial benefits in the longer term.

Developing an online repository and additional resources will require dedicated ICT staff. Again this is an area which could benefit from posts at different levels, including technical-graded staff.

R6   **Digital Imaging**

Recent project work has enhanced the NAI's capacity and the office has invested in equipment to carry out project work. To date this has depended on clerical staff and so the unit has experienced similar problems to other parts of the NAI as staff in these grades move on within the Civil Service.

Digital imaging would seem to be an ideal area for the introduction of technical grades to ensure continuity and maintain capacity in what ought to be an expanding area of work for the NAI.

R7   **Conservation**

There is insufficient conservation staff capacity at the NAI to support
the display of documents, creation of online resources and manage external projects in addition to maintaining core work to preserve the state archives and to ensure public access is maintained to the collections. The Senior Conservator needs the support of a Conservator post, which has been vacant since 2015.
The promotion of the Conservator to Senior Conservator in 2015 left a vacancy.

We recommend that staffing establishment in this area is increased as identified in the Workforce plan 2016 to at least one conservator to undertake critical tasks and ensure business continuity.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Staff Questionnaire

1.   Name(s), time with NAI and area(s) of work

2.   How would you describe your workload and the workload of the staff you manage?

3.   Given the pressure that the NAI is under, are there any areas of your job that you feel you are not able to fully meet?

4.   Are there any areas of your team's work which could be delegated to junior or non-professional staff?

5.   Are there any developments proposed for the NAI which you think will impact on your job or your team's work – either to increase or decrease your/their workload or change the nature of what you do?

6.   [If working in the reader service area].What do you think is the cause of the very sharp recent decline in visitor numbers to the searchroom?

7.   [If working in acquisitions]. Tell us about the work involved in the acquisition of documents from departments to make them accessible to the public.

8.   Have any implemented or planned changes to how records are accessed affected your area of work? And do you think there will be further changes arising from taking in more born-digital records?

9.   How do you think the change to the 20 year rule proposed in the National Archives (Amendment) bill of 2017 affect your area of work?

10.   Are there any other points you would like to make?

Appendix 2: Comparator Questionnaire

National Archive Services comparative staffing survey

Name of organisation	
Name of person completing questionnaire	
Email address of person completing questionnaire	

About your organisation's work

1. Please tick the appropriate box for each of the following:

	A major part of our work	Carried out but not a major part of our work	Not part of our work
Hold and collect archives of central government			
Hold and collect archives of other official bodies (for example law courts, health agencies etc)			
Hold and collect archives of local government (for example municipalities, local councils)			
Hold and collect archives of non-official bodies (for example businesses, religious organisations)			
Hold and collect semi-current records of central government			
Oversee or contribute to national policy on archives			
Monitor and accredit standards for other archival bodies			
Provide advice to government departments on records management			
Provide advice to other archives professionals			
Provide advice to non-official bodies or individuals on the keeping of archives			
Make archives available to the public in physical format			
Make archives available to the public in digital format			
Education and outreach			

2. Please specify any other principal areas of work

About your organisation's holdings
3. Physical format. Please give the approximate number of **cubic metres** for each of the following:

Archives available to the public	

Archives catalogued but closed to the public	
Archives not yet catalogued	
Semi-current records	

4: Digital format: Please give the approximate number of **terabytes** for each of the following:

Born digital records available to the public	
Born digital records closed to the public	
Digital surrogates	

5: New accessions and transfers. Please give the approximate average number of **items** for each of the following. If the figure varies considerably from year to year please estimate.

Archives in physical format	
Archives in digital format	
Semi current records in physical format	
Semi current records in digital format	

6. Archival cataloguing
Please give the approximate annual average number of **items** for each of the following.

Archives in physical format fully catalogued	
Archives in digital format fully catalogued	
Archives in physical format shelf listed	

7. Transfers from government departments and other official bodies
Please tick the box that best describes the arrangement in your organisation

Records are fully listed by staff in other government departments	
Records are fully listed by national archives staff	
Records are partially listed by staff in other government departments and listing is completed by national archives staff	

8. How long are government records closed to the public after transfer to the national archives? If there is more than one answer to this question, please provide only major holdings

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About your organisation's staff

9. Please give the full time equivalent numbers of staff for each of the following:

	Permanent staff funded by core budget	Temporary or fixed term staff funded from core budget	Staff funded from non core budget (for example, external grants)
Senior managers (Director or equivalent or those reporting to Director)			
Professional Archive staff			
Professional records management staff			
Professional conservation staff			
Education and learning staff			
All staff: finance, human resources, information technology			
Support staff: public duties (archive assistants)			
Support staff: repository duties			
Support staff: records management			
Support staff: other duties			

10. How many of your organisation's staff are based outside the organisation's premises? For example, this could be a record officer working inside another government department to assist with the transfer process

11. Vacancies
Please give an indication of the number of core funded full time equivalent posts which have been vacant for one year or more

Senior managers	
Archivists	
Finance, human resources, information technology	
Other professional staff	
Other support staff	

12. Please tell us if there are any special factors affecting vacancies and recruitment? For example, this could be a freeze on recruiting, difficulty in obtaining permission to recruit or a lack of suitable candidates

13. Volunteers: please give the number of volunteer hours in an average year (or the most recent year)

14. Please list the major activities volunteers are engaged in

Your organisation's services to the public and to customers
15. Is your public service delivered in one location or in several locations? If so how many?

16. How many hours is the service is open to the public each week? If there are multiple service points please give the total number of hours

17. How many visits from the public does your organisation have in person each year?

18. How many physical items are produced to the public?

19. How many learning events are held either in your own buildings or elsewhere each year?

20. How many exhibitions and displays are hosted each year?

21. How many recalls of semi-current records to the originating organisation are there each year?

Your organisation's budget

22. What is the core annual budget of your organisation? By this we mean the total normal expenditure less any income, and excluding external grants to fund particular projects, or one off amounts such as construction

23. How much of this is spent on staff?

24. What was the cost of staff engaged on externally funded projects in your last financial year? Please exclude any costs already included in the answer to question 23

Acknowledgements