



Shaping our future in the Information Age

The National Archives 2021 – 2025 Strategic Plan





Contents

Introduction	5
Opportunities and Challenges	6
Who We Are	10
Our 5-Year Strategic Goals 2021–2025	12
Goal 1	14
Goal 2	18
Goal 3	22
Goal 4	26
Goal 5	30
Conclusion	34

This strategy sets the direction for our organisation over the next five years, identifying the priorities that will guide our work as well as setting out a vision for the National Archives that positions it at the heart of government and Irish public life.

A photograph showing three elderly individuals, two women and one man, gathered around a table. They are looking intently at a large, open document or book. The woman on the left is wearing a grey cardigan and glasses. The man in the middle is wearing a blue and grey patterned sweater. The woman on the right is wearing a green and blue patterned scarf and glasses. The background is a simple, brightly lit room.

'Culture Club is a Dublin City Council Culture Company programme made in partnership with the National Archives, Ireland. Image courtesy of Dublin City Council Culture Company, photo by Jonathan Ho.

Introduction

This strategy, *Shaping our Future in the Information Age – The National Archives 2021-2025 Strategic Plan*, sets the direction for our organisation over the next five years, identifying the priorities that will guide our work as well as setting out a vision for the National Archives that positions it at the heart of government and Irish public life.

This Plan is one of ambition and transformation. It comes at a time when the state is investing millions in a new Archive Repository Project – transforming forever how we preserve and manage the archival records of the state. This level of investment is unprecedented and comes at a time, one hundred years since the foundation of the state, when we must continue to protect our historical past, but take seriously our responsibility to manage the huge challenge posed by digital technologies and the need to transform our business to meet the demands of a digital archive.

Our vision is to be a leading archive in this digital age. This is our greatest challenge and opportunity. We recognise that to deliver on this ambition, we need to be both imaginative and innovative. We also recognise that this ambition requires a significant transformation and investment to manage the huge volume of digital data that will transfer from government departments and agencies over the next decade. This strategy will support us in creating the necessary infrastructure, to enable us to deliver on our responsibility to collect and preserve the records of the modern Irish state, created in a digital 21st century.

We look forward to delivering this plan in conjunction with our parent department, the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, and with our key stakeholders across and beyond Ireland. With the Decade of Commemorations capturing the public imagination this is an exciting, yet challenging time for the National Archives and we are committed to achieving the aims and objectives laid out in the pages of this plan.

Opportunities and Challenges

Shaping the Future in an Information Age – National Archives Strategic Plan 2021-2025, will cover the 100th anniversary of the 1922 destruction of the original Public Records Office of Ireland (PROI) in the Four Courts in Dublin during the Civil War of 1922 to 1923. As the direct successor to the PROI we are especially mindful of the continuing preservation of the public record and the provision of open access to that record for all.

We are conscious of the primacy of the public record as a public good. We recognise that in an age of manipulation of information, we must point to the archival record, and promote its integrity, authenticity, reliability and availability. We operate in a rapidly changing and increasingly faster-paced world. It is a world where the need for access to data is paramount. Often the need for systems and processes to ensure the long-term preservation of that data is regarded as secondary. We strive to preserve that data for all. We are setting ambitious yet realistic goals by which to ensure its preservation.

We want to ensure the preservation of the public record as a force for good, for research, for debate and for discovery. All records that are deposited in the National Archives over the life of this plan align with our Accession Policy which supports delivery of our statutory remit.

Creating a world class infrastructure to preserve all forms of records and data remains our key priority. We will enhance, develop and deploy physical and virtual infrastructures to build a secure footing for Ireland's public record in paper and born-digital formats, thus ensuring and promoting their visibility and enabling their access into the coming decades.

We will only achieve this through improved funding, an enhanced infrastructure and through improved staffing resources. If this plan succeeds, the National Archives will have the capacity and the capability to deliver relevant, visible, credible and connected archival services to Ireland and its people so they can explore and understand Ireland's histories and in doing harness an understanding of the past to create our nation's future place and role in an ever-changing world.



We recognise that in an age of manipulation of information, we must point to the archival record, and promote its integrity, authenticity, reliability and availability.

Whilst the National Archives is developing a comprehensive physical infrastructure, it now needs to plan and develop a corresponding digital preservation infrastructure. The National Archives seeks to address this challenge through collaborative approaches to record making and record keeping in the digital age. We will advise, develop and promote guidelines and policies and in particular address the preservation of the fragile electronic record.

We will embrace this significant challenge posed by the archiving and preservation of born-digital records, which will be arriving in the coming years in massive volumes via electronic government records. This challenge includes how to store and preserve data, and also how to create workflows to support government departments and agencies to maximize compatibility as well converting paper records to digital (if appropriate). This will become a priority for us over the life of this plan.

Our primary goal remains that we must be a 21st century archives for a 21st century state. We must remain central to the development of information management and compliance across the Irish civil service. We must continue to innovate and develop new services which ensure the long-term sustainability of the public record.

Opportunities and Challenges

The work of the National Archives is complex. It is a national institution, an administrative process and a public facility. Each of these functions requires specific and targeted strategies and actions. The structure, business processes and the day to day operations of the National Archives all deliver in different ways on the different functions of the organisation, supporting and complementing each other. This strategy will deliver on each of these three functions.

- *As a national institution, the role, profile and position of the National Archives will be strengthened by this strategy.*
- *As an administrative process, leadership in records management, preserving and conserving digital and hard copy records will be core aspects of the work of the National Archives.*
- *And finally, as a public facility, our reading room, providing access to records and the making available of records and collections on-line and through a range of education and outreach programmes will be our responsibility to the public.*

Our greatest challenge and opportunity, will be delivering on these three functions, confidently, ambitiously and dynamically.

RESOLUTIONS

Decision Proposed

Relevant Papers

Documents Attached

Subject

CIRC
A.15/2757

18 MARCH, 1947.

Form A

Kíonaí do'n Siailtas.

I am desired by the Minister for Justice to forward herewith eighteen copies of a memorandum in regard to the case of Joseph McManus, who has been sentenced to death - the date of execution being fixed for 31st March, 1947. The Minister would be glad if the matter were placed on the Agenda for the next Meeting of the Government.

J.J. Collins
Kíonaí Aire.

ROINN AN TAOISIGH
19 MAR 1947
CLARLANN

GOVERNMENT.

Death for the Murder

the above matter circulated
of the Government to be
considered at the meeting
execution has been
that the question
could be considered
steps to allow of the

Signature *Gerald Boland*
Date 18th March, 1947.

P.P.-G28

'Culture Club is a Dublin City Council Culture Company programme made in partnership with the National Archives, Ireland. Image courtesy of Dublin City Council Culture Company, photo by Jonathan Ho.

Who We Are

Our Mission

To collect, manage, and preserve Ireland's public record and ensure its availability as a resource for all and as a safeguard of citizen's rights.

Our Vision

To ensure the future of Ireland's public record whilst visibly contributing to Irish cultural life and to the memory of the state.

Our Role

The National Archives is the repository for all state papers and holds records of government of the modern Irish state.

Who We Are

Our Values

- **Leadership**
We strive to be a leader in archival practice in a digital age, protecting the historical and future records of government and ensuring that our role is recognised and valued across government and society.
- **Integrity**
We discharge our functions properly and fairly.
- **Excellence**
We strive to deliver all our services, to government and the public, to the highest standard ensuring at all times that we operate a service that is responsive and of high quality.
- **Expertise**
We deliver our services, our advice and our programming based on the professional expertise of all our staff coupled with the institutional knowledge developed over many years.

Our Stakeholders

The National Archives has a wide variety of stakeholders across government departments, academic and cultural institutions and encompassing the people of Ireland and the Irish diaspora.

Our 5-Year Strategic Goals 2021–2025

- 1.** We will ensure that our services are relevant and promote best international practice
- 2.** We will develop our digital services to enable better access to archives in our custody, enhance public service delivery and increase public engagement through an enhanced education and outreach programme
- 3.** We will secure and preserve the records of the state for current and future generations
- 4.** We will develop our capacity to be a leader in the digital age
- 5.** We will strengthen our institution to be an innovative, responsive and dynamic National Archives

By 2025, the National Archives will be working across government supporting departments and bodies to manage their current and future records through a new national framework.

We will have dedicated state-of-the-art archive facilities for preserving and conserving the records of the state and public spaces which will ensure that these records can be accessed and enjoyed by the public.

We will have a new digital archive and capability to manage the transfer of huge volumes of born-digital records.

Our reputation and profile will be recognised nationally and internationally and our organisation will be fit for purpose, dynamic and innovative supporting our dedicated staff.



Conservation of a tracing paper plan of
the Public Record Office of Ireland,
OPW 5HC/1/106

Goal 1

We will ensure that our services are relevant and promote best international practice

Key Objectives

- Ensure that the legislation underpinning the statutory role of the National Archives is updated to safeguard the long-term preservation of state records in a rapidly changing 21st century information landscape
- Ensure that Government Departments, scheduled bodies and the Court Service understand and demonstrate best practice in records management
- Ensure that the statutory role of the National Archives in the protection and conservation of state records is recognised and valued across government and amongst the public

Goal 1

Supporting Actions

1. We will assist in the drafting of a new National Archives Act that places an obligation on every government department and office to create and maintain full and accurate records; to manage these records in such a manner as to be available for reference and evidence until either transfer to archival custody or disposal under authorisation from the Director of the National Archives.

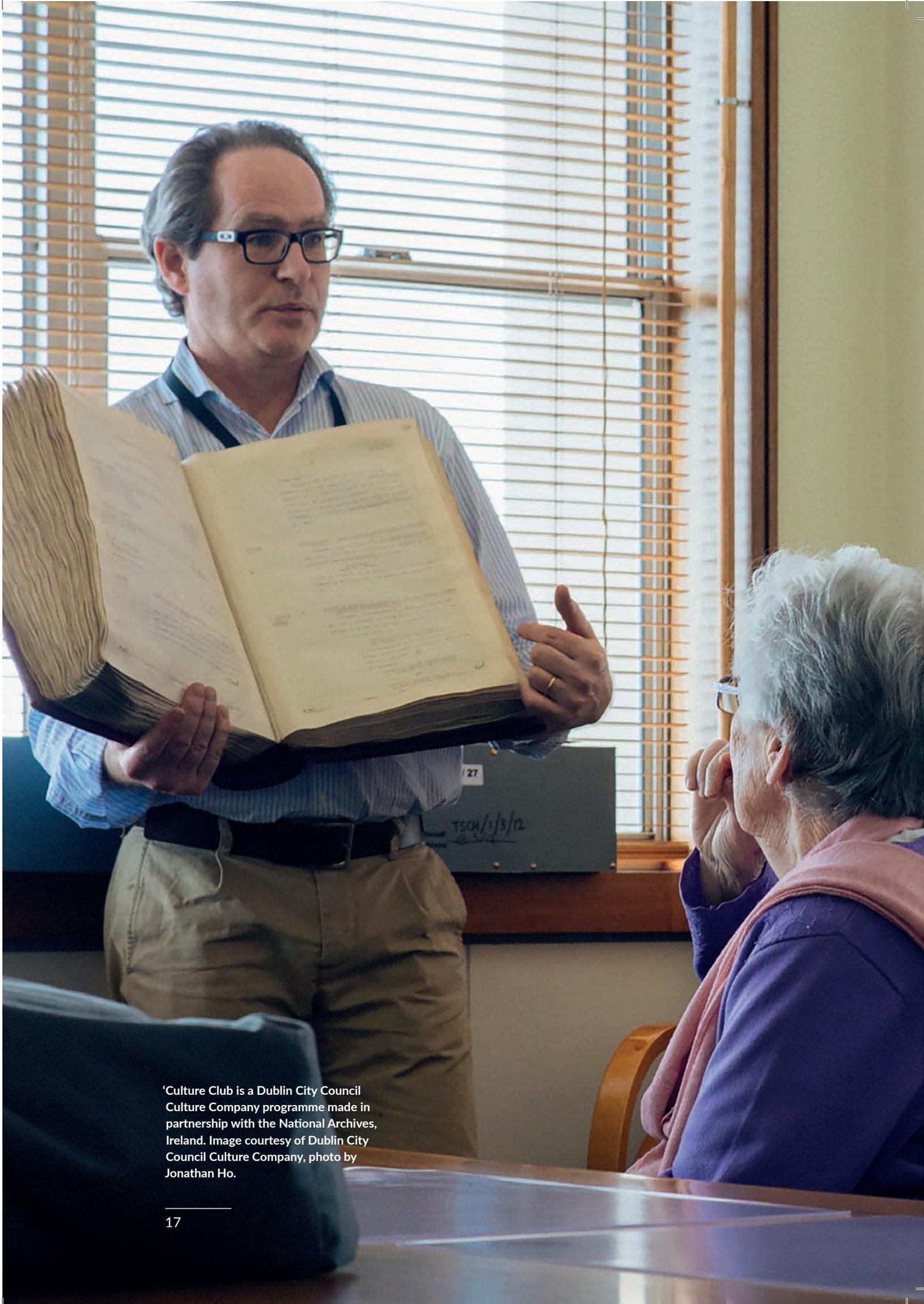
This revised legislation will recognise the many changes that have taken place since the National Archives Act 1986 including FOI and Data Protection legislation, and the application of digital technology to the creation of records and information

2. In partnership with relevant departments, court service and agencies, we will develop a new policy framework and overall strategy in records management reflecting the complete life cycle of all records from creation to transfer
3. We will raise our profile across government as the point of first contact with regard to records and information management through an advocacy, training and advice programme based on professional and ethical standards and expertise
4. We will introduce a new records management policy in the National Archives that ensures that our own records management procedures are recognised as an exemplar for others
5. We will support and assist in compliance initiatives across the Irish civil service such as Build to Share and Open Data

Goal 1

Outcomes

- A new modern and dynamic National Archives Act that reflects the reality of the policy context in which we operate
- More government departments, agencies and the court service will work with the National Archives in a shared approach to best practice records management leading to a more effective, less burdensome and efficient use of time and resources
- The statutory role of the National Archives will be understood across government and with the public as the institution recognised as an honest broker, operating to the highest standards in information management internally as well as offering impartial advice and access to records
- The release of data produced by the National Archives will comply with government data policy and will facilitate access to data for new areas of research



'Culture Club is a Dublin City Council Culture Company programme made in partnership with the National Archives, Ireland. Image courtesy of Dublin City Council Culture Company, photo by Jonathan Ho.

Goal 2

We will develop our digital services to enable greater access to archives in our custody, improve public service delivery and increase public engagement through an enhanced education and outreach programme

Goal 2

Key Objectives

- We will enable greater digital access to our services ensuring that more people can engage with the work of the National Archives remotely and avail of its services
- More people will be connected to our collections and records
- We will build and develop our public engagement through enhanced education and outreach work
- We will create new and inclusive spaces, both physical and virtual where people can encounter and enjoy our work
- More people will recognise and value the work of the National Archives
- The National Archives will play a central role in the Decade of Centenaries Commemorations Programme nationally

'Culture Club is a Dublin City Council Culture Company programme made in partnership with the National Archives, Ireland. Image courtesy of Dublin City Council Culture Company, photo by Jonathan Ho.

Goal 2

Supporting Actions

1. We will deliver an annual education and outreach programme that supports and enhances the collections of the National Archives
2. We will develop a Communications Strategy for the National Archives, to include our internal communications, across a range of media platforms and for a range of audiences
3. We will build the capacity through our website for digital access to a range of our services
4. We will develop and strengthen existing partnerships and develop new strategic alliances to create dynamic programmes and events
5. We will deliver a significant Commemorations Programme in 2021/2022 centred on our historical collections as well as reflecting 100 years of preserving state records

Goal 2

Outcomes

- The collections and records of the National Archives will be recognised and valued nationally and internationally
- More people will engage with, understand and enjoy the work of the National Archives through online platforms, enhanced digital services, increased collections, items and exhibitions available online
- We will have increased new and return visitor's onsite
- The profile, reach and digital footprint of the National Archives will have been enhanced due to increased visibility through our social media, online and public programme
- The National Archives will be working closely with a key number of institutions to raise awareness of our records and archives maximising and extending their use for research and education purposes
- The role of the National Archives as the repository of the historical records of the state will be celebrated and cherished

Goal 3

We will secure and preserve the records of the state for current and future generations



Goal 3

Key Objectives

- Our building and archive repository will reflect the value placed on the preservation and conservation of records by the state
- The public will recognise the National Archives, its collections and records, as being the holder of the memory of the state and the Irish nation, cherishing and engaging with records of importance and significance
- Government departments will recognise the value of depositing records worthy of permanent preservation with the National Archives

Goal 3

Supporting Actions

1. A new archive repository, meeting international standards for the storage of archives, will be unveiled in 2022 following significant investment under Project 2040
2. A new public spaces masterplan will be approved by Government to 'open' up the current building, creating a new public exhibition space to showcase and engage with the many historical collections and the modern records of the state and support the realisation of a new approach to our education and engagement programme
3. An audit of all state records currently held by the National Archives will be undertaken, to identify poorly catalogued or unlisted records and a plan framed to tackle the backlog and ensure their long-term accessibility
4. We will undertake a review of our services to the public including our reading room, online records and copy records provision, to ensure that access and use of our records is more efficient and streamlined
5. Following completion of the new repository, a programme will be undertaken with all government departments to identify and transfer existing backlogs of 30-year old records worthy of permanent preservation to the National Archives

Goal 3

Outcomes

- Current and future records of the state will be protected to the highest standards for future generations in a state of the art, modern, archive repository
- The National Archives building will be a dynamic and engaging space for visitors and users and identified as central to the cultural life of the nation
- The National Archives will become recognised and trusted as the official repository for all state records where departments routinely and regularly deposit. This will in turn create significant savings for the state in commercial and off-site storage currently used by departments
- Systems for the control and management of departmental records will be employed effectively
- Our services to the public will be of high quality, continually improving and responsive to the needs of users

Goal 4

We will develop our capacity to be a leader in the digital age

Key Objectives

- The National Archives' digital capacity will have been transformed and will reflect best practice archiving in a digital age
- The records of the state, available digitally, will create key moments of inspiration and curiosity about the past
- Our current records and collections will benefit from a focused and strategic approach to digitisation



Goal 4

Supporting Actions

1. We will establish a Digital Taskforce to develop an ambitious Digital Strategy for the National Archives to support government departments in standardising and streamlining the process for managing and transferring born digital records
2. We will build our internal capacity including our ICT systems to conserve, preserve and store born-digital records and a digitised archive
3. We will prepare for the launch of the 1926 census on-line as well as refreshing the 1901 and 1911 records within the context of a new genealogy strategy
4. We will embark on a curated digitisation programme from our current collections to ensure greater online access for current and future users
5. We will build on current partnerships to further develop collaborations that combine historical research, archival discovery and technology to enable access to records and collections
6. We will build our ICT capability to ensure that we can manage and preserve born-digital records and digitised archives

'Culture Club is a Dublin City Council Culture Company programme made in partnership with the National Archives, Ireland. Image courtesy of Dublin City Council Culture Company, photo by Jonathan Ho.

Goal 4

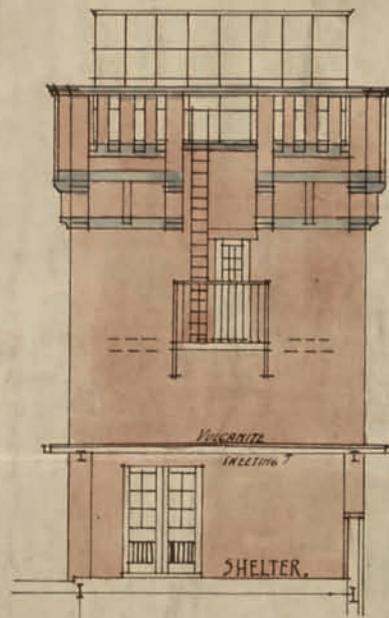
Outcomes

- Our digital archiving capacity will have become integrated across all aspects of our work including how we manage, store and preserve digital records
- Our digital services and capabilities will demonstrate best practice internationally
- We will have begun to receive born-digital records from government departments
- More people at home and abroad will engage with the digital records of the National Archives

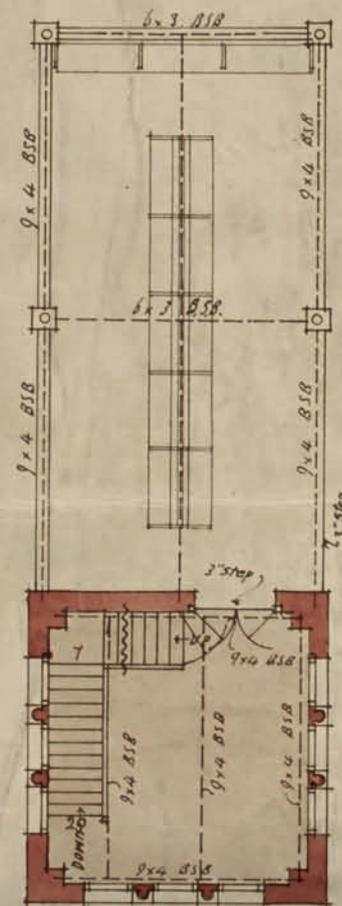
MSS W & R JACOB & CO. LTD. PROPOSED WATER-TOWER. BISHOP



ELEVATION TO BISHOP ST.



REAR ELEVATION OF TOWER.



PLAN AT ROOF LEVEL

SCALE 8'0" TO AN INCH.

No. 16.1275.
NOV. 14. 1910

Courtesy of the Irish Architectural Archive

Goal 5

We will strengthen our institution to be an innovative, responsive and dynamic National Archives



Goal 5

Key Objectives

- Our culture, building and work practices will reflect our commitment to being a 21st century archive
- Our staff will be identified as our greatest asset, providing the specialist and professional services required of a national institution
- Our staffing levels and structure will reflect the value and importance placed on protecting the records of the state
- Our structure, corporate planning and business processes will be delivered to the highest standards

'Culture Club is a Dublin City Council Culture Company programme made in partnership with the National Archives, Ireland. Image courtesy of Dublin City Council Culture Company, photo by Jonathan Ho.

Goal 5

Supporting Actions

1. We will develop an annual business plan to support delivery of our overall strategy
2. We will invest in the development of our staff to ensure that they are supported to deliver on this strategy and on the long-term vision for the National Archives
3. We will develop a workforce plan that is capable of delivering on this strategy and plans for the future needs of the organisation
4. We will work with our parent department to ensure that enhanced digital, archival, administration, preservation and conservation capabilities are reflected in our staffing complement
5. We will develop a new ICT strategy that encompasses the full breadth of the work of the organisation particularly supporting our digital capacity
6. In line with Government policy, we will develop an energy efficiency policy to reduce our carbon consumption and ensure that the development of our building and work practices operate within an energy efficient framework

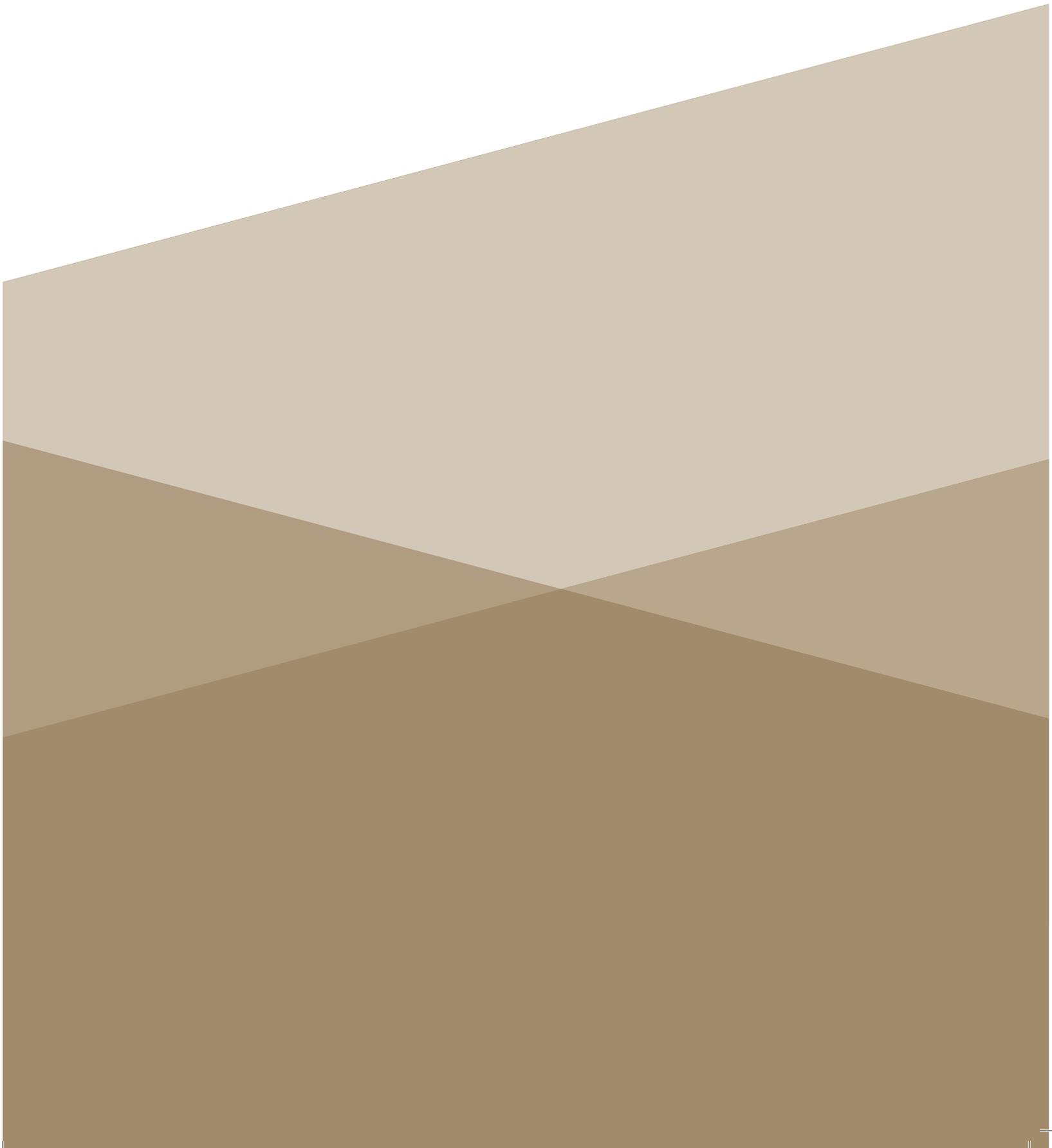
Goal 5

Outcomes

- Our staffing structure and complement will be fit-for-purpose to meet the demands of a 21st century archive
- Our internal processes, work practices and business planning will have enabled delivery of our strategy
- Our ICT processes, systems and infrastructure will have supported delivery of our many diverse and complex functions
- We will be identified as a proactive, progressive and responsive organisation, workforce and institution

Conclusion

This plan is intended to shape and direct the energies and activities of the National Archives for the next five years. It supports and reinforces existing initiatives and priorities and identifies others where there is a pressing need for us to engage. Its success will be measured by how readily our stakeholders are aware of our role and responsibilities, and in ensuring that the records created today will be available and accessible for tomorrow's readers.



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
Sráid an Easpaig, Baile Átha Cliath 8
D08 DF85, Éire

www.nationalarchives.ie

Fón: +353 (0)1 407 2300
Lo Call: +353 1890 252424
Facs: +353 (0)1 407 2333
Ríomhphost: query@nationalarchives.ie



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
National Archives