

Public Access Policy

13 February 2025



Cumberland
Council



Westmorland
& Furness
Council

Working for Cumberland Council and
Westmorland & Furness Council

Public Access Policy

Introduction

This policy has been drawn up to comply with the Archives Accreditation Standard, June 2018

Scope

This policy applies to catalogued records held by Cumbria Archives.

Who we serve

Cumbria Archives serves all those individuals and communities interested in the archives of the County of Cumbria.

Access, equality and social inclusion

Cumbria Archives is committed to the development of positive policies and activities to promote equal opportunities in employment and in the delivery of services regardless of race, disability, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or age. It is also committed to identifying and removing barriers of social exclusion that may prevent access to its services and facilities.

Access for people with disabilities

All Archive Centres are fully DDA compliant. Archive staff can provide additional assistance for people with physical disabilities. This includes reading (short) documents on request, providing magnifiers, making use of the hearing loop, and permitting the entry of assistance dogs into the research rooms.

Our purpose

Cumbria Archives cares for the county's documentary heritage, providing facilities for the public use of original and printed documents dating from the twelfth century to the present day. We are committed to making access to our collections as easy as possible.

Making our collections available

Our search rooms contain extensive indexes and catalogues to help visitors identify which archives may help their research. Many of these finding aids can be accessed through our [website and online catalogue](#) (CASCAT) and a selection of older versions of these

catalogues is also available at via [The National Archives](#). Details of annual accessions are reported to The National Archives.

Access to our research rooms is by appointment to reserve a seat and documents must be requested in advance. Access to the research rooms to view original archives is by the ARA (Archives and Records Association) [Archives Card](#) and is subject to specific forms of official identity. Original material is usually unique and irreplaceable, and we ask all researchers to observe these handling guidelines.

- Please use a pencil for taking notes
- Do not smoke, drink, or eat (including sweets and chewing gum).
- Make sure your hands are clean and free of residue from hand sanitiser
- Avoid touching inks or pigments on the documents
- Wear gloves provided to handle photographs, and handle photographs by the edge only
- Do not touch the surface of transparencies or other modern media
- Do not write on or mark the items in any way
- Use the weights provided to hold rolled documents in place
- Use the book rests provided to support the bindings of bound volumes
- Ask for polyester film if you want to trace maps
- Normally only two items may be consulted at one time

We also have a number of key security rules that help us safeguard our collections. A [Quick Glance Guide](#) detailing the items that you can and cannot bring into the research rooms and our full [Searchroom Rules](#) are available on our website and in all our archive centres.

Archives can be viewed either in original format or through microfilm, digital or other surrogate formats. Computers are also available to provide internet access to local and family history websites. Our computers also provide access to digitised records. Members of staff are always available to help with enquiries about the finding aids and to help direct individual visitors to particular research material.

Access to the search rooms is free. There are, however, charges for digitisation services, and for the use of digitised content in publications. All our fees and charges are reviewed annually and published.

A variety of outreach events are held every year to attract new and potential users to the service and to promote collections. These events are advertised through the media and on our website.

Copying services

Cumbria Archives provides a digitisation service which can provide images by e-mail, CD, and via filesharing. A price list, revised annually, is available in the research rooms or can be viewed on the website. Alternatively, the use of **digital cameras** without flash is permitted in the research room, subject to signing an agreement to respect copyright.

Copyright legislation may prevent the copying of records. This will be explained by staff when copies are requested. Information about arrangements for licensing of images or reproductions for public use is available in our media licence and standard conditions are stated on our copyright declaration form. The cost is specified on the current list of fees and charges.

Enquiry service

Staff can provide basic information from our indexes and catalogues, suggest possible avenues of research, and help with the interpretation of documents. We can conduct limited research up to 30 minutes for one enquiry free-of-charge. Any longer consultations will vary on a case-by-case basis, and we cannot guarantee to undertake extended research/family history enquiries, repeated research requests from the same researcher or enquiries on sources not held in our Archive Centres.

We maintain a list of private records researchers on our website who can conduct more extended or subsequent research requests for researchers unable to visit our offices in person. These private researchers undertake work for a fee on their behalf. **Cumbria Archives neither guarantees the quality nor can be held responsible for any work undertaken by these private researchers.**

Our turnaround time for responding to telephone, written, and e-mail enquiries, is normally within 10 working days. We are not able to provide legal advice on the content of archival documents.

Website

Information on the services provided by Cumbria Archives can be found on its website cumbriaarchives.org.uk including:

- Details for each Archive Centre ([Barrow](#), [Carlisle](#), [Kendal](#) and [Whitehaven](#)) including opening hours, a location map, postal address, e-mail and a contact telephone number
- Information about our [collections](#) including a searchable online catalogue, an image gallery, and a section devoted to new collections, browsable guides to our collections and more detailed indexes for certain holdings.
- Information about our [digitisation services](#) including charges
- A means via GOV UK Pay where you can pay online for copies, digitisation, and publication fees
- Information [about Cumbria Archives](#) and its policies

The website is updated on an on-going basis.

Auditing our service

Service plan and activities

Each year Cumbria Archives produces a service plan that sets down specific work targets for the cataloguing and management of collections, digital service delivery, staff development, conservation and preservation work, educational and outreach activities, and volunteer activities. The performance of these targets is monitored by the Archives

Management Team. Performance results and related statistics are returned on an annual basis to the National Archives.

Evaluation and CIPFA archive user survey

Customer comment cards are available in all archive centres, and visitors are welcome to provide feedback.

Cumbria Archives participates in the national CIPFA *Survey of Visitors to UK Archives* (previously the Public Services Quality Group *Survey of Visitors to British Archives*) that is held every two years. The survey asks visitors to record their comments on a wide range of services and facilities. The survey provides an insight into the level and quality of service provision, enables a comparison with other archive services in the UK and provides an opportunity for us to consider and improve our service delivery.

Access to original archives

We do not usually allow access to uncatalogued collections. We have an active cataloguing programme and make documents accessible as quickly as possible within available resources.

Most records are available for research without restrictions. However, some restrictions on access are determined by legislation or arise from the physical condition of the material and the risk of further damage. Access to records containing personal information of living, identifiable individuals is restricted under the Data Protection Act, 2018.

By signing our visitor's book on entry to our searchroom, the user agrees to abide by our [Searchroom Rules](#) in the access and use of records in our custody. Researchers are responsible under the Data Protection Act 2018 for any processing of data accessed by them relating to living identifiable individuals including copying, re-use, transmission abroad and publication (whether online or in print).

Some records about individual people are particularly sensitive, including the records of magistrate courts, county courts, coroners, hospitals, workhouses and schools. Rights of access to such records can be complex. Cumbria Archives usually cannot undertake to provide electoral register data less than 10 years old. Cumbria Archives will usually require that requests for access to sensitive records are made in writing, to enable the Service to

assess the situation accurately. We try to be as responsive and helpful as possible and will always provide an explanation if access is restricted. Users who want to find information held by Cumberland Council or Westmorland & Furness Council or their predecessor bodies relating to themselves or to relatives, particularly if this is likely to be sensitive, should submit a Subject Access Request to the relevant council's Information Governance Team.

Individuals who want to study documents for historical or statistical purposes containing sensitive categories of personal information (for instance relating to health, sexuality, race, political, or religious beliefs) of identifiable individuals still living may be able to access such records provided they sign our [Privileged Access Agreement](#). The researcher, by signing the agreement, agrees not to disclose names and any identifying information of the individuals mentioned in such records, and reference to such individuals must be. Evidence of research purposes is required before access can be permitted (such as a letter from the research funding authority or from an academic supervisor) along with evidence of the identity of the researcher.

The Freedom of Information Act, 2000 and Subject Access Requests under data protection legislation permit access to certain pieces of closed information under certain relevant guidelines. Applications under the Freedom of Information Act, 2000 or Subject Access Requests for information from any restricted records must be submitted through the relevant council's Information Governance Team.

Records which are identified as fragile and at immediate risk of deterioration, or which show signs of degradation that may be hazardous to the user such as mould or infestation, will not be made available in the research rooms and will be designated unfit for production. We make this information available in our catalogues as quickly as possible after we have identified the risk to the records. We try to arrange treatment of unfit records in our Conservation Studio as resources permit.

Very occasionally, the owner of an archive collection will request special conditions for access to their documents. Both online and research room catalogues will reflect this, and staff will be able to guide researchers and help put arrangements in place. We usually do

not permit legal enquiries without the owner's consent on privately owned collections deposited with Cumbria Archives.

Public service standards

Cumbria Archives' Standards of Service document sets out style and level of customer service you can expect. We aim to develop services that are user friendly, accessible, meaningful and that are delivered to a high standard. This includes offering our customers the right advice, prompt response times to enquiries and requests for digitised content, and an efficient document retrieval process.

Compliments, Complaints and Comments

There is a set procedure for dealing with customer complaints. If you feel that you have not received a good service you can log a complaint with the relevant council online, in writing, by telephone or email. The complaint will be logged and passed to the relevant archive centre for an appropriate response and remedial action. The response will be sent within 10 working days. All complaints are monitored on an annual basis and we seek to improve our service delivery through the comments that are received. You can also log compliments or comments in the same way. Alternatively if you wish to send us your comments directly to us in a less formal way, you can use our [feedback form](#).

Meeting the needs of our stakeholders

Our stakeholders are those individuals or organisations with a direct interest in Cumbria Archive Service. They include Cumberland Council and Westmorland & Furness Council, our users (both visitors and remote) and the depositors of archives. The needs of these stakeholders are monitored and evaluated through the biennial CIPFA user survey. We are looking to develop an Archives User Group which will provide an opportunity for groups and individuals representing researchers and depositors from our stakeholder community to meet with us and discuss issues relating to the development and performance of Cumbria Archives.

The media

Cumbria Archives welcomes interest from the media in its work. Requests for publication of archives are subject to copyright and may incur publication fees. Requests for broadcast are regulated through a Media Licence Agreement.

Takedown policy

Occasionally there are circumstances in which we may take down material from our websites or from third party social media platforms which we use. Information published on our websites should be considered to be in the public domain and will be removed from that website only in exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of Cumbria Archives. The information will be regarded as having been removed temporarily and may be restored at a date decided by Cumbria Archives.

Material may be taken down temporarily on receipt of a request from a member of the public or organisation. The case will then be considered by the Cumbria Archives Management Team with advice, where necessary, from the Information Governance Teams from Cumberland Council and/or Westmorland and Furness Council. Material will be taken down in the following circumstances:

- material made available in good faith is now considered to be subject to an exemption under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000 or the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) 2004.
- where the material discloses personal information about someone who is still alive and continued online access would be unlawful or unfair to them under data protection legislation or would breach their or their family's right to a private and family life under the Human Rights Act 1998.
- making the material available online might invoke an infringement of copyright.
- the material is defamatory or obscene.
- the material was released in error and removal is required to rectify a mistake.

Should the member of public or organisation disagree with the Management Team's decision not to take down information, then they have the right to appeal to the relevant Information Governance Team.

To contact us about material on our websites, use our [feedback form](#).

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