

Media Release

Archivists give green light to new body

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The archives world moved into a new era today following the decision by the groups representing the profession, major providers and users to join forces and create a single body to promote standards, improve access and speak for the sector.

Individual Members of the Society of Archivists voted in favour of the proposal to create a new body in partnership with the National Council on Archives (NCA) and Association of Chief Archivists in Local Government (ACALG), marking the final stage in the process to bring together the archival and records community into one new organisation, the Archives and Records Association (ARA).

The new body will cover the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, providing support to archivists, records managers and conservators, advice to users and the views of the sector as a whole to government and wider society. The ARA will continue to support the work of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Archives, which was administered by the NCA and will organise the annual Archive Awareness Campaign which seeks to engage new audiences with local and national archives.

The ARA, though an independent body, will receive some public funding from The National Archives and the Museums, Libraries & Archives Council with specific objectives within the fields of advocacy, awareness raising and sector development.

Commenting on the successful “yes” vote, Katy Goodrum, Chair of the Society of Archivists said:

“I am delighted at the outcome of this vote. Members of the Society clearly saw the benefits in creating a wider sector group. Once the Archives & Records Association has been constituted and its new officers elected, there are some key areas to work on. There will be the challenges of reaching out to new supporters, ensuring that existing Members benefit from the creation of the new body and raising awareness about what the new body is and does across a wide variety of audiences. I know that ARA will have the strength to meet these challenges successfully”.

Geoff Pick, Chair of the National Council on Archives said:

“The NCA’s member bodies voted in favour of the creation of the new sector organisation and we are delighted that the Society’s Members have so enthusiastically endorsed the proposals. It is now vital that the Archives & Records Association works quickly to establish itself in the minds of Parliamentarians, new Government Ministers, Local Government leaders and others to give a renewed voice to the archives sector. The move towards a unified organisation to represent the interests of the sector has been well received by many important partners, including those who currently fund much of the NCA’s activities – The National Archives and the Museums, Libraries & Archives Council. The future for the sector looks very positive indeed following this vote”.

Bruce Jackson, Chairman of ACALG said:

“ACALG represents those responsible for providing the majority of public access to archives in England and Wales. Their overwhelming support for this merger indicates their clear support for a more strategic approach to meeting public and government expectations of the sector.”

Tim Boswell, former MP for Daventry and Founding Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Archives said:

“The invaluable work of the archives sector will undoubtedly be strengthened by the creation of this new body. The Archives & Records Association will be able to speak with great authority and clarity to decision-makers and opinion-formers. I know that the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Archives will lend its support to the new body once the new Parliament is formed following next month’s election. I wish ARA the very best for the future and I look forward to hearing about its progress”.

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