

1. Context of the policy

West Glamorgan Archive Service (WGAS) is a joint service for the Councils of the City and County of Swansea and Neath Port Talbot County Borough, reporting to the West Glamorgan Archives Committee.

WGAS is based in Swansea Civic Centre and operates an additional service point at the Neath Mechanics Institute. WGAS provides a professional service to donors, depositors and users of archives in accordance with national standards of access to archives, in particular the Archives Accreditation Standard.

WGAS publishes information about its performance in the form of an annual report available through its web pages on the Swansea Council website. It also provides annual statistical returns to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and annual lists of its accessions to The National Archives.

This policy forms part of a suite of Archive Service policies as published on the Archive Service web pages on the Swansea Council website. Hard copies are also made available in the archive searchrooms.

2. Purpose of the policy

An important part of the work of WGAS is ensuring the security of the archives it holds, both while they are in storage and when they are in use. This policy sets out the procedures WGAS has in place to ensure the security of its holdings and the information recorded in them.

3. Security of the strongrooms

The archives held by WGAS in Swansea Civic Centre are stored in environmentally-controlled and monitored strongrooms to which unsupervised access is granted only to members of WGAS staff. They can be accessed only from areas of the building which are not open to the general public. Unsupervised access to strongrooms by maintenance and security personnel or contractors is not permitted. The strongrooms are fitted with an intruder alarm system.

The archives belonging to the Neath Antiquarian Society which are managed by WGAS on behalf of the Society are stored in environmentally-monitored strongrooms to which unsupervised access is only granted to WGAS staff and a restricted number of Neath Antiquarian Society Committee members. Unsupervised access to strongrooms by maintenance and security personnel or contractors is not permitted. The strongroom is fitted with an intruder alarm system.

Keys to strongrooms in both premises are kept securely at all times. Access to keys outside office hours is allowed to designated out-of-hours key-holders only.

4. Reader registration

WGAS participates in the Archives Card reader's ticket scheme, which is administered by ARA Commercial, a branch of the Archives and Records Association. A reader's ticket (full ticket or day pass) is required for the use of original archival material in either of the WGAS premises.

Registration for an Archives Card can be commenced online from any location, however a card is only issued on production of two forms of ID taken from a list of acceptable documents. The process follows closely UK government guidelines for identity verification.

5. Security measures in the searchroom

Public access to archives is provided only in the archive searchrooms in Swansea and Neath while under continuous supervision by a member of WGAS staff. Conduct of researchers is subject to the searchroom regulations (see appendix).

Lockers are provided in the reception area both in the Civic Centre and the Neath Mechanics' Institute. Researchers are required to place their bags and coats in these and retain the key for the duration of their visit, to ensure the security of both the archives they consult and their own belongings.

Researchers must fill in a document request slip for each document they wish to see. The request slips must carry the researcher's name and reader's ticket number, legibly written, along with the reference number of the document.

Documents retrieved by WGAS staff are produced for consultation in the searchroom only. Under no circumstances are researchers permitted to remove documents from the archive searchroom. The archivist on duty reserves the right to refuse to produce documents for any researcher whom he or she considers to present a risk to their security.

Where documents are issued on loan for exhibition and display it will be only to another museum or archive with a similar level of security, as set out in the WGAS loans policy.

6. Volunteers, contractors and temporary staff

All volunteers taken on by WGAS will complete an application form, giving the names of two referees, as set out in the WGAS Volunteers Strategy. Volunteers and temporary staff working in the archives will not be allowed unsupervised access to the strongrooms or the strongroom keys.

Contractors employed by WGAS will not be allowed unsupervised access to the strongrooms. Where access to the strongrooms is required, a member of staff will accompany and supervise them.

7. Protection and disposal of personal or sensitive information

Archives that contain personal information of living people (or those who are presumed may still be alive, judging from the date range of the records) will be dealt with according to the terms of the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 and the Data Protection Act 2018..

Records which fall within the scope of data protection legislation are usually identified as such in the archive catalogues, however the archivist on duty has discretion to withhold any record for this reason, or allow access on the basis of a data protection waiver signed by the researcher. Such a waiver commits the researcher not to record or reproduce any personal information as a result of their access to the document.

Documents received by WGAS which are not judged to be worthy of permanent preservation will be disposed of confidentially, as set out in the Appraisal of Documents Policy.

Policy dated March 2020, for review by March 2025

Appendix

Searchroom Regulations

- Readers wishing to consult original documents must be in possession of a valid reader's ticket. This is not transferable and should be presented at each visit to the Archive Service. Registration for a reader's ticket constitutes an agreement to abide by these regulations.
- Readers may not smoke, drink or eat in the searchroom.
- Only pencil may be used for making notes in the searchroom.
- Bags and briefcases must be placed in the lockers at reception.
- Documents must not be written upon or marked in any way, and readers must not lean on any document or place upon it any book, paper or other document or item. Tracings may be made by arrangement with the staff, who may specify the way in which they are made. Readers observing damage to documents should report it to the Archivist.
- The issue of documents is at the discretion of the Archive staff. Documents must not be taken from the archive searchroom. Documents which are no longer required by the reader should be returned to the Archive staff. All documents should be returned to the staff by 4.45pm (6.45pm on Tuesdays).
- Not more than one bundle or file, or 3 volumes, may be in use at any one time. Where a reader is issued with loose documents in a bundle or file, these items must be retained in their proper order and kept in their folder. Similar conditions apply to the issue of photographic material. Before issue, these papers or photographs will be counted and checked by staff who will likewise check them on their return.
- In consideration for other readers, the archive searchroom must be kept as quiet as possible. Readers are asked not to make or receive mobile phone calls in this area.
- Photocopying is undertaken at the discretion of the Archive staff. Photocopying will not be permitted where there is a risk of damage to documents or where copyright is reserved. Except in cases where copyright is reserved, readers can use a camera to photograph documents, provided the relevant copyright declaration form is completed. While readers may refer to and quote freely from most documents, permission to reproduce documents, maps and pictorial material in publications should be sought in writing from the County Archivist, for which there may be a charge.