

# **SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE**



# **RECORDS MANAGEMENT MANUAL**

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# Section 1

## Why Records Management?

### 1.1 What is a record?

A record can be a single piece of information or a collection of information that is evidence of an activity or decision. It tells the story of how we went about the activity or why we made a particular decision. Traditionally in the Executive we keep these records in a registered paper file. Indeed, this file remains the official public record. Increasingly, records are viewed as information created and stored in an electronic form that can be read, processed and communicated by a computer such as emails, word processing documents and spreadsheets. These are also records of our activities that must be retained.

### 1.2 Why do we keep records?

We all have to keep some records, whether at home or in the office. What happens if you have paid a bill and the utility company says you didn't? The Executive is like all other organisations in that it needs to keep records of business decisions and transactions. Important decisions must be preserved for future generations including the historians. Not only does it make sense to do this but we are duty bound by legislation to keep these records in good order.

### 1.3 Why do we have to manage records?

Given the wide range and number of records it is essential that they are captured, managed and preserved in an organised system, which maintains their integrity and authenticity. Additionally records have to be retrievable easily and quickly.

New legislation in the form of the **Data Protection Act 1998** and the **Freedom of Information Act** mean that the Scottish Executive's management of its records is now more open to scrutiny. Requests for personal or other information governed by statutory response time scales will be very difficult to service if such records are not properly organised and retrievable. Additionally there is the impact on resources, staff morale and costs of time spent hunting for lost documents or files.

### 1.4 What makes us different from the Private Sector?

As long as companies comply with the Data Protection Act etc they only need to keep records for as long as the business demands. However in the Public Sector, in addition to business needs, legislation on public records determines record-keeping conditions. The Public Records Act of 1958 places a duty on every person who is responsible for public records to make arrangements to select the records which ought to be permanently

preserved for safekeeping and to perform this duty under the guidance of the Keeper of Public Records.

The subsequent 1967 Act did not replace the 1958 Act but introduced the rule that government papers should normally be released to the public 30 years after closure.

In the Scottish Executive records must be organised and controlled in a cost-effective way, starting with their creation through to their destruction. Those deemed to have historical interest must not be destroyed, but archived with the National Archives of Scotland (NAS). Any files retained by Scottish Executive for administrative purposes beyond 30 years after closure must be notified to a body called the Scottish Records Advisory Council.

### **1.5 What happens if we get it wrong?**

No one likes the embarrassment of being asked a question about a subject that is within his or her area of work and being unable to find the information, in order to respond quickly and with up to date information. A key function of the Executive is to be able to give full and timely responses to Parliamentary Questions or Ministerial Correspondence.

In recent years, major government departments have incurred public criticism because their record management has failed them. Here are some examples:

- The BSE Inquiry was critical of Central Government Departments (including the Executive) because of difficulties encountered in assembling a full set of submissions which had been put up to and read by former Ministers and Permanent Secretaries on BSE and CJD related subjects.
- In 1990 the Chief Executive of the DTI was called to a House of Commons committee to answer questions about British Aerospace's dealings with Rolls Royce. The DTI were unable to produce a number of files and documents relevant to the issue, and one of the DTI documents which was produced had a British Aerospace stamp on it. When challenged about this, the DTI were unable to produce the original.

### **1.6 What are our responsibilities?**

Whatever your current grade or position in the Executive, it is up to you to find out:

- where the official records relating to the business of your Branch are stored
- how they are handled
- what electronic folder set up is used within your Branch for sharing of information; and how that information finds its way into the official paper file.

You may not have to physically file a document but **it is your responsibility to ensure that all key documents are filed in an appropriate manner.**

## Section 2

### Public Records Legislation

#### 2.1 Objectives of Public Records Legislation

The public records of Scotland, England and Wales are a rich archive and form part of our national heritage. They include records of judicial and executive branches of the central government from the 11th century to the present time. The great wealth of documents in the British Archive has made it a main source for the history of the Western World. This vast archive is made up of records of the courts, policy papers of high officers of State and papers of administrative detail (from the Domesday Book onwards). Public records legislation is directed at making provision for Government Departments and certain other public bodies to make proper arrangements to select from among their records those which are worthy of being permanently preserved and ensuring that they transfer such records to the appropriate body for safekeeping. Modern arrangements for the management of public records in the UK generally date from the Grigg Committee Report of 1954 (the Report of the Committee on Departmental Records, Cmd 9163: HMSO July 1954), although the legal position in Scotland is still governed by the Public Records (Scotland) Act 1937.

#### 2.2 Legal Background

The Public Records (Scotland) Act 1937 allows any Government Department, Board of Trustees, or other body or person having the custody of any records belonging to Her Majesty and relating exclusively or mainly to Scotland to transmit those records to the Keeper of the Records of Scotland who is the head of the National Archives of Scotland (NAS). The 1937 Act also allows any local authority or any statutory body corporate with the consent of the Keeper to transmit such of their records as relate exclusively or mainly to Scotland to the Keeper. The legislation is permissive, rather than mandatory in nature in that there is no statutory duty placed on any person to make arrangements to select the records which should be transmitted to the Keeper. There is also no definition of what is meant by public records. The provisions simply permit records of Her Majesty, or in the case of a local authority or statutory body corporate, records belonging to the body in question to be transmitted to the Keeper.

This contrasts to the position in England and Wales which is governed by the Public Records Acts of 1958 and 1967. The 1958 Act places a duty on every person who is responsible for public records to make arrangements to select the records which ought to be permanently preserved for safekeeping and to perform this duty under the guidance of the Keeper of Public Records.

Public records are defined in the 1958 Act as United Kingdom government records in whatever form. The definition includes paper records, machine readable and photographic material, film, video, samples and models which have been made for the purpose of conveying and recording information. Although the Act does not apply to

records of any government department or body which is wholly or mainly concerned with Scottish affairs, or which carries on its activities wholly or mainly in Scotland, nonetheless in practice several aspects of it have been applied in Scotland by administrative agreement since 1962.

### **2.3 1993 White Paper on Open Government**

The 1967 Act introduced the rule that government papers should normally be released to the public after 30 years. The White Paper on Open Government (Cmd 2290), published in August 1993, introduced a presumption in favour of the release rather than the retention of the files and new more restricted criteria for the extended closure of files.

### **2.4 Changes in response to Devolution**

The devolution settlement has some practical implications for the papers we create and hold in the Scottish Executive. Secondary legislation made under the Scotland Act 1998 (the Transfer of Property etc [Scottish Ministers] Order 1999 made under Section 60) provides that legal ownership of administrative and departmental records created before 1 July 1999 remains with Her Majesty's Government (HMG) – in practice, with the Secretary of State for Scotland. However the Order grants the right of possession of records created before 1 July 1999, provided they were held or used wholly or mainly for or in connection with the exercise of transferred functions, to the Scottish Ministers. This covers almost all records in use by the Scottish Office up to 1 July 1999.

This means that practically all files in existence up to 1 July 1999 (although not papers created after 30 June 1999) are formally owned by the Secretary of State for Scotland; but that the Scottish Executive is responsible for looking after them, for passing them to Scotland Office when requests are made for access to them, and for reviewing them when this falls due.

It has been agreed that where in future the UK Government wishes to exercise their right of access to pre-1 July 1999 records, **only** papers relating to the period up to 1 July 1999 should be released. Where a file contains papers generated before and after 1 July 1999, it should be split before the older papers are sent to Scotland Office (see Section 3.7).

### **2.5 Responsibilities of the Scottish Executive**

Scottish Executive administrative practice requires that the Scottish Executive ensures cost effective organisation and control of records. This begins with their creation, continues through their use in storage, to their destruction or retention in NAS. All documents not chosen for permanent preservation must be destroyed. Any files retained for administrative purposes beyond 30 years must be notified to the Scottish Records Advisory Council.

### **2.6 Departmental Record Officer (DRO)**

The Departmental Record Officer is responsible for ensuring that The Scottish Executive conforms to the Public Records Acts. The DRO must ensure that records are kept in good order and are reviewed properly and regularly. The DRO has the right to see all official records in the Scottish Executive.

If you have any questions about the preservation or destruction of records, please ask the DRO (see Appendix 5 - Contacts List).

## **Section 3**

### **Role and responsibilities of Records Management Branch**

#### **3.1 Functions**

Records Management Branch (RMB) provides the following registry services:

- to open new files on electronic or written request;
- to keep permanent records of file movements and provide branches with accurate markings;
- to hold PA (put away) files in store and forward to branches on request;
- to provide a BF (bring forward) service for files;
- to carry out “official searches” for missing files;
- to provide a re-theming service for branches seeking to modify their filing to the standard Scottish Executive system;
- to arrange for the annual review and disposal of files.

These functions apply in general terms to all registries whether they are staffed and controlled by the Directorate of Administrative Services (DAS) or by branches/divisions themselves. In some branch and divisional registries additional duties such as the opening and distribution of incoming mail, the acknowledgement of letters and the filing of papers are carried out.

There is one central registry in the Scottish Executive staffed by RMB and operating the standard registry system. This is located at Saughton House.

Registries serving Executive Agencies are staffed and run by their own personnel. However, it is now Scottish Executive policy that all core Departments should have their records managed by the standard registry system operated by RMB.

### 3.2 Standard Registry System: Re-theming

The ultimate aim is to bring the agreed standard registry procedures into effect throughout the Scottish Executive, where it is practicable to do so. Branches which are part of the standard registry system enjoy considerable savings in storage space and staff time (hence cost) and improved reviewing capacity. For branches preparing to join the standard system, the procedures are as follows:

- Re-theming is undertaken on request from branches.
- If appropriate, RMB can arrange to visit the branch to discuss requirements and thereafter a 3 digit cipher (e.g 2AB) which will be the unique identifying branch code for the new file series is selected and reserved. **RMB is responsible for maintaining the master cipher list and must therefore be consulted to ensure any cipher chosen has not already been allocated..**
- Before planning a new file series, the branch must consider all its current files with a view to identifying any for closure, disposal and storage with RMB if appropriate. Yearly files which are not the current year, files which are rarely used and those which are thicker than 4 cms should also be closed and allocated a disposal decision.
- Only current parts of files and papers less than 5 years old are rethemed – i.e if a file has 4 parts, only part 4 will be rethemed.
- Once the current files have been sifted and those for closure identified, the remainder will form the core of the new series, and a decision will be required as to how they should be allocated themes and subthemes.
- All letters from A-Z may be added to the 3-digit cipher to signify the theme (general subject matter) e.g. 2ABA. There is then a numerical suffix to denote the subtheme (more specific subject matter) e.g. 2ABA 001, then a second numeric suffix to represent the file title e.g. 2ABA 001/001. The following example illustrates:

#### **File number ABA 001/001 part 1**

AB:	Cipher (denoting branch ID)
ABA to Z	ID + Theme (eg Administration, etc)
ABA 001 to 999	ID + Theme + Sub-Theme (Staff Matters, Accommodation etc)
ABA 001/001	ID + Theme + Sub-Theme + Specific Title (Training, Leave, etc)

- All new files are created using lead zeros so that any reports produced from the database will list in strict numeric order.

- The retheme table should be completed with all files to be included in the new series, then forwarded to RMB for consideration and addition of the new records to the central database. Labelled file covers will be created and issued to the Branch and RMB will ensure that all appropriate cross-referencing to former files is actioned. A permanent computer record will be created on the RMB database for each file, including file number, title, opening and closure dates, disposal instructions, movements, review years and classification if applicable.
- Transfer of papers into new files is the responsibility of the branch and is carried out on branch premises. If circumstances and resources permit, it may be possible for an RMB officer to assist with this task. RMB will provide a demonstration of NetIMPREs on completion of the exercise.
- If Mediclips (see paragraph 2.3 'File covers') are the preferred option to hold papers in the new series, it should be noted that any documents which had been held on Treasury tags in old files, will be transferred in the same tags to minimise time and effort devoted to the exercise. All new files with no papers to be transferred and all subsequent parts of the new series will contain mediclips if desired.
- Further guidance on retheming may be obtained by contacting RMB who will also supply an electronic copy of the standard retheme table.

### 3.3 Opening of new files

The form (Form PD18) to request new files is available electronically both as a SCOTS template (see Para 2.4), **or on the Intranet facility NETIMPREs (see Para 2.5)**. Customer branches should complete Form PD18 with suggested title and number, and return to RMB for opening. RMB staff will check to ensure that the proposed new file number is correct.

If a new part of an existing file is required, then a written request or suitably annotated PD18 should be submitted to RMB, together with the existing part, for closure. If papers on the existing part are in use, then submission of the file cover annotated with first and last paper dates will be acceptable. If the latter course is not possible because the file is in constant use for meetings etc, or the subject matter is of a sensitive nature, then the electronic **Form PD18A** should be used instead. RMB will accept requests for new parts using this form provided branches undertake to formally close the old part themselves (RMB will provide a red "File Closed" sheet for the purpose) and give review disposal instructions for it. Attachment of an 'Immediate' tag will ensure priority action. Protectively marked files should be sent in a "double envelope" (staff dealing with protectively marked documents should confirm the procedures for the handling and circulation of such papers) and will be returned to the branch in the same fashion with the new file part.

#### *File Covers*

RMB offer customer branches a choice of the type of file cover issued, either the traditional type fitted with treasury tags or an alternative type fitted with a “Gazebo Mediclip”. This is a plastic clip which allows material to be accessed from the file without removing all other papers, and late filing to be introduced in date order without disrupting the remainder of the file. **NB: Files fitted with this type of clip are not suitable for use with Green Folders.**

#### **3.4 Opening of New Files using the SCOTS Templates.**

Forms PD18 and PD18A are available as a SCOTS template (5PD18.DOT and 5PD18A.DOT). Completed forms using this medium should be sent by E-mail to the following address:

RMBNUFIL.

Alternatively they can be printed off and sent by internal mail to RMB, J Spur, Saughton House.

### *How to use the Template*

Once in Word, click on File, click on New, highlight 5PD18 or 5PD18A, and click on OK. A copy of the form will now appear on screen. The insertion point will be at the first field (“From”) which should be completed. To move to the next field, press the Tab key and type the appropriate text. Press the Tab key to the next field, and so on (pressing the Shift and Tab keys together will move back a field). To insert a cross in a box press the spacebar.

### **3.5 Intranet Access to the Records Management Database.**

Most branches with access to SCOTS will have read-only access to the Records Management IMPReS database which holds details of all existing officially registered Scottish Executive files (exceptions to this are branches which have notified RMB of concerns about confidentiality regarding their file records). Branches are able to view information regarding each file of the sort that would normally appear on the file cover (File reference Number, Title, current location, disposal etc) and electronically request such files (or new files to be opened) from RMB. They are also able to search the database for files using keywords from file titles (eg entering “Devolution” will produce a list of all files with “Devolution” somewhere in their title). The facility is called NETIMPREs.

Requests for files from branches not recorded as the “owners” of those files will be queried before such requests are actioned.

NETIMPREs may be accessed via the “Systems” tab on Intranet. Click on Records Management. Thereafter guidance is given on screen.

### **3.6 Transit of files**

When files are sent outwith the Division, they should be passed via RMB, so that an accurate movement record can be maintained. If files are to be sent direct, then written notification of the new location must be sent to RMB. There is also a facility on NetIMPREs to notify RMB of the change in a file’s location. Arrangements for uplift of bundles of files too large for conveyance by the messengerial service can be made by contacting the RMB paperkeeping service on the numbers shown at Appendix 6. **For rules governing protectively marked files at Victoria Quay, see Appendix 2.**

### **3.7 Records of devolved matters**

The Scottish Executive has taken legal advice on whether it is necessary physically to separate papers relating to the pre-1 July 1999 period from those generated after that date by the Scottish Executive. The advice is that this is not necessary. However it has been agreed that where in future the UK Government wishes to exercise their right of access to

pre-1 July 1999 records, **only** papers relating to the period up to 1 July 1999 should be released. Where a file contains papers generated before *and after* 1 July 1999, it should be split before the older papers are sent to Scotland Office (see Section 2.4 for legal background regarding devolution).

Where a branch is asked to split a file in this way, it should advise RMB that it has done so. RMB also needs to know where the pre-1 July 1999 part of the file has been sent to. A new file should then be opened for the post-1 July 1999 papers in the normal way by submitting a request to RMB.

When the papers have been returned by the UK Minister the original file will be closed and the holding branch will be asked to make a decision on its disposal.

### **3.8 File markings**

#### ***Files to be Brought Forward (BF)***

Files not in current use should not be stored in branch rooms but should be given a BF or PA marking and sent to RMB. Files may be marked “brought forward” for any date between 7 days and one year from the submission of the file to RMB. Branches should indicate in the “marking” column of the file cover the date when the file is to be brought forward together with the name and room number of the officer requiring it.

#### ***Files to be Put Away (PA)***

Where no foreseeable action is envisaged on a file a PA marking should be given. However, this should also be viewed as the first opportunity for branches to consider alternative disposal instructions for closed files by referring to their Records Schedules.

### **3.9 Lost File Procedure**

If a file appears to be lost the following steps should be taken:

- a. Branch staff should check the latest marking with RMB;
- b. Branch staff should make a thorough search throughout the division, *and at the same time, RMB should check the storage racks;*
- c. RMB should then circulate a search list through all the offices of the customer branch, to be signed by every officer;
- d. As a last resort, an “official search” can be requested in writing by the branch B1 to the Records Manager. This involves the RMB senior paperkeeper organising a thorough search of *all files in storage* and all cupboards, desks, cabinets, briefcases etc *in the branch rooms*. While this may be carried out during normal working hours if resources permit, it may be necessary to

arrange for a search to be conducted outwith normal working hours. In the latter case the branch concerned will be liable for overtime costs *if the file is discovered on branch premises, and not in RMB.*

As RMB holds many thousands of files such a time-consuming search should be undertaken *only after all other possible steps have been exhausted.*

### **3.10 Paperkeeping Services**

The RMB paperkeeping staff are organised on an area basis to cover all the Scottish Executive premises in Edinburgh and staff can be moved to pressure points to maintain a satisfactory paperkeeping service. A warehouse at Leith Walk which now houses all the Scottish Executive's older, less frequently accessed files is entirely staffed by paperkeepers.

Their duties include:

- custody and storage of all files in the registry system not actually held in customer branches;
- the extraction and disposal of files from and to the storage racks;
- delivery or collection of files to and from customer branches when their quantity is greater than can be sent by the normal messenger service (approximately 18 files);
- the destruction of files as directed;
- the collection, storage and disposal of classified paper waste;
- the disposal of computer diskettes and cassette-size tapes.

The paperkeepers are under the direct control of the Chief Paperkeeper (see Appendix 6 - Contact List). A full paperkeeping service is only available to branches within the official Registry system, although the collection of classified paper waste is a service offered to all.

### **3.11 The Good Practice Compliance Programme**

RMB has initiated a Good Practice Compliance Programme to reassure Divisions that best records management practice is being followed in their branches.

The programme involves a personal visit to branches by an experienced RMB officer to discuss with nominated branch officers the procedures followed. Based on a short questionnaire to be completed by RMB during the course of the conversation, the discussions will identify any problems which will then be documented with advice on practical solutions. A survey of records held in each branch may also be conducted at a

time suitable to the branches. The survey would involve an RMB officer tape-recording the main details of all file covers retained by the division to establish accurate numbers and locations. For those branches already in the official registry system, this information will then be updated on the RMB database as necessary and will facilitate the production of more accurate reports on the state of branch records. For those branches not yet in the system, the information could be used as a basis for establishing a rethemed series of files to be added to the RMB database if the branch subsequently decides to join.

**Other than advising on storage areas and a relatively brief discussion with RMB, no effort will be required of divisional or branch staff. It is intended that there will be no disruption to the work of divisions and RMB officers will be as unobtrusive as possible.** A summary report of the whole exercise with any recommendations for improvement will be produced.

The programme is cyclical and, in time, all branches will be contacted. Divisions or branches who wish an early visit, however, can arrange this by contacting RMB direct (see Appendix 6 – Contact List).

## Section 4

### Filing

#### 4.1 Principles

Files are the case histories which preserve correspondence and are the record of what decisions are reached (and why) and what action is taken. Incorrect or slipshod filing, or an inadequate record of events makes for mistakes, confusion and unnecessary work. It is therefore essential that files are properly maintained and that the standard procedure for the filing of papers is followed by all staff. Correct filing helps to ensure that related documents are kept together or can readily be *brought* together and produced when required.

**All officers should ensure that good filing practice is maintained, and while a special onus rests with heads of divisions, branches and sections, each member of staff carries responsibility.** Senior officers can assist junior staff by ensuring that a file reference number is shown on papers to be filed or indicating where such papers should be filed if the subject is liable to change.

#### 4.2 Basic Rules

- \* Each file should have only 2 tags normally 13 centimetres long, which should be anchored inside, not outside, the cover (some file covers may have plastic clips instead of tags). With the exception of Green Folders (Ministerial correspondence - see below) all papers must be filed on the tags on the right hand side of the file cover. **Note: File covers fitted with plastic clips are not suitable for use with Green Folders.**
- \* In filing papers the “reverse book” method of filing should be used, ie on opening the file, the latest paper should be filed on top. ***No matter when they become available for filing, papers should be filed in the order of the date on which they were written.***
- \* The spacing of holes punched in papers should correspond with the standard punch holes in the file cover.
- \* Files should not start with a paper referring to another paper which is not on that file (copy from another file if necessary).
- \* A reply should always be filed on the same file (and the same part of the file) as the paper to which it is responding.
- \* A minute asking a question should not only appear on the same file as the minute giving an answer, the papers should also appear *in the order in which they were written*.

- \* Attachments or enclosures to documents should be filed immediately below the document to which they relate. Plans, drawings or other bulky items should be put in a pouch at the back, inside the file. A brief description of the contents should be recorded on the front of the pouch.
- \* **Green Folders** (Ministerial correspondence file covers) should be put on the appropriate subject file. After action on them is completed they should be tagged to the inside front cover of the file, which will help to ensure that they are not overlooked and can be easily detached if required.
- \* *Papers should not normally be removed from files.* If exceptionally it is necessary to permanently transfer papers between files, a cross reference should be made on the original file and the remaining papers renumbered sequentially as necessary. Papers that are removed temporarily (eg for use at a meeting in London) should be returned as quickly as possible and in the meantime a note of their removal should be placed on the file.
- \* Duplicate copies of the same paper **SHOULD NOT BE FILED**, unless annotations have been made which may have future relevance.
- \* As a general rule spent drafts should not be filed.
- \* Unless there are compelling reasons for doing so (ie originating Branch) the practice of holding general office notices, circulars etc on registered files should be avoided.
- \* *No file should remain open for more than 5 years from the date of the first paper on the file.* If a file is still “live” after 5 years a continuation part should be opened and the existing file closed. **No further papers should be added to a closed file.** If the subject again becomes active a new part to the file should be opened. Continuation parts should bear exactly the same title and number as the original file Part 1 and the continuation parts notated Part 2, 3 etc as necessary. For those in the official registry system see Section 2.3 of this manual for guidance on how to do this.
- \* *Files should not be allowed to become too bulky.* Normally 4 centimetres (about an inch and a half) is the maximum width that will allow the protective flap to lie easily over the top paper and a new file should then be opened.

***Note: Official papers should never be locked away in personal drawers. Folders kept for personal use should never contain the originals or the only copies of papers.***

### **4.3 Theming of files**

- \* The use of “general” or “miscellaneous” files should be avoided where possible.
- \* Correspondence should be kept separately from policy documents.
- \* Smaller, more specifically themed files are preferable to bulky, all-embracing files containing all the papers relating to eg land ownership in Scotland.
- \* File titles should explain clearly and specifically the subject matter of the papers within the file.
- \* Different strands of the same subject should be given different files.
- \* Each stage of the legislative process of a Bill should have its own file - Second Reading, Committee, Report and Third Reading in the House of Commons and the same in the House of Lords.
- \* Theming should be considered by *all* members of a branch - more senior staff who will be responsible for writing many of the papers may have a view or preference as to where papers should be filed.
- \* All branch staff including A1s should *read* all papers in order to be better informed and involved in deciding where papers should be filed.

### **4.4 Cabinet or Cabinet Ministerial Committee Minutes and Memoranda**

Papers in this category (or extracts from them) must not be placed on departmental files. They must be returned promptly to the appropriate Private Secretary for safe-keeping. In many cases it will be useful for future reference to have a note placed on the departmental file showing the existence of the Cabinet document and its reference number. This is most important where Cabinet documents were originated by, or are of major concern to, the Scottish Executive. A copy-brief may serve this purpose; otherwise a note should be made on a minute sheet. When such references to Cabinet documents are incorporated in a file, the file cover should be clearly marked “Contains references to Cabinet documents”. The object of this marking is to assist in the identification of files for possible selection for permanent preservation and in the researches of historians.

### **4.5 Papers in Ministerial Private Offices**

It is the responsibility of Ministers’ Private Secretaries to ensure that the top copies (or “blues”) of all submissions and minutes to Ministers, and any “white copies” of papers which Ministers annotate with a comment of any substance, are returned to the signatory for placing on the relevant Departmental file once Ministerial action is complete. Decisions about which of these side copies should be sent back will to some extent rely

on the judgement of Private Office staff, but as a rule of thumb any comments which the Private Secretary would normally record in a minute to the Department should be returned. Private Offices should operate a “holding tray” system for such documents, sending them to relevant Secretariats periodically for appropriate distribution within Departments. **Divisions subsequently in receipt of such papers should ensure that they are placed on the relevant registered file.**

#### **4.6 Computer-generated documents**

In common with other government departments and large businesses, the Scottish Executive is trying to develop a system for the electronic storage and archiving of the many important documents that users of SCOTS are now creating and transmitting. This is still an emerging technology and it will be several years before we have a fully operational system. In the meantime it is **vital** that any documents created on SCOTS (including Email messages) that would have been placed in a paper file had SCOTS not been available *should continue to be placed on the paper file*.

## **Section 5**

### **Electronic Records**

*(To be added)*

## Section 6

### Email – Lightning the Load

#### 6.1 Introduction

Communication via electronic mail (email) has now become part of everyday life, as it is an effective, speedy and simple way to communicate with others. This document is part of a Records Management information series that will act as a guide to using the Executive email system in both an effective and efficient manner. Please, however, do not lose sight of traditional forms of communication such as telephone or letter, as these can often be a more suitable medium for sensitive issues.

#### Key Record Principles

- Scottish Executive's e-mail system is provided primarily for business communications. Currently, any e-mail or attached document which, if received or sent in paper form, would normally have been placed on a registered paper file, should be printed out and filed accordingly. The e-mail should then be deleted from the system once actions upon it are complete.
- All e-mail is the property of Scottish Executive (SE), and it should be noted that all email is subject to the full range of laws that apply to other communications including defamation, harassment and discrimination. Brief personal emails are permitted with small attachments to internal and external addresses and the same guidelines apply, though disciplinary action will be taken against any member of staff who makes improper or excessive use of the email facility.

#### 6.2 Addressing Mail

- Be careful when deciding who to circulate emails to. Avoid sending to those who should not be included in the distribution. Always read the entire message before replying and do not assume that it is OK to copy someone into an email without checking with the author first.
- Ensure that those people who should be copied in the email distribution are. A general rule of thumb is that if a person is referred to in an email then they should be copied on its distribution

#### 6.3 Email Text

- If a document is to be read only by e-mail, try to avoid the use of file attachments. Putting your message in an attachment adds unnecessary bulk to the e-mail and makes it more difficult and time consuming to read. Instead, use the text in the body of the message.

- Be concise. Try to keep e-mails less than 4 paragraphs long. Simplicity and focus demonstrates respect for other’s time and that you’ve thought through the idea sufficiently to know why you are e-mailing.
- Use English intelligently. E-mail is generally a less formal style of communication. But balance that with the need to be clear on your message and do not let poor structure, spelling and grammar cause you to appear incompetent. Use the spell checker and read your message before you send it.

## 6.5 Subjects

- Keep to a single subject line per message.
- Provide a subject heading that clearly and accurately reflects the contents of the message. This will greatly help the recipient identify and file messages, and it will help you in future with the retrieval of the message. Subject lines should be as descriptive as possible.

### Poor or confusing subject lines

“Helpful Info”  
 “Report”  
 “Minutes”  
 “Important”

### Better, descriptive subject lines

“ERM Contact Info Jan 2001”  
 “Spring 2001 Quarterly Financial Report”  
 “25 Jan 99 ERM Project Board Minutes”  
 “Revised Admin. Procedures Jan 2001”

## 6.6 Storing

- Keep e-mail copies only for ongoing business reasons. Delete material as soon as it is feasible to do so, but do this only in accordance with SE guidelines (see Key Principles above) and approved retention schedules (see Annex A).
- Develop an orderly filing system for those email messages you wish to keep. Good housekeepers will clear out their emails at least once a month.
- Try to avoid the temptation to keep e-mails “just in case”.

## 6.7 Printing/Filing

- Avoid printing out, and filing documents that were sent solely to provide information.
- The paper filing system should not be used as a dumping ground for all electronic communications; only file on paper the important documents you have initiated or received. A rule of thumb is that the creator of the email should ensure it is filed accordingly.

- Avoid making hard copies of reference material such as articles or long documents that have been published elsewhere.

## 6.8 E-mail Etiquette

- Avoid putting matters into e-mail messages that would not be put into an official minute, and use sarcasm and humour with care; they can be very easily misunderstood without the benefit of accompanying body language. Always remember that e-mails can be caught by the Data Protection Act 1998 and may also be under Freedom of Information.
- The e-mail system should not be used to create or disseminate any offensive or disruptive messages. Among those which are considered offensive are any messages which contain sexual implications, racial slurs, gender specific comments, or any other comment that offensively addresses someone's age, sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs, national origin, or disability.
- Avoid public "flames", that is, messages sent in anger. Messages sent in the heat of the moment generally only exacerbate the situation and are usually regretted later.
- Don't shout! Be careful with capital letters in messages. Sentences or words in capital letters may be considered as shouting with a touch of anger. SO DON'T SHOUT!!!!
- A good policy to keep in mind is 'if this email was delivered to the wrong recipient, would it cause any offence or embarrassment to myself or anybody else' – IT IS VERY EASY TO SEND AN EMAIL TO THE WRONG PERSON
- Keep email chains short e.g. after a third email with no solution, walk 'n' talk with others to resolve – pick up the phone and discuss or go and see them!!

## 6.9 Security

- E-mail must not be used to transmit any protectively marked material.
- Remember e-mail is not private. Administrators and other authorised personnel can have access to the system.
- You can use e-mail for private messages within limitations (see the [IT Code of Conduct](#) for further guidance). Any opinions you express via external e-mail, where they are not related to the conduct of SE business, should be noted as your opinions and not those of SE. Simply include the line 'these opinions are my own' at the footer of the email message.

## 6.10 Viruses

- Users should be aware that computer viruses exist and are easily transmitted via emails. These can corrupt computer files and systems, and can be highly contagious to other machines! If you are in doubt over an email received please contact IT Security.

## **6.11 Further Information**

For guidance on the disposal of emails see Appendix 4.

In addition, there is a great source of email guidance on using Outlook in the SCOTS guidance section of the Intranet (If viewing electronically, click on this link to take you there- [Outlook Guidance](#) )

## Section 7

### The Review and Disposal of Files

#### 7.1 Organisation and Responsibilities

The review and disposal of files in the Scottish Executive is achieved largely by means of the Annual Review of files. This is administered by the RMB Records Appraisal Unit . Files are taken from store and organised in batches depending on whether they are First Review (5 years after the date of the last paper on the file) or Second Review (up to 25 years after the date of the first paper on the file) and sent to the the appropriate RMB Records Appraisal Officer for review. However, the Scottish Executive expects branches to make disposal decisions on their own files when closing them. The review of protectively marked files (outwith Victoria Quay, which has central storage facilities for such files up to Confidential level) is also a branch responsibility. **NB: This also applies to Victoria Quay branches in respect of files protectively marked SECRET or above.**

#### 7.2 Principles and Practice

##### *When can a file be reviewed?*

A file can be reviewed up to three times in its existence.

Firstly, it should be reviewed immediately on **Closure**. Its long-term value may be quite clear at this stage and staff in branches are now encouraged to take the earliest possible decision on its disposal to save time and storage costs. While most files should not be destroyed earlier than five years after the date of the last paper, files with invoices, circulars, or very routine correspondence may be destroyed sooner.

Secondly, it may be set aside for re-examination five years after it has been closed (**'First Review'**). In most cases, the perspective made possible by the lapse of time since the file was opened should now allow a decision on disposal.

Finally, there will be occasions when it does not prove possible to reach a decision on a file at First Review. Such files are put away to be examined later, that is anything up to 25 years after the date of the first paper on the file (**'Second Review'**).

##### *What are the choices when reviewing?*

The reviewer has several options and these are set out on a panel on the file cover. The number of options available varies at each review, but the definitions do not.

A file can be marked for destruction, either immediately (**'Destroy'**) or at some later date which the reviewer specifies (**'Forward Destroy'**).

The file can be marked for **Preservation**. Unless it is still required for regular administrative use, it will then pass to the National Archives of Scotland (NAS) in the year you indicate. Such files will be made publicly available 30 years after the date of the last paper, unless they have also been marked either for **Early Release** or for **Extended Closure** (see below). Branches are always able to borrow back preservation files from NAS for temporary consultation and delivery can usually be made within 36-48 hours.

If the file has a continuing and regular administrative use, it can be marked to be **'Retained'** *in the branch's own storage area*. It must be reviewed every ten years thereafter to see if its status has changed. If the branch wishes to retain a file beyond 30 years after the date of the last paper, this **must** be notified to the Departmental Records Officer, who makes an annual return to the Scottish Records Advisory Council (SRAC). The SRAC is a statutory body appointed by the Secretary of State to advise on the public records of Scotland and reviewers should be aware that it can ask them to justify retention decisions.

If a decision is not obvious at First Review, the reviewer can mark the file for a later **Second Review**. The standard Scottish Executive Second Review period has previously been at a date no more than 25 years *after the file was first opened* but the ideal date is in fact about 15 years after a file is first opened. Second Review should be used only as a last resort for those files whose continued use or value is genuinely in doubt. Old files can be fascinating, but a review up to 20 years after they have been closed is generally a waste of time! The following disposal options are available at each review stage:

At closure:

Destroy (only a few);  
Forward Destroy;  
Preserve in NAS (30 year closure, early release or extended closure);  
Retain;  
Send to First Review.

At First Review:

Destroy;  
Forward Destroy;  
Preserve in NAS (30 year closure, early release or extended closure);  
Retain;  
Send to Second Review.

At Second Review:

Destroy;  
Forward Destroy (rarely);  
Preserve in NAS (30 year closure, early release or extended closure);  
Retain (and notify to DRO if 30 years old).

### *So how are decisions made?*

**Firstly**, it is SE policy that all branches should have a **Records Schedule** (*see example Records Schedule at Appendix 3*), agreed with RMB, of which the appropriate RMB Records Appraisal Officer (RAO) should also have a copy. Branch officers should have this beside them when files are first being closed and later the RMB RAO when they are being reviewed.

Each branch's Records Schedule should refer to its own file lists specifically. Additions and deletions should be made regularly where necessary, and all records management decisions which could be considered as precedents should be recorded on it. The Records Schedule should be borne in mind when opening files to ensure that as much paper as possible is in files which clearly fall within one or other of the categories listed. Hybrid files containing a mix of policy papers, letters from the public, internal minutes, Whitehall correspondence, etc are much more difficult to deal with. Rigorous use of the Schedule, particularly for marking files when they are first closed, should significantly reduce the numbers of files for First and Second Review, with a consequent saving in staff time. It should also allow preservation or destruction decisions to be made at the earliest opportunity. That said, the Schedule is only a guide and you will inevitably find that many older files that do not fit neatly into it will require individual examination.

**In these cases** the file contents should be examined, however briefly. A decision should not solely be made by reading the file title.

**Then in all cases**, consider the options.

*Destruction* is an irreversible act and care must be taken that nothing of permanent historical or administrative value is lost. Many staff will know that NAS has a small team (now based at Saughton House) with powers to examine all files marked for destruction. In practice they examine only a small proportion of the whole and cannot be counted on as a 'safety net' by anyone tempted to make hasty decisions. However, NAS staff are always happy to give advice on problems.

*Storage* of files is very expensive both in terms of the space they occupy and the human resources needed to look after them; any unnecessary preservation is costly. Consequently NAS staff closely examine all files marked for preservation and will query any that do not seem worth keeping. If the administrative or historical importance of a file, while real enough, would not be immediately obvious to NAS staff, reviewers should attach a *brief* note stating the reasons for preservation.

Appendix 1 of this manual sets out some broad guidelines to help you identify types of records for permanent preservation. Reviewers are also welcome to consult the NAS Inspection Team (Ext 43453). They maintain a computer textbase of files held by NAS and are very happy to discuss reviewing problems and, where possible, give advice on precedents.

### 7.3 Problems with Protective Markings

Declassification of protectively marked files is compulsory before such files can be passed to the central registry (except at Victoria Quay, where secure storage facilities exist) or to NAS. If you are unwilling to declassify at closure you will have to retain the file within your branch, marking it for review as appropriate. Such files should be regularly reconsidered to see whether they still merit protective marking. At Second Review it should be possible to declassify almost all files. Until that stage only originators or their successors may authorise the declassification of protectively marked files. In the Scottish Office, officers who are authorised to downgrade are:

SECRET	- C1 or above;
CONFIDENTIAL	- B2 or above;
RESTRICTED	- B1 or above.

It is important when declassifying files to examine *every protectively marked paper on the file* with a view to declassification and mark them accordingly. This is to prevent a complete file being declassified when there may be individual protectively marked papers on it where such action is not yet appropriate. The protective markings on the front cover of the file should then be struck out, signed and dated by the officer concerned.

Protectively marked documents received from other Departments should not be declassified without the approval of the originating Department (or its successor), but at Second Review stage, Local Security Officers (ie Branch Heads) may use their discretion as to the continuing sensitivity. Files containing a small number of protectively marked documents among much else can cause disproportionate difficulties: it is worth considering whether it is always necessary to file one-off protectively marked material originating from other Departments on subjects in which your branch does not have a major interest.

If protective markings cannot be removed, the file must be kept by the branch and the reason for its retention reported to the DRO at the 30 year point. The DRO will then report the details to the SRAC.

Merely because a file remains protectively marked, however, does not mean that its *ultimate* fate cannot be decided. Many protectively marked files might possibly be marked for destruction on a certain date or for preservation *once declassified*. Branches will still have to hold such files until the declassification and disposal action can be carried out, but at least the burden of First and Second Review decisions will be decreased.

### 7.4 Open Government: Early Release and Extended Closure

Openness is now encouraged. Unless there is a continuing administrative need for them, files marked for preservation should not be kept in the branch or in RMB storage but should be passed to NAS and thus (after 30 years) to public inspection. However, preservation files can also be marked for **Early Release**, that is the reviewer can instruct NAS to make files publicly available, either immediately or at some point before the normal 30 year period has expired. Reviewers are encouraged to use this facility where files contain information already in the public domain (for example, proceedings of committees of inquiry which have reported, consultation papers and responses, some legislation files etc), or where any sensitivity will in their judgement have passed in fewer than 30 years.

Branches are asked to give sympathetic consideration to the occasional requests received from historians, journalists and others for early access to files, whether held in NAS or in the Scottish Executive. Access should be granted unless there is a clear and *justifiable* reason for refusal.

Some preserved files cannot be made publicly available at the 30 year point because they might breach confidences, cause substantial distress to identifiable individuals, or identify the victims of sexual offences. Such files will need an **Extended Closure** under one of the criteria set out in Appendix 5. It is up to the reviewer to determine the closure, and to provide a *brief* note in support of it. This should be placed as the last document on the file. Files for extended closure under Category A should also be marked for return to the branch for a further review in 10 years' time, and again 10 years after that if still within the closure period.

## **7.5 After 30 years...**

NAS releases files to the public 30 years after the date of the last paper on file, except where Early Release or Extended Closure markings have been applied. The more interesting files due to become open on 1 January each year are selected for an advance preview to the press in December and NAS advises divisions of these in advance. Unless the subject matter has unexpectedly become highly sensitive, or new and distressing/dangerous information has emerged about individuals detailed in the files, the original closure should stand. In most cases branches should not have to devote any time to checking the NAS list, or re-examining the files. You are not expected to re-review the file to decide whether or not you agree with the original decision! Other files not selected for the press preview will routinely be made available to the public following the expiry of the closure period. This release will go ahead automatically, unless instructions to the contrary are received by NAS from the appropriate divisions or from RMB.

## *Appendix 1*

### **Guidelines for Selection of Records for Permanent Preservation**

The destruction of records is an irreversible act, while the preservation of records which do not warrant it involves high and continuing costs. The following basic guidelines are

intended to assist RMB or branch reviewing officers in identifying records of permanent value for transfer to the National Archives of Scotland. While of necessity very general, these guidelines cover most aspects of departmental and research criteria. As such, they should help to prevent both ill-considered destruction and uncritical selection.

The following records should be kept:

- \* Papers relating to the origins and history of the Department; its organisation and procedures; functions and dissolution (office notices, organisation charts, and a standard set of all HQ guides and instructions to out-stations and regional offices, or bodies with which the Department is in regular contact, may be as important as files which relate to these matters);
- \* Copies of annual and other major Departmental reports (although some are published, it is convenient to preserve a record set for use in conjunction with other Departmental records);
- \* Principal policy papers, including papers relating to the preparation of legislation and statutory instructions (primarily Scottish), submissions to Ministers or senior officials and papers to the Cabinet or Cabinet Committees, together with all earlier drafts;
- \* Selective papers relative to the implementation and interpretation of policy and to changes in policy;
- \* Record sets of minutes and circulated papers of all major Departmental bodies, eg Departmental committees, advisory bodies and working parties (in the case of inter-Departmental committees, the set of the Department which provides the Secretary should be identified as the record set for permanent preservation);
- \* Papers relating to what the Department accomplished, or to obsolete activities or investigations, or abortive schemes initiated by the Department;
- \* Papers cited in, or noted as consulted in the preparation of official histories;
- \* Evidence of statutory rights or obligations, title to property, claims for compensation not subject to a time limit, and formal instruments such as awards, schemes, orders and sanctions;
- \* Records which must be permanently preserved by statute;
- \* Papers relating to major well-known public or international events, persons or *cause celebre*, or to major events which give rise to interest or controversy on the national level, particularly where those records add significantly to what is already known;

- \* Papers which relate directly or indirectly to trends or developments in political, social, economic or other fields, particularly where they contain unpublished statistical or financial data covering a long period of time or wide area;
- \* Papers relating to the more important aspects of scientific, technological or medical research and development, particularly where these had a wider application and affected the political, cultural, social, economic or other aspects of the life of the country;
- \* Papers containing matters of significant regional or local interest on which it is unreasonable to expect that evidence or information will be available locally, or comprising synopses of such information covering the whole country or a wide area;
- \* Statistical and quantitative research either sponsored by the Department or undertaken by outside bodies, where its findings affected Departmental decision-making, and the research reflects on demographic, medical, social, cultural and economic history or historical geography.

**Important: These guidelines should be used in conjunction with, and tempered by, the Records Schedule.**

## **HOW TO DEAL WITH PROTECTIVELY MARKED FILES: VICTORIA QUAY**

Only the Victoria Quay paperkeeping staff accept protectively marked files because there is secure storage for them.

### *Declassifying files*

Only if protectively marked files have first been declassified can they be put into Second Review or Forward Destroy status (such files are stored at Leith Walk Repository, which does not have secure facilities) or otherwise be subject to normal Registry file-handling procedures.

When declassifying documents (if a single document remains protectively marked on a file, then the whole file must remain so) the following principles should be adhered to:

#### *Information originating within the Scottish Executive*

Only originators or their successors may authorise the downgrading or declassification of protectively marked documents. In the Scottish Executive, officers who are authorised to downgrade or declassify are:

SECRET - Branch Head or above;

CONFIDENTIAL - B2;

RESTRICTED - B1 or above.

#### *Information originating within other Departments*

Protectively marked documents received from other Departments should not be downgraded or declassified without the approval of the originating Department (or its successor) unless they are old eg at Second Review stage, when Local Security Officers ie Branch Heads can use their discretion as to the continuing sensitivity.

### *Collection or delivery of protectively marked files*

Protectively marked files **MUST** be delivered and collected by Branch/Divisional staff. If at Review time there is a large number of files to be collected, RMB paperkeepers may be available to assist in the delivery/pick up. However, the files must be escorted by Branch/Divisional staff.

***Protectively marked files leaving the building***

**NO** protectively marked files in the Registry system should go out of the building without first coming to the VQ Rack Room so that the file records can be amended.

***When you need a protectively marked file:***

Step 1 Phone your usual Records Management number to request the file;

Step 2 Either you or someone from your section then has to come down to the VQ Rack Room, sign the file book and collect a blank receipt form;

Step 3 When you take the file back to your section, the person who requested the file has to sign the receipt saying that he/she has reserved the file - the receipt then has to be sent back to the VQ Rack Room **immediately**;

Step 4 When you bring the file back, a member of Records Management Branch staff will *give you* a receipt acknowledging that they have received the file back into their safekeeping.

**Please remember that while the file is in your possession it should be stored in the appropriate container ie ordinary locking cabinet/cupboard for RESTRICTED files, security container for CONFIDENTIAL or above.**

**RECORDS SCHEDULE**

*Appendix 3*

Notation: D - Destroy  
IR - First Review  
P - Preserve

Type of File	Instruction	Notes
<b>1. Policy</b>		
Files on subjects of interest to, but not the responsibility of, the branch (ie. most papers on the file originate elsewhere).	D. 5 years after closure except as stated in notes.	IR if subject likely still to be 'live' or where significant inter-branch discussion has taken place.
Policy files on main work of branch.	IR.	Unless clearly of minor interest, when immediate decision to destroy in X years might be possible.
Departmental Working Group, when branch provides Secretariat/is lead branch. Papers, Minutes, Final Report.	P. (Indicate date when file can go to NAS).	Consider whether NAS can be instructed to release such files before 30 year point.
Consultation papers and responses.	P. (Indicate date when file can go to NAS).	Consider whether NAS can be instructed to release such files before 30 year point. (Not possible if respondees wish views to be confidential.)

## 2. LEGISLATION

Primary legislation where branch is in the lead (ie. Bill team). P. (Indicate date when file can go to NAS.)

Consider whether NAS can be instructed to release files before 30 year point.

Primary legislation in which branch has interest:

- Files containing copies of papers originating elsewhere and/or branch contributions to briefing notes, notes on clauses etc. D. 5 years after closure.
- files containing branch's own policy papers IR.

Secondary legislation where branch is in the lead:

- amendment of primary legislation P. (Indicate date when file can go to NAS.)
- routine updating of eg. fees D. 5 years after closure.
- other IR.

Other secondary legislation:

- files containing copies of papers originating elsewhere and/or minutes to lead branch D. 5 years after closure.
- files containing branch's own policy papers IR.

### 3. Correspondence

General correspondence files.

D. 5 years after closure..

Specific case files.

D. 10 years after closure except as stated in notes.

IR if file contains precedent material.

Contact NAS for advice if you think specific case files might be worth sampling.

### 4. Monitoring of Agencies and NDPBs

Files on the setting up of an Agency, NDPB where branch is sponsor.

P. (Indicate when files can go to NAS.)

Ministerial Directions.

P. (Indicate when files can go to NAS.)

Monitoring Files.

D. 10 years after closure except as stated in notes.

IR if file contains controversial material in which ministers were actively involved.

Minutes of meetings etc. submitted by originating bodies.

D. 5 years after closure.

Unless branch is Secretariat

Minutes of meetings etc. between agency or NDPB and departmental sponsor.

IR.

## 5. Reports from Outside Bodies

Reports sent to Ministers for information.	IR.	[Some could be unpublished or interesting and otherwise unobtainable.]
Reports sent to Ministers for action, where branch is in the lead.	P. (Indicate when file can go to NAS.)	Where report is commissioned, or Ministers involved in consideration.
Where branch is not in lead.	D. 5 years after closure.	Unless of continued administrative use.

## 6. EC Papers

Proposals considered on a Scottish (not a UK) basis where branch in the lead.	P. (Indicate when file can go to NAS.)
Files containing mainly copies of documents originating elsewhere.	D. 5 years after closure.
Files containing branch comments to lead division.	IR.

## 7. Finance

PES files.	D. 10 years after closure.
Estimates files.	D. 10 years after closure.
Appropriation Account files.	D. 10 years after closure.
Payment files.	D. 7 years after closure.

## 8. Appointments

First round of appointments to new body, when branch is in lead.	P. (Indicate when file can go to NAS.)	
Subsequent rounds.	D. After 15 years (or period appropriate to length of appointment and possible reappointments).	Unless file contains precedent material, strong Ministerial views, when IR might be appropriate.

## 9. Honours

Files containing procedure papers and branch contributions to Honour rounds.	D. 5 years after closure.
Case files.	IR. When interesting subject or possible precedent material. Otherwise D. 5 years after use.

**10. Ministerial Meetings and Visits**

Routine meeting and visit briefings	D. 5 years after closure.
Non-routine meeting and visit briefings	IR.
Files containing useful summaries of live issues for which branch is responsible.	IR.

**11. Research**

When commissioning branch.	P. If research otherwise unpublished. Indicate when file can go to NAS. Otherwise, D. 5 years after closure.	Consider whether NAS can be instructed to release files before 30 year point.
Where not commissioning branch.	D. 5 years after closure.	
Branch's consideration of, and use of, research.	IR.	

**12. Press Cuttings**

**13. Office Procedure**

Management Planning, Manpower requirements, training, work plans, monitoring.	D. 5 years after closure.	Unless part of Bill series where branch is in lead.
Procedure Manuals.	P.	

Divisional/branch operating instructions.

IR.

Branch meetings.

D. 5 years after closure.

Minor procedural Instructions, Scottish Office trawls  
and general notices.

D. Once no longer in force.

**E-mail Disposal Schedule**

*Appendix 4*

<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>DISPOSAL ACTION</b>
Formal communications between officers, such as minutes and submissions	Delete after printed copy placed on officially registered file.
Mail requesting or authorising or commenting on the expenditure of money or other resources, or nay action involving such expenditure.	As above.
Mail containing instructions of a significant nature, including notifications of changes of policy, the establishment of precedents.	As above.
Mail containing comments on and suggested amendments to significant documents or proposed actions.	As above
Trivial work-related material, e.g. routine housekeeping information such as the time and place for meetings, administrative details.	Delete as soon as no longer required.
Personal material.	Delete as soon as no longer required.
Any other routine messages of a clearly ephemeral nature.	Delete as soon as no longer required.

## GUIDELINES ON EXTENDED CLOSURE

**Guiding Principle:** All records not retained in departments should be released after 30 years unless a) it is possible to establish the actual damage that would be caused by release, and b) the damage falls within the three criteria set out below.

Criterion	Nature of Record	Closure Period	Category
(as stated in the White Paper Cm 2290) Exceptionally sensitive records containing information, the disclosure of which would not be in the public interest in that it would harm defence, international relations, national security including the maintenance of law and order, or the economic interests of the UK and its overseas territories	All records meeting this criterion, including those concerned with national security and containing information the premature disclosure of which would impede the conduct of the policy of HM Government abroad.	40 years	A
Documents containing information supplied in confidence the disclosure of which would or might constitute a breach of good faith.	Most records meeting this criterion, including commercial and personal information supplied in confidence.	40 years, or until death where known (where appropriate)	B (1)
	Tax Information	75 years	B (2)
	Personal information subject to a statutory bar during the lifetime of the person concerned.	75 years, or until death where known	B (3)
	Records of the decennial census of population	100 years	B (4)
Documents containing information about individuals the disclosure of which would cause either:	Records meeting this criteria and containing sensitive personal information which would substantially distress or endanger a living person or his or her descendants.	40 - 100 years	C (1)
(i) substantial distress, or			
(ii) endangerment from a third party to persons affected by disclosure or their descendants.	Records containing information from which it is likely that a woman could be identified as a rape victim.	100 years	C (2)

## **Records Management Contact List**

*Appendix 6*

### *Enquiries on any aspects of public records policy*

Freedom of Information Unit: Extension 45146

### *Enquiries and advice on general records management matters (including electronic), the review and disposal of files and good practice compliance*

The Departmental Record Officer (DRO) Extension 43728

The Deputy Departmental Record Officer (DDRO) Extension 44319

### *Enquiries on all registry matters (handling of files, retheming etc)*

The Records Manager Extension 46921

### *Enquiries on Paperkeeping Services (movement and storage of files etc)*

The Chief Paperkeeper Extension 42581

### *Enquiries on the Disposal of Sensitive Paper Waste*

The Chief Paperkeeper Extension 42581

### *Advice on Archiving and the Review and Disposal of Files*

The National Archives of Scotland, Government Records Branch,  
West Register House 0131 535 1408

