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Dear Leighton,

Thank you for your email. I've been asking questions about how Welsh Government has processes and policies in place to manage the selection and appraisal of records for permanent preservation. I've also been concerned to learn more about the service which is provided by the National Archive in Kew.

As to Cabinet minutes, the position is clearer. Following devolution Cabinet minutes from the Welsh Government were published on our website from March 2000 at the request of Rhodri Morgan, a practice we have maintained since. As you have noted, minutes from April 1999 to February 2000 were never published on the web. A plan is now being put in place to correct this. It is likely to take a bit longer than either you or I would prefer, but the hard copy files containing these papers are currently being reviewed, sensitivity checked and catalogued and will then be transferred to The National Archives (TNA).

The National Archives not Welsh Government are responsible for the UK Government Web Archive and they run the regular captures of government web sites. It turns out that early web archiving processes did not always capture the complete site. I am told that this is due to the technology used at the time the website was captured and is a known issue which cannot be resolved as the captures were done at a specific point in time.

I have written to the Chief Executive of the Archive, asking for an improved service for anyone seeking to access documents deposited by the Welsh Government. The advice I have received provides an assurance that Web archiving has evolved considerably in the last five years and links in more recent captures are more reliable. I am interested in accessibility, as well as reliability, and this has been the focus of my correspondence.

More generally, and as you largely already know, all Welsh Government records are managed throughout their lifecycle and our policies comply with the Public Records Act 1958 (PRA) and FOIA Section 46. The TNA Guidance on the Management of Private Office Papers has been used as a basis for Welsh Government guidance. The PRA requires public records bodies to transfer any records of historical value to TNA or another place of deposit by the time they are 20 years old. Applications need to be made to the Archives

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Advisory Council to retain records beyond 20 years for a specific business need or if there is a backlog.

Selection of records for transfer to TNA is based on the Operational Selection Policies (OSP). Welsh Government's operational selection policies cover each Assembly term and previous policies are available on the TNA website:

[OSP 7 Welsh Office 1979-1997](#)

[OSP 59 Welsh Government 1997-2006](#)

[OSP 60 Welsh Government 2006-2011](#)

[OSP Welsh Government 2011-2016](#)

The OSP for the 2016-2021 Assembly/Senedd term is in draft. Publication has been delayed due to work connected to the Covid 19 Public Inquiry which has required a considerable diversion of resources during the most recent intensive period of engagement. The OSP is written by the Departmental Records Officer during the Senedd term to ensure that key decisions and events are captured. The OSP is signed off by the Permanent Secretary prior to publication.

Welsh Government records are reviewed against the OSP for the Senedd term. Records selected for permanent preservation are catalogued to aid retrieval at TNA and prepared for transfer by our archivists. Records currently under review span the period 1999-2004. The backlog due to the transition from the 30 to 20 year rule increased when file review was suspended during the pandemic. As this was an office based activity, work had to cease during lockdowns and was more limited at other times. TNA are aware of the backlog and monitor the position alongside us.

Thank you for writing to me on this important matter. The Permanent Secretary is aware that I will continue to pursue an interest in the way in which Welsh Government documents are preserved and accessed, beyond my time as First Minister.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Drakeford". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

MARK DRAKEFORD