Teesside Archives Strategy 2026-2036

DRAFT VERSION 1

1. Purpose

Vision:

A modern, interactive, digital and enlightening hub for heritage in the Tees Valley. A 'one stop shop' where visitors discover and share the stories of our place through archives, local history collections, exhibitions and events. A place to understand our past and how it connects with us today; embracing heritage as a means to valuing our sense of identity, community and place.

Mission:

- We collect, catalogue, preserve and make accessible records and documents relating to the areas of Middlesbrough, Stockton, Hartlepool, and Redcar & Cleveland.
- We celebrate and protect our area's rich heritage by using collections to engage with local, national and international audiences.
- We ensure people and organisations have access, in person or remotely, to collections which are representative of the communities we serve and their lived experience.
- We support organisations to fulfil their statutory obligations for preserving and making accessible public records.

Values:

- We respond to the needs and interests of our communities.
- We prioritise accessible and inclusive collections.
- We preserve the integrity and authenticity of our records.
- We embrace opportunities for technological change.

2. Strategic Priorities

1. Establishing a permanent home for Teesside Archives.
2. Developing a financially sustainable operating model for Teesside Archives including securing increased investment through a range of stakeholders and greater partnership working across the heritage sector.
3. Ensuring the long-term preservation of physical and digital records.
4. Improving the accessibility of our collections by making them more discoverable, accessible and inclusive, ensuring they are representative of the rich and diverse communities of Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton.
5. Developing our people from our governance arrangements to our staff and volunteer team to ensure we have the skills, experience and decision-making powers we need to run the service effectively.

6. Aligning the Archives Service to political agendas and local strategies around place, learning, health & wellbeing, etc.

3. Short Term Strategy (0-2 years)

Key Objectives:

Objective	Owner
To agree a 10-year strategy for Teesside Archives.	Head of Culture
To agree a business case for a new Archives facility and operating model.	Head of Culture
To implement a digital preservation system to collect, catalogue and preserve digital records.	Archives Manager
To commence delivery of a stakeholder engagement plan to advocate for the value of Teesside Archives in the region.	Archives Manager
To spread public engagement with Teesside Archives across all four boroughs.	Archives Manager
To secure Full Accreditation of Teesside Archives by The National Archives.	Archives Manager

Supporting Actions:

Actions	Timeline	Owner
Prioritise existing / at risk digital records for import into Preservica.	Year 1	Archives Manager
Agree born-digital records management protocols with Local Authorities to ensure they are deposited with the Archives.	Year 1	Archives Manager
Improve governance arrangements through an update of the Teesside Archives SLA.	Year 1	Head of Culture
Establish a staff succession plan.	Year 1	Head of Culture
Explore potential inclusion of Teesside Archives within to the Tees Valley Museums Group NPO.	Year 1	Head of Culture
Seek additional funding for digital preservation projects	Year 2	Archives Manager
Ensure the Archives is connected with place-making and regeneration projects where appropriate.	Year 1-2	Head of Culture / Director of ECC
Deliver outreach programme against agreed action plans with each borough	Year 1-2	Archives Manager

Measures of Success:

- % of digital records added to Preservica / reduction in Preservation backlog.
- % of core records being deposited by LA partners.
- Number of people engaging with Teesside Archives across the four boroughs.
- Full Accreditation from TNA

4. Medium Term Strategy (3-5 years)

Key Objectives:

Objective	Owner
To address gaps in representation within the Archives through proactive collecting.	Archives Manager
To implement a new catalogue system, integrated with Preservica.	Archives Manager
To secure investment for a new home for Teesside Archives.	Head of Culture / Director of ECC
To improve public awareness of the diverse themes and treasure within the Teesside Archives collection.	Archives Manager
To improve Teesside Archives' online presence.	Archives Manager

Supporting Actions:

Actions	Timeline	Owner
Launch new catalogue system and integrate with Preservica.	Year 3	Archives Manager
Digitise high demand collections first, the broaden out.	Year 3-5	Archives Manager
Deliver capital fundraising campaign.	Year 3-5	Head of Culture
Host events, workshops and projects to support proactive collecting of records.	Year 3-5	Archives Manager
Deliver rolling programme of exhibitions (physical and digital).	Year 3-5	Archives Manager

Measures of Success:

- Increase in online catalogue usage.
- Growth in digital downloads.
- Number of new accessions from under-represented communities.
- Capital investment secured.
- Increase in public awareness of Teesside Archives.

5. Long-Term strategy (6-10 years)

Key Objectives:

Objective	Owner
To move Teesside Archives to its new home.	ECC Director
To ensure all collections are stored in compliance with sector standards.	Archives Manager
To increase the number of in-person and online users.	Archives Manager
To support partners in the wider heritage sector to ensure their collections / archives are secure, accessible and sustainable.	Archives Manager
To develop education partnership with Universities, Colleges and Schools.	Archives Manager

Key Actions:

Actions	Timeline	Owner

Update retention schedules.	Year 6	Archives Manager
Review all policies.	Year 6	Archives Manager
Implement green archives initiatives.	Year 6-10	Archives Manager
AI and automation integration.	Year 7-10	Archives Manager
Develop shared service arrangements with heritage partners.	Year 7-10	Archives Manager / Head of Culture

Measures of Success:

- Number of in person visits and online users.
- Number of partners working with Teesside Archives to improve the stewardship of their collections/archives.
- Maintenance of TNA Accreditation.
- Annual research enquiries

6. Enablers & Risks

Key Enablers:

- Our collection is our biggest asset.
- Strategic alignment to Council Plan, Place Vision, Heritage Strategy, etc.
- Secure physical storage systems (working on digital).
- Experienced and qualified staff.
- Strong volunteer engagement.
- Compliance with statutory responsibilities.

Key Risks:

- Lack of buy-in from key stakeholders – Archives seen as low priority.
- Backlogs in digital preservation and cataloguing.
- Lack of investment and understaffing.
- Records Management functions don't exist in each Local Authority / inconsistency in approach to depositing records with the Archives.
- Temporary accommodation with inadequate space to operate the service.
- Risk to Accreditation status.

7. Review and Accountability

Frequency of Review: Annually

Owned By: Head of Culture, Archives Manager

Progress Reported To: Director of ECC, Joint Archives Committee, Local Authority Lead Officers

Frequency of Strategy Refresh: Every 3 years

ENDS