Gloucestershire Archives @ The Hub

Environmental Policy

1. Policy statement and purpose

Gloucestershire Archives is committed to embedding environmental sustainability and climate resilience across all aspects of our work – building, collections, digital, and provision of a range of services. We will reduce our environmental impact in support of Gloucestershire County Council's and South Gloucestershire Council's climate commitments while continuing to preserve collections securely and provide inclusive public access. This policy provides a framework for action.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all collections, activities and services delivered on site, off site and online. It applies to staff, volunteers, partners, contractors and suppliers working on behalf of Gloucestershire Archives.

3. Terminology

Archives are records of the activities of governments, organisations, businesses and individuals, in physical or digital form, preserved permanently for their evidential and historical value.

Environmental sustainability means meeting present needs while protecting natural resources, ecosystems and the climate for future generations.

Climate resilience means the ability to anticipate, withstand, respond to and recover from climate-related risks and disruption.

Carbon impact means the greenhouse-gas emissions associated with an activity, service, product or asset over its life cycle.

4. Background

We are an accredited archive service recognised by The National Archives as the place of deposit for public records relating to Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire.

Gloucestershire Archives gathers archive collections and local and family history resources to ensure they are kept secure and made accessible.

We are a Gloucestershire County Council service. By agreement, we also provide an archive service for South Gloucestershire Council and are the appointed Record Office for the Diocese of Gloucester.

We are a lead partner in the Gloucestershire Heritage Hub, a network of local people and organisations with a common interest in our historic county's documented heritage.

5. Guiding principles

- To care for our collections by implementing sustainable environmental measures that preserve their integrity while minimising energy consumption
- To promote sustainable practices in all aspects of our work to reduce the resources we use, waste less of what we use, use resources for longer, and reuse or recycle resources we no longer need to reduce our carbon footprint
- To deliver a programme of actions, monitor and review our environmental performance to identify areas for improvement
- To encourage our staff, volunteers, partners, visitors, and suppliers to participate in our environmental efforts and promote environmental awareness
- To reflect climate risks in our emergency planning, business continuity arrangements and risk assessments.

6. Actions and Commitments

6.1 **Archives building including strongrooms**

- Monitor performance of predominantly passive strongrooms against BS/E16893: 2017 Conservation of Cultural Heritage and ethical guidelines of Icon and the Archives and Records Association. This follows the removal of air conditioning and associated chiller unit from remaining two strongrooms and installation of low-cost ‘dry air’ circulation system in lieu of individual portable dehumidifiers
- Monitor performance of chilled photographic strongroom and use of freezers for additional photographic storage against the same conservation standards. This follows replacement of full air conditioning and chilling system with a domestic ‘wine cellar’ system

- Work with property colleagues to draw up business case and identify funding to replace elderly heating system with air/ground source heat pumps or equivalent when existing equipment reaches end of life

6.2 **Collections**

- Continue collecting archives and publications that document the environmental history of our two counties and provide evidence for tackling environmental issues over long timescales.
- Ensure sustainable use of storage space though focused collecting, appraisal (to reduce unnecessary keeping), and appropriate packaging of archives

6.3 **Community garden and wider site**

- Work in partnership with charities, volunteers and community groups to maintain our community garden to protect and enhance habitats and wildflowers, and support low-carbon food production and beekeeping
- Continue using compost produced on site, water butts and re-use of grey water scheme to support maintenance and success of the garden
- Protect and enhance biodiversity across the site, including the car park through planted areas

6.4 Digital

- Keep all aspects of our e-preservation work (an essential core activity) under review as we recognise this activity has an environmental impact, particularly with the need for redundancy to ensure reliable ongoing accessibility
- Undertake periodic digital clean-up days to reduce unnecessary digital clutter
- Reduce printing and use double sided printing where feasible
- Consider business case (including environmental impact) prior to digitisation projects
- Take a responsible approach to use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

6.5 Energy and water usage

- Work with council property colleagues to actively monitor use of electricity, gas and water and follow up any unusual peaks to improve efficiency and further reduce usage
- Periodically review opportunities to build on existing measures (LED lights, solar panels and battery storage, removal of air conditioning, charging points for electric vehicles) and explore additional renewable options.

6.6 Engagement

- Continue sharing information on environmental collections with environmental professionals (e.g. weather, flooding etc) to inform current practice and planning
- Continue holding environmentally themed events
- Continue providing online exhibitions to avoid bespoke use of physical exhibition materials and enable reuse of images and research, whilst reaching wider audiences.
- Plan full lifecycle of any physical exhibitions and engagement materials, building in re-use where feasible, and use of sustainable materials such as reusable (non-plastic) pull-up banners or recycled products wherever practicable
- Build on legacy of Green Pledge Project to provide 'green' guidance on events/exhibitions for potential co-creators and community collaborators

6.7 Procurement and project management

- Consider the environmental impact when planning new projects
- Consider 'eliminate, reduce, reuse and recycle' before purchasing
- Consider whole lifecycle of purchases, choosing sustainably sourced, environmentally friendly products which use less packaging wherever practicable, aligning with any relevant council procurement carbon reporting requirements.
- Work with council colleagues to encourage contractors to demonstrate their shared commitment to the delivery of the council's environmental objectives.

6.8 Research and training

- Offer environmental sustainability training to all staff and incorporate overview into inductions for new staff

- Stay abreast of best practice in heritage and other sectors
- Share learning from Green Pledge Project (2023-2025)

6.9 Transport and travel

- Encourage staff and visitors to travel sustainably
- Promote staff and visitor use of our electric vehicle charging points
- Promote proximity to rail and bus stations on our website and onsite
- Support sustainable travel initiatives such as 'Cycle September'
- Support home working as appropriate providing the needs of the service are met (with public service and working with unique archives)

6.10 Waste management

- Keep to principle 'eliminate, reduce, reuse, recycle' across all areas of our work
- Provide clearly marked recycling and organic waste bins for staff and visitors to reduce waste going to landfill and ensure proper disposal of specialist waste such as batteries and electronics.
- Continue undertaking periodic waste audits to measure impact of activities
- Continue reducing 'waste' received from donors and depositors by offering files, folders and plastic wallets for re-use to Hub visitors
- Recycle creatively where possible

7. Roles and responsibilities

The Head of Service is responsible for developing and leading the implementation of this policy.

The Hub Green Team will build on the work undertaken during our Lottery funded *Green Pledge Project* (2023-2025). Team members are responsible for recording progress using Julie's Bicycle tools (https://juliesbicycle.com/our-work/creative-green/creative-climate-tools/), for monitoring implementation of this policy and encouraging continuous improvement.

All staff are responsible for carrying out decisions and delivering services and activities in line with this policy.

8. Monitoring and reporting

We will continue to monitor our progress against baselines and review progress via quarterly meetings of the Hub Green Team. Progress on actions will be recorded on our website at The Green Pledge Project | Gloucestershire Archives. Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) will be displayed at the Heritage Hub.

9. Raising a complaint, concern or suggested improvement

Any complaint, concern or suggested improvement should be sent to archives@gloucestershire.gov.uk

10. References

This policy should be read alongside other related Archives policies, to be found at www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives/policies.

Gloucestershire County Council's environmental strategy and related papers - https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/access-to-information/publication-scheme/our-priorities/economy-environment-and-infrastructure/environmental-strategies/

South Gloucestershire County Council environmental policy - Our environmental policy | BETA - South Gloucestershire Council

Case studies from the Archives and Records Association's Environmental Sustainability Group: https://www.archives.org.uk/environment-case-studies

Case studies and reports: https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives/our-projects/the-green-pledge-project/project-reports-and-articles/

The National Archives, Archive Service Accreditation Standard and supporting guidance.

BS EN 16893:2018, Conservation of Cultural Heritage — Specifications for location, construction and modification of buildings or rooms intended for the storage or use of heritage collections.

BS 4971:2017, Conservation and care of archive and library collections.

BS EN 17820:2023, Conservation of cultural heritage — Specifications for the management of movable cultural heritage collections.

11. Review and revision

This policy will be reviewed at least every 3 years.

Please write to archives@gloucestershire.gov.uk if you wish to give feedback on this policy.

Document control

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Version history

Version	Version date	Summary of Changes
V0.1	October 2025	Comments from initial local and national consultation on draft incorporated. V1 approved 7 November 2025
V1.1	August 2026	Wastewater option removed as following research it was not a sensible way forward. Added link to case studies and reports. Updated biodiversity paragraph.
V1.2	October 2026	Reviewed and added environmental definitions, a separate paragraph covering monitoring/reporting, climate risks approach added, updated and increased archive-specific references. Added solar panel batteries.

Date of next revision: 2029