NERC RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY

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The Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) holds a vast quantity of information in a variety of formats, including written and electronic formats, which have been created in the conduct of our business. NERC recognises that its records are an important asset and are a key resource to effective operation, decision making and accountability. These records represent NERC's corporate memory, providing historical evidence of our decisions and actions and acting as a reference for current and future needs.

The Public Records Act places an obligation on NERC to safeguard records that are worthy of permanent preservation and to transfer them to The National Archives (TNA) or a Place of Deposit, by the time the records are 20 years old and to destroy those not selected.

This Policy outlines the framework for managing NERC's records. It will be underpinned by procedures dealing with day to day records management operations and by disposal schedules.

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1. Definitions

Information: is defined as a corporate asset. NERC's records are important sources of administrative, evidential and historical information, vital to NERC's business operations, for accountability and in meeting its legal obligations. Such records also constitute NERC's corporate memory.

Records: are subsets of information in any form created or received by NERC in the transaction of its business or conduct of its affairs and retained by NERC as evidence of such activity.

Records Management: is an administrative discipline to ensure efficient and systematic control of all records that are created or received during the course of NERC business.

2. Scope

This policy applies to NERC Centres and Head Office. It applies to all business, operational and project management records held irrespective of content, format or location.

The general principles of this policy apply to scientific data which is also subject to information related legislation including the Public Records Act. This is managed under NERC's Data Policy.

3. Objectives

The aim of this Policy is to define a framework for managing NERC's records to ensure:

- the effective capture or creation of key information;
- the appropriate control of access to information;
- the regular review of information;
- the controlled retention of information;
- the controlled destruction of information;
- conformance with legal and statutory requirements relating to record-keeping;
- a fit for purpose approach.

Through adhering to these principles NERC will benefit from:

- records being easily and efficiently located, accessed and retrieved;
- information being better protected and securely stored;
- records being disposed of safely and at the right time.

This policy will be underpinned by a set of records management standards, applicable across NERC based on recognised standards. These standards will:

- define how records must be managed;
- enable us to measure NERC's compliance with existing and evolving records management practice;
- enable the identification and promotion of good practice;
- support the increased use of electronic records as a means of gaining organisational benefits without introducing additional risks;
- ensure the long-term preservation, accessibility and usability of electronic records.

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4. Why do we need to manage records?

NERC is dependent upon its records in order to operate efficiently and to account for its actions. Maintaining effective records management practices will enable us to meet our business, legal and regulatory requirements, as well as reducing the risk of legal challenge. By adopting this policy, we aim to ensure that our records (in whatever format) are accurate, reliable, complete, up to date and accessible. This helps us to:

- carry out our business;
- make informed decisions;
- protect the rights of our employees and the public;
- comply with relevant legislation;
- provide an audit trail to meet business, legal and regulatory requirements;
- support continuity and consistency in management and administration and support the delivery of our science;
- ensure we are open and transparent;
- promote our achievements.

5. Records disposal

Disposal is part of the normal records management process. It is important that systems are in place for the timely and secure disposal of records. This includes the development and maintenance of corporate disposal schedules. This statement sets out how the disposal process will be managed. In particular:

- their life, according to their security markings and in accordance with NERC's Government Classification Scheme Guidance and Information Security Policy.

- NERC will ensure that its records are stored, handled and managed securely throughout.

- Records will be closed as soon as they are no longer in active use, but will remain available and accessible for informational or reference purposes.

- Records will be disposed of in accordance with NERC's documented disposal schedules.

- Disposal of records will only be undertaken by appropriately trained staff in accordance with relevant guidance and documentation.

- Any decisions regarding the disposal of records (including destruction, transfer or further retention) will be made in conjunction with the business unit responsible, and where appropriate in consultation with TNA.

- Decisions on records considered to be of historical value and requiring permanent retention will be made in consultation with TNA for transfer to TNA or a recognised Place of Deposit.

- Records that are not selected for permanent retention will be disposed of, either by destruction or, with TNA agreement, by presentation to another body as an alternative to destruction (s.3(6) of the PRA).

- Where there is an operational requirement to hold on to records beyond 20 years then application has to be made to the Lord Chancellor for permission (under Section.3(4) of the PRA) to retain them for a period up to 10 years, renewable thereafter.

- Destruction will be through a managed process and formally documented to provide evidence that it took place in accordance with established procedures and with appropriate authorisation.

- The destruction process will ensure that all copies are destroyed, and that the content of records is irretrievable.

6. Security and access

Security and care of records will be governed by NERC's Information Security Policy. Records should be secure from unauthorised access, alteration or deletion and have the appropriate audit trails.

7. Roles and responsibilities

Operations Group: has overall responsibility for ensuring that NERC's legal obligations are met and for meeting internal/external governance and corporate accountability. It is also responsible for considering and approving changes to this policy and any records management standards.

NERC Head of Web & Information Services: has overall responsibility for developing and implementing the records management function across NERC.

NERC Departmental Records Officer: has responsibility for governance and co-ordination, with the RIM Group providing a mechanism for bringing together corporate and local requirements.

Records and Information Managers' Group: provides a forum for the exchange of information and sharing of best practice between Centres and Head Office. The Group provides support for records management activities and is responsible for:

- the development and implementation of policy and procedures, ensuring compliance with information related legislation;
- ensuring our work reflects the most recent professional best practice;
- raising staff awareness;
- providing advice and guidance to Local Records Managers, where applicable;
- co-ordinating responses for assurance questionnaires;
- developing and maintaining disposal schedules and document disposal activity.

Records Managers and Archivists: are responsible for the day-to-day management of the processes that relate to the records' life cycle from creation through to destruction or preservation. They will advise departments and individuals on the retention and management of their records, provide a service to manage semi-current records, and take ownership of those records worthy of permanent preservation. Local Records Managers are responsible for their own Research Centre requirements.

Senior Managers: are responsible for supporting the application of records management policies and standards throughout the organization and ensuring staff are aware of record keeping issues.

All staff: (including contractors and temporary staff) are responsible for creating and maintaining reliable and authentic records in relation to their work, in accordance with the records management policy, standards and procedures.

In the event of changes to the status of Centres, NERC will remain responsible for management of public records created at those Centres between 2009 to the date of transfer to new status. TNA have advised that records do not need to be transferred from the Centres to Head Office where Centres can provide assurance that any public records remaining will be managed in accordance with the Public Records Act. Centres unable to provide this assurance will need to arrange the transfer of any NERC public records of long term value created from 2009 to date of change of status to NERC.

8. Training and awareness

All staff should be made aware of their responsibilities for creating, maintaining and using records in accordance with this policy and related guidance through generic and/or specific training programmes including induction.

9. Standards and procedures

NERC will aim to adhere to relevant information standards (Appendix 1). In particular, NERC will aim to comply with the Lord Chancellors Code of Practice on Records Management under Section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The statutory environment that governs our business includes, but is not limited to:

- Data Protection Act 1998
- General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679)
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Environmental Information Regulations 2004
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Public Records Act 1958
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000

10. Relationship with other policies and guidance

This policy is supported by the following NERC policies and guidance:

- Information Security Policy
- Electronic Communication Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- NERC Data Policy
- NERC OneDrive Guidance

There may be additional local guidance at Head Office and the Centres.

11. Review of the policy

Responsibility for maintaining the NERC Records Management Policy resides with the NERC Head of Web & Information Services. The NERC Records Management Policy will be reviewed at least once every three years and, where necessary, revised to take account of any statutory or business changes that affect the Policy.

12. Further information

If you are unclear about any of this policy contact any member of the NERC Records and Information Managers' Group:

Ieuan Hopkins, Archives Manager (BAS)
David Hyett, Departmental Records Officer (Head Office)
Lesley Hughes, Records Manager (Head Office)

John Mason, Records Manager (Head Office)
Jaana Pinnick, Data and Electronic Records Manager (BGS)
Steve Prince, Head of CEH Library, Records and Archive (CEH)
Caroline Speller, Company Secretary (NOC)
Jane Stephenson, Head of Information Services (NOC)

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Amendment history

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0.4		Comments: Leilani Smith
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0,6	18/5/11	Final version agreed by all RIM Group members for July OG
0.7	30/11/11	Minor amendments for final presentation to OG for approval
0.8	12/1/12	Ratified by OG
1.0	12/3/12	Approved by The National Archives
1.1	20/11/15	Reviewed and amended by RIM Group
1.2	27/10/16	Review by RIM Group