

ROADS & ROAD TRANSPORT HISTORY ASSOCIATION

from Tony Newman,
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The Secretary
30-year Rule Review
c/o The National Archives
Kew
TW9 4DU

Response to the 30-year rule review.

The Association has not the opportunity within the time constraints of this Review to consult all its members but the matter has been discussed as widely as possible including with those members we know are regular readers at The National Archives.

It is the view of the majority of the Association's Board of Management that the two legal requirements:

- 1) that records be transferred to The National Archives after 30 years
- 2) that records are made available to the public after 30 years

have, subject to certain specific exceptions, served to create a regular and recognisable pattern for the preservation of Public Records. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 sought, for the first time, to provide legal criteria for keeping records closed for *more* than 30 years. In addition, the assumption that records will be closed for 30 years has been removed by the passage of the Act. There appears to be no great contradiction between the accepted practice and the Freedom of Information Act. The small proportion (believed to be less than 5%) of records that reach The National Archives and remain closed for more than 30 years is not likely to change greatly, although members of the public who wish to have specific records in this category made available to them may make application, giving their reasons.

The only matter upon which changes may be appropriate is whether the period of 30 years continues to be right for the majority of records to be transferred to The National Archives and made available to the public. Our view is that the Review Commission should consider whether variable time scales might be put in place, dependant on the nature of the information in the files and the effect of allowing or denying the public access to such information. Matters of state security are particularly likely to need special consideration, while there might be a few cases where the record would reveal actions of staff still in employment at the time of opening the record. Any new time scale should not have the effect of lengthening the closure period for any record.

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Director

26th February 2008

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