



Ein cyf/Our ref MB/FM/0153/08

Paul Dacre  
Chair of 30-Year Rule Review  
The National Archives  
Kew  
TW9 4DU

29<sup>th</sup> February 2008

Dear Paul

I am writing in response to your letter of 28 December 2007 inviting me to respond to the review of the "30 year rule". I very much welcome the opportunity to contribute.

The Welsh Assembly Government has for many years been committed to maximising openness and has embedded that commitment in a Code of Practice on Access to Information. I believe that the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and our Code have allowed us to experience the many benefits associated with maximising openness in government. There is clearly a wide public interest in people being able to understand the bases on which governments take significant decisions and to understand more about governments' work generally.

The FOIA establishes a context for releasing information unless there are good reasons for not doing so and I believe that it is correct to recognise that there may not be good reasons for keeping the majority of records closed for as long as 30 years. A reduction of the period to anything as short as 15-years would be more in line with our current practices of sending appropriate records opened to TNA well ahead of the 30-year period and would seem to be more in line with the presumption of openness embedded in the FOIA. Our experience is that records older than 15 years are rarely required for internal use and I believe that the risks associated with any reduction to 15 years are minimal. A reduction to 10-years would require significant additional resources for us to comply with in the short term and would be likely to generate some operational difficulties.

If the period is reduced to less than 20 years, I believe that it would be appropriate to allow a period of 2-3 years for organisations to manage the transition.

My officials have consulted appropriate Assembly Government Sponsored Bodies and their views have been considered during the preparation of this response.

I am copying this letter to the Paul Murphy, Secretary of State for Wales.

Yours  
Rhodri