

Access during temporary closure of Staffordshire Record Office

As a result of a successful application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund Staffordshire Record Office (SRO) will be extended, remodelled, and refurbished to create the Staffordshire History Centre.

Building work will begin on site in March 2022 and it is anticipated that this will continue for a period of twelve to eighteen months. This is a high-profile project which Cabinet approved and allocated capital funding to on 19 May 2019 and 17 February 2021.

The onsite service will close temporarily as construction will take place at SRO, the courtyard and William Salt Library at the same time and the site will not be safe for staff and public access.

The Archives and Heritage team will relocate to an alternative base within Stafford town centre adjacent to SRO. Whilst the team relocates there will be a short period of a few weeks where there will be no access until the team are in their new base. During the construction period there will be very limited access to collections until the team has moved equipment and furniture. Access as outlined below will resume as soon as possible.

The Archives and Heritage team will be permitted access once a week to retrieve documents for volunteer projects which form part of the History Centre funded project and to meet priority access enquiries. There may be periods when no access is permitted, for example when the new strongrooms are joined to the existing ones. As such a limited service will be provided within the context of the legislation which governs access to archive collections held by Staffordshire County Council.

Onsite access

During the temporary closure provision will be made for onsite access for members of the public and Staffordshire County Council staff to consult original collections. This will be available one day per week for enquiries which are categorised as priority access for the reasons listed below. Documents and spaces will need to be booked two weeks in advance.

The categories for priority access will include:

- Legal access, rights of way, deeds service, planning and site investigation, property ownership/residence, ancient hedgerows, public inquiries, criminal and inquest investigations, documentation to support religious ceremonies.
- Time specific deadlines meeting funding requirements and academic submissions where this cannot be delayed.
- Other enquiries assessed on a case-by-case basis to cover exceptional circumstances.

Remote service

During the Covid-19 pandemic the Archive and Heritage Service has continued to provide a remote service prior to reopening onsite access as soon as it was permitted. This model will be continued during the temporary closure to answer enquiries about collections, direct people to the online offer, provide copies where appropriate and possible, and prioritise requests for onsite access.

Online access to key collections is available through:

- [Staffordshire Past Track](#) ([tithe maps](#), photographs and [Staffordshire Views](#))
- [Find My Past](#) available free at [Staffordshire Libraries](#) (parish registers, wills, marriage bonds)
- [Staffordshire Name Indexes](#) to request copies or transcripts from online indexes of a range of collections
- [Gateway to the Past](#) is the online catalogue which lists the collections held by the service
- Historic Ordnance Survey maps online through [National Library of Scotland](#)

The Archive and Heritage team will also be managing and delivering a four-year activity programme which includes volunteer projects, cataloguing and digitising collections, oral history and collecting from minority groups, creating the Staffordshire History Network, training and developing knowledge of staff and volunteers, researching creating temporary exhibitions.

Implementation and review

This draft public service model has been shared with The National Archives (the archive sector lead body) and will be reported to the Joint Archives Committee for their consideration in March 2022. The model will be reviewed with the Committee during the project as part of the progress updates on the Staffordshire History Centre project.

Joanna Terry

Head of Archives and Heritage