

**PRESS RELEASE**  
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## **Big Data Funding boost for legislation service and historical datasets**

It was announced earlier today that The National Archives has received “big data” funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to support two new projects, one transforming how we understand and use current legislation and the other, revolutionising how historic individuals can be identified across large digital datasets.

**Justice Minister Simon Hughes, who has responsibility for The National Archives** said: “This funding reflects the increasing importance of data and technology to research in the humanities. The National Archives’ is ideally placed to respond to the Big Data agenda, with world class expertise in data exploration supported by its specialist knowledge of historic records and the statute book. These projects when complete will offer researchers powerful new tools to open up their fields”.

Just over £550, 000 will support the Big Data for Law project to provide new open data, new tools and new research methodologies for the study of UK law. For the first time ever, researchers will have the kit required to map and interrogate vast amounts of current legislation – estimated to be at least 50 million words with over 100 000 words added or changed every month.

**Richard Heaton, Permanent Secretary and First Parliamentary Counsel** said: “We know people find legislation difficult. They struggle with the volume and complexity of the statute book, and with the language and structure of legislation. This research will help us better understand how people use law, and will give us the detailed insights we need to deliver good law.”

A second grant also worth just over £550, 000 will support the “Traces Through Time” project enabling The National Archives to develop practical analytical tools to support research on the scale of entire populations, spanning over 500 years of British history. These tools will help researchers to identify and trace historic individuals within and across historical datasets, enabling their stories to finally emerge from the documentary evidence that survives them.

**Clem Brohier, Acting Chief Executive at The National Archives**, said: "This is an exciting time for The National Archives. Both of these projects will transform how we use and research large datasets. "Big Data for Law" is set to transform legislation, providing new open data, new tools and new methodologies specific to law. The "Traces Through Time" project will enable historic data to be explored in ways that were not imagined when the records were created."

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### **Notes to editors:**

#### **About The National Archives:**

For the record, for good...The National Archives is a government department and an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). As the official archive of the UK government and England and Wales, we look after and make available to the public a collection of historical records dating back over 1,000 years, including records as diverse as Domesday Book and MI5 files.

Our 21st-century role is to collect and secure the future of the record, both digital and physical, to preserve it for generations to come, and to make it as accessible as possible. We do this by devising technological solutions to ensure the long-term survival of public records and working to widen access to our collection. The National Archives also advises on information management across government, publishes all UK legislation, manages Crown copyright and leads the archive sector. We work to promote and improve access to public sector information and its re-use. [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk) [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funds world-class, independent researchers in a wide range of subjects: ancient history, modern dance, archaeology, digital content, philosophy, English literature, design, the creative and performing arts, and much more. This financial year the AHRC will spend approximately £98m to fund research and postgraduate training in collaboration with a number of partners. The quality and range of research supported by this investment of public funds not only provides social and cultural benefits but also contributes to the economic success of the UK. [www.ahrc.ac.uk](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk)

The grant for the Traces Through Time project is worth £558 625 and the grant for Big Data for Law is worth £554 188.

Both projects are due to complete by 31 March 2015

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