



Public Record Office of Northern Ireland

Business Plan 2005-2006



An Agency within the Department of

**Culture, Arts
and Leisure**

www.dcalni.gov.uk

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Foreword

The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) holds heritage assets of immense value, assets built up over the eight decades. When PRONI opened its doors for the first time in 1924 it was against a bleak backdrop - the loss of the Irish official records in the Four Courts fire in Dublin two years earlier. That sorry event moulded the institution. It turned its energies and most of its resources for succeeding decades into acquiring the diverse sources that could fill the gap created by the catastrophe. It was a search that went on through even the dislocations and restrictions imposed by the Second World War. It was a spirit that, in a sense, came into its own during the 30 years of 'The Troubles' when records that might otherwise have been lost for ever were brought into the 'safe haven' of PRONI.

What today sits neatly boxed on the 54 linear kilometres of shelving is the inheritance created by those decades of unmatched effort. And there is another inheritance of immense value, the detailed descriptive catalogues that are the key to accessing those records.

The PRONI holdings are often referred to as 'the documented community memory'. The challenge for PRONI – as reflected in this business plan – is how to make that documented community memory more readily accessible to the community so that all can learn from and enjoy the archival inheritance.

PRONI has sought over recent years to orient itself more clearly than before towards the provision of customer focussed services. It has inevitably worked within the physical constraints of the site and the building where it is located. That situation promises to change and to change dramatically with the highlighting of funding for new PRONI accommodation in the draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland. Of course, a robust case has to be made, and that is no small task. Above all it requires a conviction that the investment sought is not about supporting some narrowly defined concept of archives but is rather about creating genuine and significant benefits for the community whose documented memory we hold.

The clearest demand on PRONI is that it should have a truly inspiring vision of the direction in which it wants to go and of what it seeks to do. That vision would be no vision at all if it did not take full account of what the community wants and if it did not seek in that concept of community to embrace every interest. The prospect of new accommodation gives the whole exercise an importance, an edge and an urgency that otherwise might be lacking. The building that must emerge from the discussions, the listening to different viewpoints, careful gathering of detailed evidence must be a building that, quite literally, accommodates staff but above all else attracts those who otherwise might never think of using archives. It must be an open and welcoming community facility.

This business plan seeks to move PRONI further along the road of the internal change that must accompany the new accommodation. It is in essence seeking to put in place the building blocks that will guarantee future success. In stripping away the minutiae of daily operations – important though those operations are to service delivery – the plan seeks to focus on the ‘big issues’. These range from coping with the existing paper records by means of disposal schedules, through opening up information to the public (whether by sensitivity reviewing or by harnessing modern technology), to ensuring that PRONI has reliable survey evidence of what the public actually wants rather than what we think it wants and staff trained to deliver on those needs and demands.

It is a plan that involves significant commitments of resources at every level of PRONI and within the different disciplines, but those commitments are made in full recognition that they are nothing less than an essential investment in the future.

That future is about something more than PRONI. It is about contributing to the growth of a more open society in which diversity is respected and even celebrated. The Canadian poet and novelist Michael Ondaatje might have been writing about Northern Ireland when he said, ‘The past is still for us a place that is not safely settled.’ Our present has been moulded in large measure by an interpretation of the past that denies its rich complexity and settles instead for the stark simplicities of the negative image.

Within the documented community memory is the reality of what happened in the past, or as close to it as any human being can hope to reach. If we are to continue the healing process recognition of that past is a necessary ingredient not only for our present but also for our future well being as a society.

Gerry Slater

Chief Executive

Corporate Plan 2003 to 2006 – review

The following Strategic Goals were agreed with the Minister and subsequently published in PRONI's 2003 to 2006 Corporate Plan. PRONI's Management Team reviewed the Corporate Plan as part of the 2005/06 strategic planning process. The Team concluded that the Strategic Goals remain relevant for the 2005/06 Business Plan.

- Strategic Goal 1:** Determining the future strategic direction of PRONI and archival service provision in Northern Ireland by completing the APNI process
- Strategic Goal 2:** Overseeing the management of records in government and the wider public sector to support its business
- Strategic Goal 3:** Seeking to contribute to information policy by providing support to public authorities on public record aspects of the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts
- Strategic Goal 4:** Selecting, acquiring, listing and indexing public and private records of enduring historical and other research value for public access
- Strategic Goal 5:** Meeting FOI requirements in the internal operation of the agency
- Strategic Goal 6:** Promoting the value and use of PRONI's archives as a unique information and educational resource
- Strategic Goal 7:** Introducing value added products which improve on and off-site access to the records
- Strategic Goal 8:** The permanent preservation of an authentic record which future generations can have access to and consult
- Strategic Goal 9:** Expanding continuously PRONI's capabilities

for making the changes necessary to achieve its overall strategic goals

Strategic Goal 10: To put in place firm plans and proposals for new accommodation for PRONI

Strategic Goal 11: Maximise the use of resources in order to achieve Reform Plan and other operational imperatives by managing them effectively, demonstrating value for money and improving efficiency where possible

Risk management

An integral part of PRONI's strategic management process is to identify and manage risks which could prevent the achievement of strategic objectives. PRONI has identified 7 main risks which are listed below.

Risk 1: Loss of records – traditional and electronic

Risk 2: Inadequate On-site Customer Service

Risk 3: Under-utilisation of PRONI's archival resources

Risk 4: Serious injury or death of a member of staff or a visitor

Risk 5: Failure to maintain an effective system of internal control

Risk 6: Failure to secure adequate funding and manage finances effectively

Risk 7: Failure to recruit and retain adequate numbers of qualified and skilled staff

These risks are currently being reviewed to ensure that they remain relevant to PRONI's 2005/06 operating environment.

Business Plan 2005-2006

Introduction

PRONI's business plan is presented in Balanced Scorecard format using the 4 quadrants in the table below and in following pages to describe (a) its objectives, (b) the actions it proposes to take to achieve the objectives, (c) how success will be measured and (d) the specific Key Performance Measures (KPIs) it will use. The colours in the KPI boxes indicate PRONI's confidence of achieving the performance target measured at the beginning of the financial year, with green representing high, amber probable and red questionable.

Achievement of the KPIs will be validated independently by Internal Audit and reported on in the 2005/06 Annual Report and Accounts.

STAKEHOLDER/PERFORMANCE	CUSTOMER
<p>The effective corporate governance of PRONI</p> <p>In support of DCAL concept of Cultural Capital, and access to information legislation, to increase public participation in the use of archives</p> <p>To add to Cultural Capital by increasing holdings of public records of long-term historical and other research value</p>	<p>To provide customers with quality archival products and services in a timely manner and in ways which best meet their needs</p>
PROCESS	LEARNING AND GROWTH
<p>To improve key operational processes in ways which enable PRONI to meet customer and stakeholder performance targets</p>	<p>To strategically manage and align staff, facilities and technology to achieve our mission</p>

Stakeholder/Performance

Achieving the performance detailed below will ensure that PRONI makes its contribution to overall Departmental Corporate Strategies.

Strategic Objectives	Strategic Goal link	Risk Link (under review)	How performance will be measured	Key performance indicators	Actions and Initiatives
The effective Corporate Governance of PRONI	Goal 11	Risks 5 and 6	Unqualified accounts laid in Parliament	Accounts laid in Parliament before the summer recess	Carrying out the Corporate Governance processes including business, financial and staffing planning, risk management, internal and external audit programmes leading to the preparation of the PRONI annual report and accounts
In support of DCAL concept of Cultural Capital, and access to information legislation, to increase public participation in the use of archives	Goal 3	Risk 3	Date of release of official records	Release of open official records on first working day of 2006	To complete the Annual Sensitivity review of official records
	Goal 3	Risk 2	Number of access requests responded to within FOI timescales	Within 5 days of receiving recommendation from relevant Public Authorities, PRONI will inform the FOI applicant	To maintain Access to Information/ Assess Section systems for FOI responses
To add to Cultural Capital by increasing holdings of public records of long-term historical and other research value	Goals 2 and 4	Risk 1	Turnaround time for final quality assurance of Disposal schedules for Departments' paper records	80% of disposal schedules for Departments' paper records to have received final PRONI quality assurance within 3 months of delivery to PRONI of initial draft schedule	To maintain necessary staff resource commitment and supporting procedures

Customer

Achieving the performance detailed below will help PRONI to better understand customer expectations and tailor services and products to meet them.

Strategic Objectives	Strategic Goal link	Risk Link (under review)	How performance will be measured	Key performance indicators	Actions and Initiatives
To provide customers with quality archival products and services in a timely manner and in ways which best meet their needs	Goals 5 and 7	Risk 3	Completion of in-house quality assurance of existing catalogue entries	Quality assurance completed by March 2006	To progress the eCATNI project in accordance with project plan
	Goal 7	Risk 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer survey results Customer feedback 	Maintain or exceed the customer satisfaction level against a 2002 Public Service Quality Group (PSQG) Survey baseline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To participate in biennial PSQG Survey of visitors to British Archives in order to secure comparative performance measures To complement PSQG Survey with biannual customer survey tool that will secure s.75 groups and other data
	Goals 6 and 7	Risk 3	Extent of improvements to and updating of PRONI web site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ordnance Survey historical maps data captured, including points of interest Wills accessible on line 	<p>To continue the digitisation programme by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progressing the OSNI/PRONI Historical Maps Project Placing the 2nd phase of the Wills Digitisation project on the web

Process

Achieving the performance detailed below will help PRONI to improve key operational processes related to the permanent preservation of records.

Strategic Objectives	Strategic Goal link	Risk Link (under review)	How performance will be measured	Key performance indicators	Actions and Initiatives
To improve key operational processes in ways which enable PRONI to meet customer and stakeholder performance targets	Goal 8	Risk 1	eGovernment Board approval of report	Report produced by March 2006	In conjunction with key stakeholders to review and report to the eGovernment Board on digital records preservation and records management needs in the Information Age
	Goal 8	Risk 1	Implementation Action Plan (IAP) approved by the Management Team	IAP approved by MT by March 2006	To carry out a review of archive security

Organisational Learning and Growth

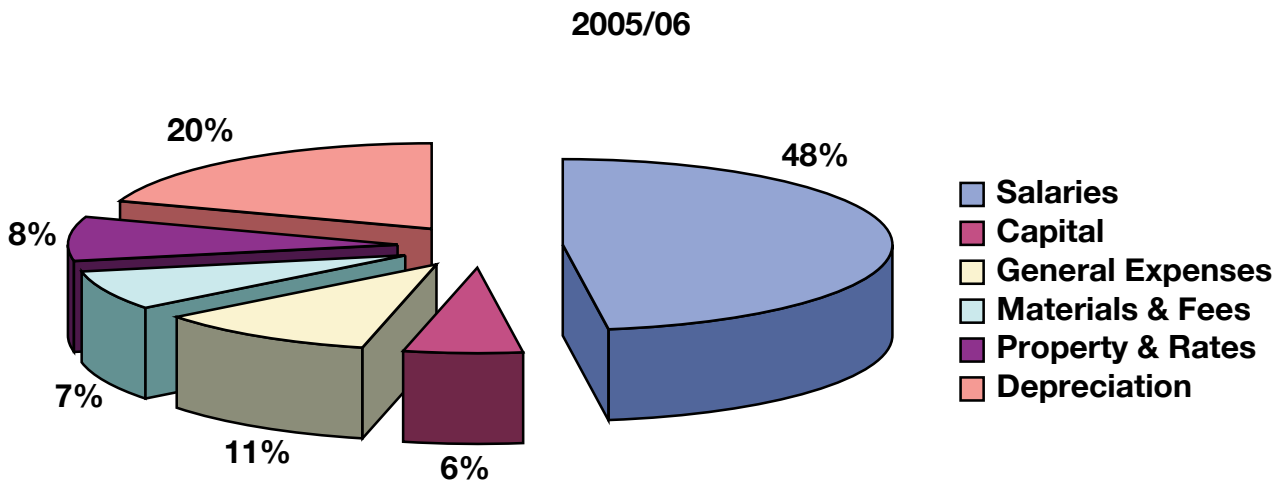
Achieving the performance detailed below will help PRONI plan ahead in terms of determining its future strategic direction, and accommodation needs and the consequential changes required to ensure that staff have the skills and knowledge required to cope with changing business needs.

Strategic Objectives	Strategic Goal link	Risk Link (under review)	How performance will be measured	Key performance indicators	Actions and Initiatives
To strategically manage and align staff, facilities and technology to achieve our mission	Goal 1	Risk 3	New Corporate Plan agreed with Minister	Corporate Plan agreed by March 2006	To map out PRONI's vision for the future in the light of the outcome of the APNI consultation process including seeking Ministerial guidance and direction were appropriate
	Goal 10	Risk 4	Progress against agreed project plan	Location identified by 31 March 2006	To maintain project to provide accommodation that meets the British Standard for the storage and exhibition of archival documents and reflects the openness of Freedom of Information.
	Goal 9	Risk 7	Curatorial satisfaction levels	Survey of curatorial opinion carried out by 31 March 2006	Implement BDS recommendations on pay, progression and career development for curatorial staff
	Goal 9	Risk 7	% of staff who complete priority 1 training programme	100 % of priority one training needs met by 31 March 2006 (subject to availability of relevant courses and of nominated staff to attend)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual PDPs agreed between staff and line managers Corporate Training Plan developed Staff provided with the opportunity to develop and improve key business related competencies

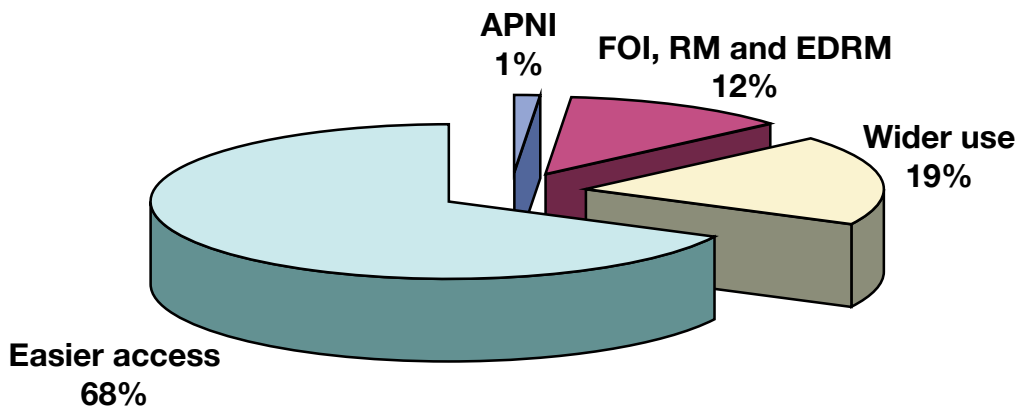
Deployment of Resources

Financial resources

At 1 April 2005 our gross resource budget for 2005/06 is £4,500. Here is how we plan to spend it.



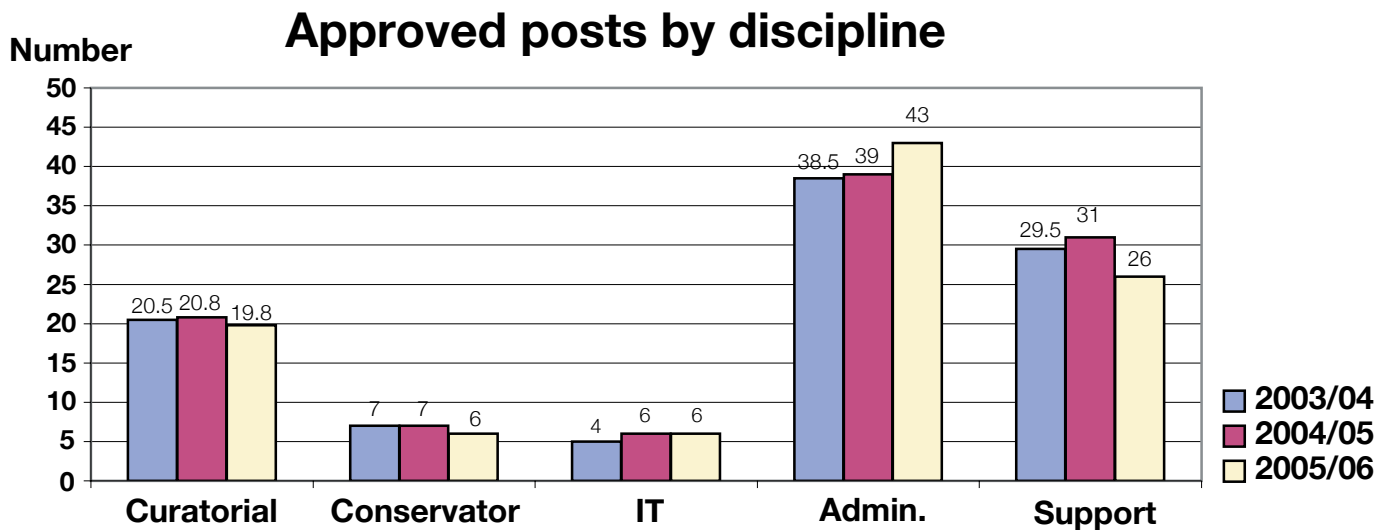
And here is how the budget has been allocated by priority area with the cost of support services apportioned across these areas.



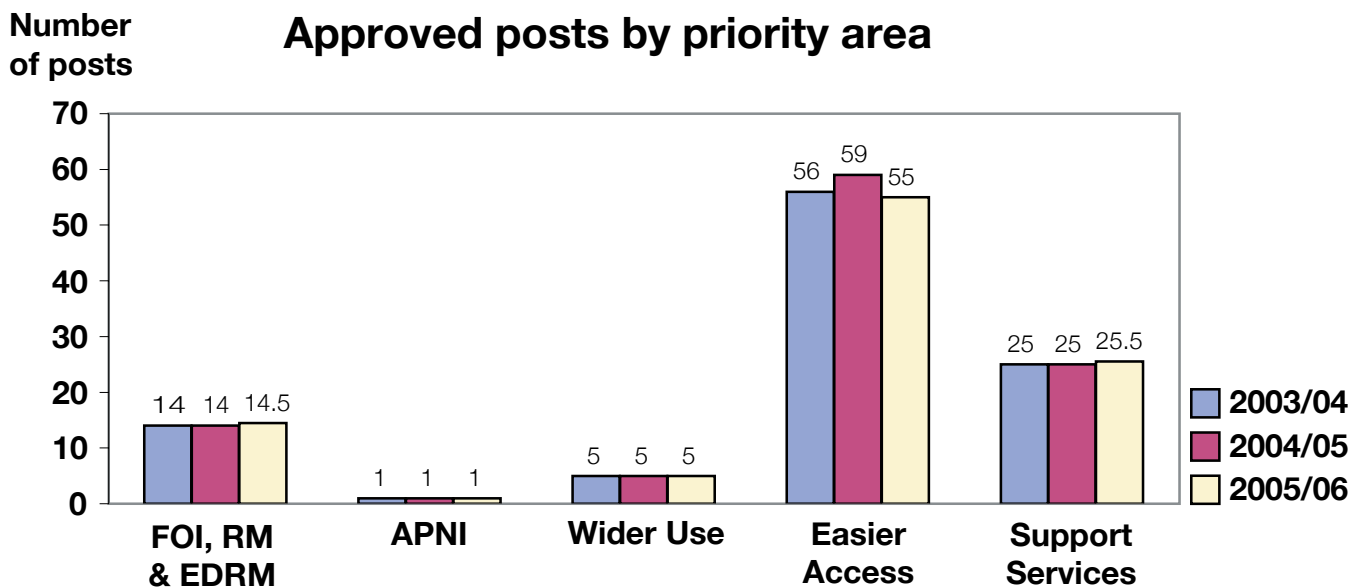
Staff resources

At 1 April 2005 our approved staffing complement was 101.3 posts with 93.3 staff in post. Our target is to reduce vacancy levels from 8% to 5% or less by 31 December 2005. All staff are located at PRONI's headquarters at 66 Balmoral Avenue, Belfast.

The work of the Agency requires a multi-disciplinary approach and the Chief Executive is supported by curatorial, conservation, IT, administrative and support staff as shown below.



To help achieve its stated goals and objectives staff are allocated to priority areas as shown below



Key assumptions

Workload forecasts

Much of the workload undertaken by PRONI is demand-led and involves outside bodies and individuals over which it has no control. Though the future workload may be volatile the agency has made the following forecasts, based on previous workloads, for its services during 2005/06 –

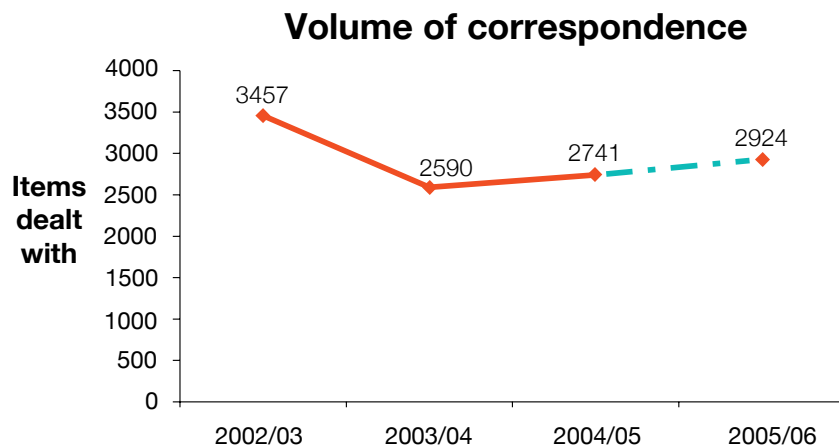
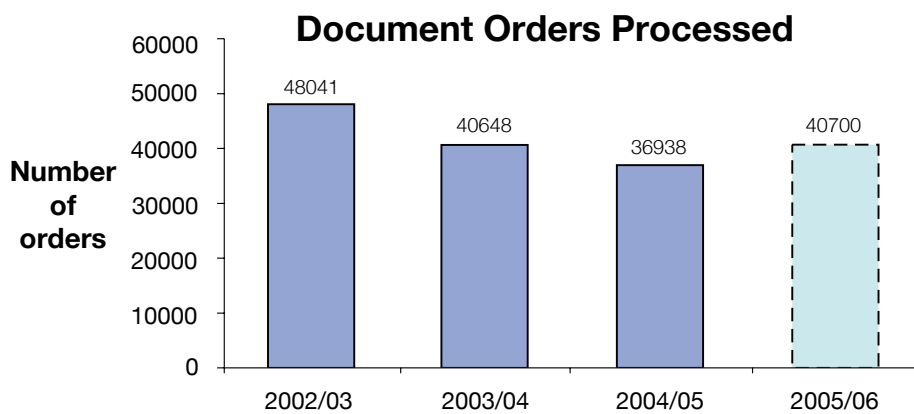
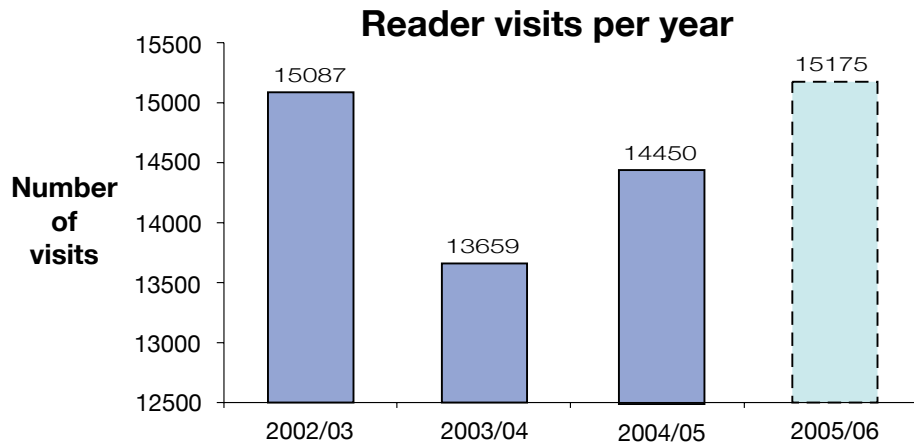
- The Annual Sensitivity Review of official records and release of open records will be completed and made available on the first working day of the New Year.
- 15,175 on-site reader visits for research purposes will be dealt with (see appendix 1 for trend analysis)
- 2,924 items of correspondence (including e-mails and letters) will be answered (see appendix 2 for trend analysis)
- 40,700 customer orders requesting access to records will be processed (see appendix 2 for trend analysis)

Resources

- The agency will continue to be funded by Vote and the budget will not be less than £4,500,000.
- The bid for additional funds for the important eCATNI project (£249,000 in 2005/06) will be successful
- The number of approved posts will not be less than 101.3
- Vacancy levels will be reduced to 5% by 31st December 2005 and sick absence levels will be maintained at or below the NICS average (6.4% at January 2005)

Appendix 1

Business Plan – Key Workload Assumptions



2003/04 figures for both visits and documents orders processed lower than predicted because of partial closure of reading and search rooms for refurbishment from November 2003 to January 2004 and the temporary cessation of late night opening on Thursday evenings due to industrial action