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Dear James,

Consultation Response from The National Council on Archives (NCA) to the Film Archive Forum (FAF) and British Library Sound Archive's draft UK Audiovisual Archive Strategy

The NCA warmly welcomes the chance to be able to comment on the draft strategy produced by ABL Consulting. Our response represents the views of the Council and its officers, although the consultation timetable has not allowed us to discuss the draft strategy in open debate at Council.

We hope that by now, following the Hidden Treasures conference, we have made demonstrably clear the NCA's support for the work of the FAF and its efforts to gain further recognition of audiovisual archives in the UK. The production of this strategy document is in itself a testament to the momentum that FAF has created. We very much applaud the opportunity that the process of producing the strategy has afforded for airing the issues that affect and will affect the development of audiovisual archives.

We understand the reasons why the document seeks first and foremost to provide a structural framework for the development of common voice for audiovisual organizations. We support this concept and agree that the development of such a framework is an essential first step to determine the future direction of audiovisual archives. We do, however, have some concerns that the emphasis placed upon this aspect means it is difficult to argue that the document truly represents "An Audio Visual Archive Strategy" rather than, in fact, a strategic development framework from which a strategy may rightly emerge at a later date once the framework is in place. We, therefore, have some difficulties in codifying the strategic aims outlined in section 4 in advance of the development of the representative committee outlined in section 2.

With this in mind, the main body of the document and, indeed, the Action Plan would appear to speak more to FAF members than either policy and funding bodies or other organizations that care for audiovisual material. With regard to the former audience, we have some concerns that the document may speak as a call to action for those that are already "on-side" rather than explicitly making the case to opinion informers about why audiovisual archives are disproportionately valued but under resourced. We would argue that there is a

role either within this document or elsewhere for underscoring more explicitly the social impact of audiovisual archives and how that impact underpins the government's learning, access and social inclusion agendas. 2.1.1. and 2.4.1 do cover these issues but perhaps there is a case for including some case study examples to reinforce these messages. In our view this would strengthen the advocacy potential of the document.

As far as other organizations outside of FAF that care for audiovisual archives are concerned, we are not sure of the extent to which they have been consulted in the development of this document. We do, however, support and welcome the initiatives outlined in the strategic aims section of the document to place an emphasis on defining the scale and scope of audiovisual archives wherever they maybe, the concept of a distributed national collection and its relationship to developing coherent collecting policies.

Whilst being fully supportive of the aim to establish a coherent development framework and a representative committee to provide a single voice for audiovisual archives in the UK, we might caution against describing any grouping as a "sector". Resource has for sometime been using the term "sector" to define what museums, archives and libraries are collectively. As a consequence, it may be confusing and counterproductive within some circles to apply this term to audiovisual archives. If a term must be used, audiovisual archives would be more accurately described as a sub-domain.

We would welcome the opportunity to become part of the proposed representative body and would be happy to engage with that body in discussions, on a without prejudice basis, concerning the establishment of the development officer and to share our experiences of organizational development.

We look forward to working with you on taking this strategy forward and congratulate FAF and the British Library Sound Archive on making such good progress.

If you have any questions about this response, I would be grateful if you could contact Katie Norgrove, Policy and Development Officer on 020 8392 5376 or katie.norgrove@nationalarchives.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,

Nick Kingsley
Chairman