



Records of local Conservative constituency associations and what to do with them

Constituency associations, particularly long-established ones, can often find themselves overwhelmed with the quantity of records they hold, and knowing what to do with them can be a problem.

The Conservative Party Archive exists to preserve and make available for research the records of the national and central organs of the Party such as CCHQ and the National Conservative Convention and its predecessors, from 1867 to the present day. However, we believe that local association records are just as important an historical resource and can offer advice and guidance on what to do with them.

Will the Conservative Party Archive preserve our records for us?

No. Unfortunately, owing to the sheer volume of records created by the 600+ constituency associations around the country, we are not in a position to be able to take them ourselves. However, if amongst your records you hold papers relating to the Party nationally rather than simply locally, then please contact us. This might include papers relating to well-known politicians or records of the Party's regional or "Area" organisation.

I don't have the space to keep them. What should I do with them?

A network of local authority-run county record offices exists for the purpose of preserving the records, without charge, of local organisations, landed estates, charities and businesses, as well as the records of the local authority itself. Your local record office will usually be happy to take them and will be able to offer advice on what should or shouldn't be kept, or even provide a site survey. Your papers will be sorted and catalogued by professional archivists and made available for research and, where necessary, conserved. A list of county record offices (and other archival institutions) can be found here:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archon/searches/locresult.asp?LR=800819>

Please note however that there is no statutory obligation for your local record office to take your papers. In the unlikely event that they are declined, please contact the Conservative Party Archive and we will see what we can do to help.

What constituency association records should be kept?

Records don't necessarily have to be in the form of a traditional minute book and any format is acceptable from paper to floppy discs and CDs provided they record or relate to any of the following:

- Minutes of association meetings;
- Agents' reports;
- Election of officers or selection of the Parliamentary candidate;
- Administrative/constitutional changes within the association;
- Relations between the Association and Central Office;
- Election material (posters and leaflets) – parliamentary, European, and local;
- Audio-visual material: photographs, films, videos, and audio cassettes of important speeches or events.

Some of the records are confidential. I'm not happy with members of the public being able to look at them.

Just as some of the records of the national Party are confidential or sensitive, and are therefore closed to public scrutiny for up to 30 years in line with current National Archives' rules, so the staff of your local county record office are experienced at handling confidential material discreetly and applying access restrictions as you require.

Are they really of interest, or can I simply throw them out?

They are of interest! For instance, broad trends in the country's voting habits and the popularity of the Conservative Party nationally can be identified in the records held in the Conservative Party Archive, but without recourse to the local records it is impossible to provide a true picture of what happened locally and regionally: what were the local issues which occasionally overrode national concerns?

**We are here to help – if you have any questions or interesting records contact
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This information leaflet has been issued by the CPA with the assistance of CCHQ**