



Guide to Collections Advice from National Museums Scotland

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1. Purpose

As Scotland's national museum service we work with museums across Scotland to share our knowledge, skills and collections as widely as possible, engaging through partnerships, loans and touring exhibitions, expert advice, and training and development opportunities.

This guidance deals specifically with our role in offering advice on collections to other museums and how users can access this service.

2. What advice can National Museums Scotland offer?

National Museums Scotland does not operate as the primary route for collections information to the Scottish museums sector but endeavours to complement the advice and information offered by other organisations such as Museums Galleries Scotland and the Collections Trust. The advice offered by staff in the Collections Directorate at National Museums Scotland normally falls into one of three categories:

2.1 Advice or information on a specialist curatorial area, based on the adviser's current expertise, signposting relevant resources where these are available.

2.2 Advice which is tailored to specific projects involving significant investment of time, for example a detailed analysis of a group of collections or advice on specialist conservation. This category of advice will normally only be undertaken on a cost-recoverable basis (See paragraph 8 - Specialist Services).

2.3 Sharing our own approach or procedures in cases where our staff do not have sufficient information or experience of the local context to make a judgement on the most appropriate approach. This is particularly relevant in areas such as conservation of sensitive objects or specialist areas of collections care.

3. Who is entitled to advice?

Representatives of organisations holding a public collection in Scotland can approach National Museums Scotland for advice. There is normally no charge for this service. We expect museums to be accredited under the Arts Council England Accreditation Scheme, managed in partnership with Museums Galleries Scotland, which sets nationally agreed standards for UK museums:

<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-museums/accreditation-scheme-0>

<http://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/standards/accreditation/>

Individuals who do not have direct involvement with a public collection (for example, consultants or individuals engaged on personal projects) are not eligible for this service.

4. How to ask for advice

Requests by email can be directed to the relevant member of staff in our Collections Directorate: <http://www.nms.ac.uk/collections-research/collections-departments/>

If you need help to identify the member of staff who is most relevant to your enquiry or have any questions about this guidance, please contact the department of National & International Partnerships: partnerships@nms.ac.uk

5. Constraints of service

Provision of advice is subject to available resources and the demands which our wider priorities place upon staff. This means that we may at times have to restrict provision by particular individuals or departments within National Museums Scotland. Major restrictions will be published on our website: <http://www.nms.ac.uk/>

6. What we ask of users

We ask that users of this service:

- Seek advice only when specialist information is required that cannot be obtained by other means.
- Understand National Museums Scotland's requirement to manage advice provision subject to organisational priorities and the resources and staff time available.
- Be aware that the level of provision given to one organisation will have an impact on what can be offered to others.
- Record the advice and information provided so that it can benefit your museum in the long term.

7. Frequently sought advice

Where similar advice is being sought by a number of museums we may produce generic guidance. Much of this is already published on our website. We also target frequently sought advice through mechanisms such as training, professional networks, projects or knowledge sharing events.

Guidance materials, resources and upcoming National Training Programme workshops and events can be found on our website: <https://www.nms.ac.uk/about-us/services-and-expertise/training-and-guidance-for-museums/>

8. Specialist Services

National Museums Scotland does not have the resources necessary to provide services such as site visits, detailed collections research projects, collection reviews, technical conservation or analysis. We may, however, engage in such delivery where this contributes to our wider organisational priorities, in the context of a formal partnership agreement or where it can be delivered on a cost-recoverable basis as part of a project.

9. Other organisations that can offer collections advice

Museums Galleries Scotland

<http://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk>

Collections Trust

<http://www.collectionstrust.org.uk/>

Historic Environment Scotland

<http://www.historicenvironment.scot/>

The Museums Association

<http://www.museumsassociation.org>