

Collections Information and Access Policy

National Museums Scotland, 2015

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1. Purpose of Policy

1.1 Under the National Heritage (Scotland) Act 1985, the Board of Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland is responsible for the care, preservation and development of the collections and for making them available to the public for exhibition, study and research.

1.2 This policy sets out the principles by which National Museums Scotland will ensure that there are effective arrangements for collections information management and access to the collections. This will:

- improve accountability for the collections;
- meet or exceed minimum professional standards in documentation procedures and collections information and meet best practice standards where possible;
- extend access to collections and collections information including facilitating physical and intellectual access on site and virtually, and by incoming and outgoing loans;
- strengthen the security of the collections through accurate collections information.

1.3 The following definitions are set out in the British Standard PAS197:2009 'Code of practice for cultural collections management':

Collections information: information an organisation collects, creates, holds and maintains about its collection and/or collected items. *Note: collections information can include a broad range of knowledge, such as interpretation, stories, research and recorded conversation.*

Collections access: right, opportunity or means of finding, using [including borrowing] or approaching collection items and/or information about items.

1.4 The Museum's approach to the security of information assets and the Collections Information Systems (CIS) are set out in the ICT Network and System Security Policy, 2008 and Information Security Policy, 2012.

2. Collections Information Principles

2.1 The Museum's collections include both physical and digital collection items. Information about the collections and associated intellectual property is key to managing and enabling access to the collections.

2.2 The CIS are the primary tool for creating and managing collections information. The Museum is committed to creating and maintaining good quality information and maintaining accurate location information for collection items, which conforms to national and international standards, as far as possible.

2.3 This enables accountability for items that the Museum is legally responsible for: permanent collection items, loans to the Museum, items on deposit, un-acquisitioned and previously undocumented items.

- 2.4 All staff responsible for creating and managing collections information should receive the appropriate training and create documentation in accordance with Museum information management procedures. Information should be accurately input in a timely way, retrievable and auditable.
- 2.5 Documentation backlogs will be identified, prioritised and addressed as resources permit.
- 2.6 Digital collections will be catalogued in the CIS, in the same way as physical items, and the digital 'master' or item, managed and preserved in line with the Museum's Digital Preservation Policy.
- 2.7 The Museum has an ongoing and prioritised programme to photograph collection items, as resources permit. These digital images should be catalogued and stored in the appropriate system. .
- 2.8 A rolling and prioritised programme of collections auditing will be developed to verify the presence and information status of collection items as recorded in the CIS. Documentation about the collections is made available for inspection by the Museum's auditors upon request.
- 2.9 The Museum will undertake regular reviews of the CIS to ensure that they are fit for purpose and that collections information is appropriately safeguarded against potential future obsolescence of the system.

3. Collections Access

- 3.1 The Museum is committed to enabling access to collections items, physically and digitally, in accordance with the Collections Care and Conservation Policy, 2015 and Digital Media Strategy, 2013
- 3.2 To enable access, appreciation and understanding of the collections, the Museum presents a broad range of exhibitions, displays and creates touring exhibitions, alongside a range of learning programmes and content on the Museum's website and social media channels.
- 3.3 The Museum provides free online access to collections through 'Search our Collections', on the Museum website. This is updated as new information (text and images) becomes available and where no rights or data restrictions apply. Arrangements to use collection information for commercial purposes may be made through National Museums Scotland Enterprises.
- 3.4 The research collections, held in Museum stores, may be viewed upon appointment. Appropriate levels of access are monitored and approved by the Director of Collections and Keepers, who have the right to refuse access at their discretion in order to protect the collections or for other valid reasons
- 3.5 Museum staff have a duty of care to protect sensitive or confidential collections information, in accordance with legal regulations. All public requests for information will be considered in terms of compliance with the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, Data Protection Acts 1998 and 2003 and the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulation 2004. Requests will be reviewed for confidential data, such as donor information,

environmental information or site details, on a case by case basis, and in accordance with applicable legislation and any legal agreements or conditions of gift.

4. Due Diligence

- 4.1 The Museum follows the guidelines issued by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, which defines due diligence as the necessary precaution that museums take to ensure that they acquire, borrow or lend only ethically acceptable material and reject items that may have been looted or illegally exported.
- 4.2 The Museum will not acquire or borrow any object unless it is satisfied that the owner/lender has good legal title and they or any agent acting for them has full legal authority to enter into an agreement with the Museum.
- 4.3 The Director of National Museums Scotland has overall responsibility, which is delegated to the Director of Collections and Keepers, for ensuring that the appropriate due diligence procedures are carried out.
- 4.4 Particular attention will be paid to object provenance between 1933 and 1945, and on observance of all relevant national and international regulations governing the import and export of cultural property and the control of trade in endangered species of wild flora and fauna.

5. Lending and Borrowing

- 5.1 National Museums Scotland lends and borrows collection items to and from venues across Scotland, the UK and abroad. Lending and borrowing plays an important role in our work to promote access to our collections and to engage a wider audience.
- 5.2 This policy covers the lending and borrowing of single items and large groups of items to one venue or more for the purpose of exhibition and display. It does not apply to the movement of items for conservation or research purposes.
- 5.3 The Board of Trustees is authorised to lend the Museum's collection items and borrow items from other public institutions or private individuals under the terms of the National Heritage (Scotland) Act 1985 and the Museums and Galleries Act 1992.

The objectives of the Loans Programme are to:

- enable greater access to collections, knowledge and expertise;
- extend the reach of the collections within and outside Scotland;
- maximise the benefits of partnership activity;
- maximise opportunities for mutual benefit for the borrower/lender and National Museums Scotland;
- develop the legacy of loans through publications, online presence and outreach projects;
- support shared scholarship.

5.4 Criteria for lending

The outgoing loans programme operates in conjunction with National Museums Scotland's major projects, meaning that capacity may at times be reduced or restricted. National Museums Scotland may charge the borrower for direct costs incurred and reserves the right to make further charges to cover indirect costs.

The following criteria will be used to assess a loan request:

- A minimum of six months' notice for UK loans and nine months for international loans is preferred.
- If the item requested is required for the National Museums Scotland's own purposes such as exhibition in the near future.
- The physical condition of the loan item and its suitability for travel.
- Resources available to facilitate the loan.
- The suitability of the borrowing venue, including the borrower's ability to meet professional standards.
- The status and relevance of the item to the exhibition theme and content.
- The impact on public displays at National Museums Scotland.
- The potential of knowledge generation and lasting legacy.
- That there is an appropriate level of public access.

5.5 Criteria for borrowing

The following criteria will be used when requesting a loan:

- A minimum of six months' notice for UK loans and nine months for international loans is preferred.
- Resources should be identified and be available to facilitate the loan.
- The suitability of the National Museums Scotland display environment and ability to meet the owner's loan conditions.
- A loan should be for the purpose for inclusion in a special exhibition or gallery display.
- Items may be placed on loan to National Museums Scotland prior to acquisition.
- Loans must be objects not otherwise available from the National Museums Scotland collections.
- Loans must be demonstrably beneficial to the National Museums Scotland displays or research.
- That there is an appropriate level of public access.
- Long-term loans should be reviewed on a regular basis.