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Collections Care and Conservation Policy

National Museums Northern Ireland

Approved by Board of Trustees: 20 March 2015

Review Date: on or before March 2020

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1. Relationship to other relevant policies/plans of the organisation:

1.1 Museum's statement of purpose

1.1.1 The Board of Trustees of the National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland (hereafter referred to as 'National Museums Northern Ireland') is required under Article 4(1) of the *Museums & Galleries (Northern Ireland) Order 1998* (hereafter referred to as 'the Order'), to 'care for, preserve and add to the objects in its collections'.

1.1.2 The areas of interest to be covered by the organisation are defined in the Order, Article 4(1)(d), as:

- art, history and science
- the culture and way of life of people; and
- the migration and settlement of people

Article 4(2) states that 'the Board shall have particular regard to the heritage of Northern Ireland'.

1.1.3 National Museums Northern Ireland (NMNI) also collects items of international significance that directly relate to the areas of interest outlined above; provide context, both historic and contemporary, for items already in the collection; and, demonstrate Northern Ireland's place in the world and the impact of world events on Northern Ireland.

1.1.4 NMNI's mission statement is:

To connect the collections, knowledge and public spaces of National Museums Northern Ireland with the widest possible audience to inform and inspire their understanding of the past, the present and the future of people, culture, places, and of the natural environment here and across the world.

1.2 Purpose of Policy

1.2.1 This policy is part of the NMNI's Collections Management framework which consists of:

- Collections Development Policy, 2015
- Collections Information and Access Policy, 2015
- Collections Care and Conservation Policy, 2015

1.2.2 The purpose of the Collections Care and Conservation Policy is to ensure that NMNI fulfils its responsibilities in relation to the care and conservation of the collections, in

line with its statutory obligations, Corporate Strategy and annual business plans, in proportion to resources available.

1.2.3 The constituent museum sites within NMNI are:

- Ulster Museum
- Ulster Folk & Transport Museum
- Ulster American Folk Park
- Armagh County Museum

1.2.4 All four sites within NMNI are Accredited Museums. The Accreditation Scheme is administered by Arts Council England (ACE) which sets nationally agreed standards for UK Museums.

1.2.5 Armagh County Museum and its collections will be transferred to the new Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council as part of the Northern Ireland Executive's Review of Public Administration. This transfer will take effect from 1 April, 2015.

1.2.6 In line with the Accreditation Scheme this policy details how NMNI will:

- Monitor the condition of the collections
- Manage and improve the preservation of the collections through good environmental conditions and building maintenance
- Maintain best practice in the care and conservation of the collections
- Increase access to the collections through the conservation process, scientific investigation, analysis and display

1.3 Policy Implementation

1.3.1 NMNI's policies and procedures are informed by relevant legal and ethical frameworks, alongside appropriate national and international standards, as set out in Appendix 1.

1.3.2 Managers should ensure that the Collections Management framework and supporting procedures/plans are followed in the areas for which they are responsible.

The following strategies, plans and procedures, in particular, are relevant to this policy:

- Documentation Plan, 2007
- Digitisation Strategy, 2010
- Documentation and Loans Procedural Manuals, 2010
- Loans Policy and Procedures, 2010
- Digital Preservation Strategy, 2011
- Collections Care Incident Response and Recovery Guidelines, 2012
- Disaster Planning: Maintaining Disaster Plans and Preparedness, 2012

- Event Hire Policy: Ulster Museum, 2012
- ICT Strategy, 2012-2015
- Intellectual Rights Policy, 2013
- Business Continuity Plan, 2014
- Documentation Plan (Draft), 2014
- Energy Management Policy, 2014
- Event Hire Policy: Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, 2014
- Integrated Pest Management Policy, 2014
- Major Incident and Emergency Plan, 2014
- Working Collections Policy, 2014
- Collections Care and Conservation Plan (Draft), 2015
- Environmental Sustainability Policy Statement, 2015
- Exhibition Policy (Draft), 2015

1.3.3 Training, where relevant, will be provided to support the delivery of the Collections Care and Conservation Policy.

1.3.4 All NMNI staff should strive to meet the responsibilities outlined within this policy.

1.4 Policy Review

1.4.1 The Collections Care and Conservation Policy will be published and reviewed at least once every five years.

1.4.2 Date at which this policy is due for review is on or before March 2020.

2 Care and Conservation of Collections

2.1 Definitions

2.1.1 Caring for the collections is a fundamental duty for all museums. This policy includes a combination of preventive and remedial conservation measures, designed to ensure long-term preservation.

2.1.2 Preventive conservation covers the measures necessary to slow down or minimise deterioration of museum objects and specimens and structures.

Conservation treatment, or remedial conservation, involves treatment of an object or specimen to bring it to a more acceptable condition or state in order to stabilise it or enhance some aspects of its cultural or scientific value.

2.2 Scope

2.2.1 This policy refers to the care and conservation of collections while:

- on display as part of an exhibition or loan
- in storage as part of our reserve collections

- in transit between sites or to other venues

2.2.2 The policy also refers to collections items that are:

- Individual accessioned items and collections
- Archival collections
- Historic exhibit buildings and historic interiors
- Collection items in the care of NMNI through loan
- Support collections such as those on display in exhibit buildings

2.2.3 The policy does not include collections primarily developed for educational or outreach use, replicas or items primarily used for events or in connection with corporate hire.

2.3 Principles

2.3.1 The policy aims to strike a balance between the long-term preservation of the collections and the provision of access through the management of risk to the collections and management and training of staff. The following principles will apply:

- **Utilising a risk based approach:** NMNI will undertake assessment of collections care and conservation needs on the basis of a pragmatic risk management model. Evaluation of the likelihood of risk and its impact in terms of loss of value of the item or collection will be used to identify and prioritise collection care measures to reduce damage to an acceptable level within the available resources.
- **Prioritising Access:** NMNI will support and prioritise physical access to its collections through exhibitions, loans and in store while recognising that the use of collections may result in increased risks. Assessment of risk will take into consideration the nature of the risks and the impact on value of the collection item and will ensure that appropriate measures to mitigate and manage the risk are in place.
- **Promoting Sustainability:** NMNI will work to reduce the environmental impact of measures taken to stabilise the collections and will embed sustainability into plans and procedures for collections care and conservation.
- **Achieving Public Value:** NMNI will maximise the public value of collections care and conservation through:
 - supporting collections use, study and research
 - adding to the knowledge of collection items through study and research
 - maintaining and actively promoting good practice

2.4 Preventive Conservation

2.4.1 Within the exhibition environment NMNI will:

- Provide appropriate environmental conditions through monitoring and control of temperature and relative humidity which balances the needs of visitors with care of the collections. In most areas, this aligns to the Joint International Institute for Conservation (IIC) of Historic and Artistic Works – International Council of Museums (ICOM), Conservation Committee (CC) Declaration on Environmental Guidelines 2014
 - Provide appropriate lighting while minimising deterioration to vulnerable collections
 - Effectively monitor and control pest activity, dust and pollutants
 - Control damage from handling and wear and tear
 - Meet appropriate environmental standards for material within the care of NMNI as identified as part of agreements with lending institutions
 - Maintain adequate fire detection and suppression systems
 - Provide security regimes which deliver protection for collection items consistent with the level of risk and current best practice

2.4.2 Within exhibit buildings NMNI will:

- Provide a level of control of environmental conditions commensurate with the original nature of the building and interiors
- Deliver a range of housekeeping and monitoring procedures which reduce the incidence of pest damage and enhance the presentation of the buildings
- Carry out monitoring of collection damage and loss to effectively manage preventive and remedial conservation measures
- Provide appropriate training for visitor guides in pest management, housekeeping procedures, fire prevention and security

2.4.3 Within collection storage areas NMNI will:

- Regularly review storage areas to prioritise measures to achieve improvements in the buildings and collection environment for all collections
- Undertake assessment and review of collection condition to inform priorities for preventive measures and conservation treatment programmes
- Improve environmental conditions through monitoring and control of temperature and relative humidity so that the majority of the collections are stored in environmental conditions which meet recognised standards.
- Control light levels within storage areas
- Monitor and control pest activity, dust and pollutants through measures such as the Integrated Pest Management Programme, housekeeping regimes and use of suitable storage materials and enclosures

- Control damage from handling and wear and tear through appropriate storage furniture, physical protection for collections and appropriate handling techniques
- Maintain adequate fire detection and suppression systems
- Provide security regimes which deliver protection for collection items consistent with the level of risk and current best practice

2.4.4 For collections in transit, both within and between sites NMNI will:

- Minimise risk to collections by providing appropriate handling equipment and vehicles for transit
- Provide appropriate protective enclosures or other physical protection to collections based on an assessment of risk specific to the collection item and proposed movement
- Use trained personnel to handle and move collections
- Use appropriate security measures for collections in transit

2.5 Interventive Conservation

2.5.1 For conservation treatment carried out in house NMNI will:

- Undertake remedial or interventive treatment to collections
- Respect the integrity of the collection item and, in collaboration with curatorial staff, develop treatments which, where possible, adhere to conservation principles of minimum intervention
- Undertake work to high professional standards using appropriately trained and experienced staff
- Develop the skills and expertise of staff to improve standards, efficiency and effectiveness in the care and conservation of collections
- Adhere to the Institute for Conservation (Icon) Code of Conduct and Professional Standards (2014)

2.5.2 For conservation work carried out by contractors NMNI will:

- Employ contractors who have appropriate skills and expertise to carry out the work and are, where possible, accredited by either the Institute for Conservation, Institute for Conservator - Restorers in Ireland or another comparable and recognised professional body
- Develop a clear brief for the conservation work and agree a detailed and appropriate methodology for any work to be carried out
- Ensure that the contractor has the necessary arrangements in place for the safekeeping of works in their care and is adequately insured

2.6 Emergency Planning

To mitigate against loss or damage to the collections in the event of a major incident NMNI will:

- Proactively manage major risks and practically plan and prepare for emergency situations
- Ensure that the NMNI Business Continuity and Major Incident and Emergency Plans are held for each site
- Liaise effectively with emergency services and other collection bodies to provide mutual support.
- Provide adequate communication and training for staff to ensure protection of the collections as part of emergency response
- Respond to emergency situations involving collections with adequate materials, equipment and personnel

Appendix 1: Legal, Ethical and Standards Framework

NMNI's Collections Management framework is informed by legislation, ethical codes and appropriate sectoral standards.

A. Legislation applying to all Collections Management Policies

- Copyright Act 1911 and 1956
- The Public Records Act (Northern Ireland) 1923
- Disposal of Documents Order 1925
- Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976, as amended
- Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988
- The Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
- The Treasure Act 1996 (as amended by the Coroners & Justice Act 2009)
- Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997, as amended
- Fair Employment & Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Data Protection Act 1998
- The Museums and Galleries (Northern Ireland) Order 1998
- Section 75, Northern Ireland Act 1998
- Sections 76 Northern Ireland Act 1998
- Schedule 9 Northern Ireland Act 1998
- Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003
- Copyright and Related Rights Regulations 2003
- Employment (Northern Ireland) Order 2003
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended DDA (Northern Ireland) Order 2006
- Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006, as amended
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, The Wildlife (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011
- The Requirements of HM Customs & Revenue

B. Ethical codes applying to all Collections Management Policies

- UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, ratified Nov 2002
- CITES – 'Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora' 1973/79
- Spoliation of Works of Art during the Holocaust and World War II period: Statement of Principles and Proposed Actions, National Museum Directors Conference 1998
- Combating Illicit Trade: Due Diligence Guidelines for Museums, Libraries and Archives on collecting and borrowing Cultural Material, DCMS 2005
- Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums, DCMS 2005
- Code of Ethics for Museums, Museums Association 2008

- UK Export Licensing for Cultural Goods – Procedures and guidance for exporters of works of art and other culture goods, Arts Council England 2011
- ICOM code of Ethics for Museums 2013 (including the ICOM 'Red List')

C. Sectorial standards applying to all Collections Management Policies

- PAS197:2009: Code of practice for cultural collections management, British Standards Institute
- SPECTRUM 4.0: The UK Museum Collections Management Standard 2011

D. Collections Information and Access Policy

D.1 Documentation and Cataloguing Standards

- Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (3rd ed., 2002)
- ISAD(g): General International Standard Archival Description, International Council on Archives 2007
- SPECTRUM 4.0: The UK Museum Collections Management Standard 2011
- Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules ('AACR', Joint Steering Committee, 2nd ed., 2002 revision): international library documentation standard. Superseded by AACR2 and Resource Description and Access ('RDA', 2010, revisions through 2013)

D.2 Lending

- Loans between National and Non-national Museums – New standard and practical guidelines, National Museum Directors' Council 2003
- UK Registrars Group, Courier Guidelines 2nd Edition 2004
- Effective Collections, Simple Loans Administration. Museums Association Supported by Esmée Fairburn Foundation. 1st Edition 2007
- Immunity from Seizure legislation (Part 6 of the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcements Act 2007)
- UK Registrars Group, Standard Facilities Report 2008
- UK Registrars Group, Standard Facilities Report: Display Case supplement 2008
- UK Registrar' Group, Standard Facilities Report: Security Supplement 2008
- Bizot Group Loans Guidelines (revised) 2009
- Government Indemnity Scheme, Guidelines for National Institutions 2012
- Smarter Loans: Principles for lending and borrowing from UK museums, Museums Association 2012

D.3 Collections Care and Conservation Policy

- European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Professional Guidelines 2002
- National Museum Directors Conference , guiding principles for reducing museums' carbon footprint 2010
- Benchmarks in Collections Care 2.0, Alex Dawson (ed.), Museums, Libraries and Archives 2011
- PAS 198:2012 Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections, British Standards Institute

- PD 5454:2012 Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials British Standards Institute
- Joint International Institute for Conservation (IIC) of Historic and Artistic Works – International Council of Museums (ICOM), Conservation Committee (CC) Declaration on Environmental Guidelines 2014
- Institute of Conservation (Icon) Code of Conduct and Professional Standards 2014
- RAPT (Risk Awareness Profiling Tool), www.raptonline.org.uk