NATIONAL TRUST *for* SCOTLAND

ADVANCING ACCESS
A POLICY FOR AUDIENCES AND COLLECTIONS

2018

For the *love* of Scotland

Advancing Access: A Policy for Audiences and Collections

Approved by Board, 2nd April 2018
Review date: 2nd April 2023

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What is access?

Access is a right or opportunity to have or use collections in a way that yields benefits. It is made possible when physical, cultural, social, intellectual, psychological, sensory, emotional and attitudinal barriers to learning from and enjoyment of the collections are removed, reduced, or overcome.

Why is access important to the Trust?

Access and enjoyment are at the heart of the Trust's mission. The Trust aims to conserve what is considered special about our heritage in a way which protects or enhances its significance. In doing so, it seeks to provide opportunities for everyone to experience and value Scotland's heritage in a way that sustains it for the future.

Policy statement

a) We are committed to increasing access to our collections to everyone in order to enhance users' experience, to expand collective knowledge and understanding, and to enrich lives.

b) Because barriers to access exist within a wider societal context (e.g. socio-economic, disability, cultural diversity) and also cut across all that the Trust does and is perceived to be, tackling barriers requires the Trust's management and staff to work collegiately, with users and stakeholders, with external stakeholders and, with experts to ensure a joined-up approach and to maximise impact.

c) We believe that heritage conservation and access, the twin pillars of the Trust's mission, complement and stimulate one another. The conservation of heritage is effectively the articulation of its importance and value, and by implication, a symbiotic process of facilitating and/or promoting the access and enjoyment of it.

d) In delivering access to what we conserve, we follow the Trust's Conservation Principles (2018) and commit to manage our collections within the Museums Association Code of Ethics 2007.

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How we deliver this policy

	Objective	Output
1	Identify users' needs and barriers to access	a. We will continuously develop insight and understanding of audiences and non-users to understand visitor motivations and social realities, and ensure the broadest possible opportunity to access to our facilities, services and collections. b. We will carry out access audits at individual sites to assess the degree of physical, social and sensory access. c. We acknowledge the Social Model of disablement and expect disability awareness to be demonstrated within day-to-day operations, planning, exhibitive design and, new developments. d. We acknowledge an innate tendency to underplay emotional and sensory access to collections and interiors and will actively seek the means of engaging visitors in these ways.
2	Understand our collections more	a. We acknowledge that collections knowledge and data is essential in supporting every aspect of our visitors' experiences and how we care for collections. b. We will continue to learn about our collections, their meanings and significance. c. We will seek to collect intangible heritage and new information on collections originating from a variety of sources (such as user-generated content), see Collections Information Policy. d. We balance high quality research of collections with excellence in communicating, engaging and interpreting heritage.

		e. We are facilitators as well as enactors of research. f. Our research will be outcome-driven and audience focused. g. We encourage and facilitate cross disciplinary research to include heritage science, climate change and other new and emerging areas.
3	Utilise technologies	a. We should utilise existing and new technologies where these enhance the visitor experience, promote social or sensory access, increase knowledge and data, or help to conserve collections. b. We will provide remote access to as much collections data (information and images) as possible. c. We will endeavour to have the most open form of online access to collections data and images for the public, with the exception of value-added images and services or those for commercial use. As much of our digital content will be covered by the Attribution-Non Commercial or CC BY-NC Creative Commons licence.[1] d. We will use digital technology as an enabler for, not a replacement of, collections and interiors.
4	Reflect the diversity of our current and potential audiences	a. We acknowledge and recognise cultural differences and will demonstrate cultural relativity in our programmes and our exhibitions (see Collections Development Policy).[2] b. We will actively seek more diverse audiences in all aspects of how we manage and how we use collections.

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[1] 'This license lets others remix, tweak, and build upon your work non-commercially, and although their new works must also acknowledge you and be non-commercial, they don't have to license their derivative works on the same terms.' https://creativecommons.org/licenses/ accessed on 13/02/2018.

[2] Cultural relativism is the idea that a person's beliefs and activities should be understood based on that person's own culture rather than by one's own.

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		c. Offering visitors choice is one of our priorities.
		d. We will continue to seek to make information on our collections available in languages other than English wherever possible.
5	Interpret through all visitor activities	a. Our heritage sites will extend the interpretation of heritage through experiences beyond the direct collection / objects, such as through retail, foods services and events. This includes design and content into products, services, spaces and promotions. The visitor experience covers spaces and time beyond immediate collections.
		b. Recognition for the Visitor Experience (in heritage sites) to include all experiential aspects being designed, developed and managed with heritage content and meaning, as far as practicable.
6	Invest in training	a. The Trust sees all its volunteers and staff as participating in the heritage visitor experience and equally, developing their own knowledge and appreciation for the heritage and how it is conveyed and experienced. It will invest in training in order to facilitate better access for all.
7	Display and use	a. Where the use of an item is of significance consideration should be given to retaining that use wherever possible (See Collections Care Policy).
		b. We will ensure sustainable access to collections and that any competing demands of access and long term care of collection items will be managed in accordance with the outcomes of a collection care risk assessment.
		c. We will consider the use of surrogates where this protects the original or enhances the visitor experience.

		d. Although there might be occasions when the display of a whole room and its contents is appropriate, generally speaking, we will endeavour to display less but change this more often in order to rest items from continuous display and to refresh the visitor offer.
8	Share resources	a. We will borrow items from individuals and other organisations where these enhance the visitor experience, increase knowledge or understanding, or enrich lives and, equally, lend items where this can be achieved for a wider audience (see Collections Loans Policy). b. We will endeavour to facilitate access to users whose access may be limited due to their high cost, physically restricted objects, or the lack of appropriate infrastructure or due to prejudices within the society that restrict use. This will include access to images and metadata (See Collections Information Policy).
9	Evaluate impact and regularly reviewing collections access	a. We will continuously assess the impact of our collections via visitor surveys which include questions relating to access. b. Information from surveys will inform future access improvements and revisions of this policy.

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Ethics and legislation

As a minimum, we will follow national and international standards, ethical codes and best practice guidelines including, but not exclusively:

Equalities Act 2010

Ethical guidelines 4 – Access. Museums Association

PSQG Access Standard, The National Council on Archives, 2006

BS 8300, Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people – Code of practice

BS 8477: 2007, Code of practice for customer service

BS ISO 10002: 2004, Quality management – Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations

BS 5454, Recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival documents

PAS 197:2009 Code of practice for cultural collections management

PAS 78 Guide to good practice in commissioning accessible websites

Data Protection Act 1998

Museums Association Code of Ethics (2007)

Notwithstanding the above, the Trust may from time-to-time develop innovations in accessibility and interpretation beyond 'mainstream' or 'established practice' or convention; heritage and its conservation are continuously moving and reflective of contemporaneous audience realities, technologies and social change. The Trust is obliged to be forward-thinking, continuously contributing to what is meant by 'heritage' and access to it.

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References

For Info: A Policy to Build and Share Information about Collections (2019)

Caring for Collections: A Policy to Protect Significance (2019)

Developing Collections: A Policy to Reflect and Enrich Lives (2019)

Sharing Collections: A Policy on Lending and Borrowing (2019)

Access, Enjoyment and Education Principles (2005)

Conservation Principles (2003)

NTS Conservation Principles (2018)

NTS Equality and Diversity Policy (2012)

NTS Experiencing Collections (2017)

NTS Collections & Interiors Review (2017)

**NATIONAL
TRUST for
SCOTLAND**

OUR VISION

Scotland's heritage is valued by everyone
and protected now and for future generations

OUR OBJECTIVES

To protect and care for Scotland's heritage

To provide opportunities for everyone
to experience and value Scotland's heritage

To promote the benefits of heritage

To create an efficient and sustainable business
which supports our conservation needs

OUR VALUES

VIBRANT **CARING** **INCLUSIVE** **CURIOUS** **BRAVE**