



NATIONAL  
TRUST *for*  
SCOTLAND



# DEVELOPING COLLECTIONS

A POLICY TO REFLECT  
AND ENRICH LIVES

2019

For the *love* of Scotland

# Developing Collections: A Policy to Reflect and Enrich Lives

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**Name of museum<sup>1</sup>:**

*The National Trust for Scotland*

**Name of governing body:**

*The Board of Trustees of the National Trust for Scotland*

**Date on which this policy was approved by governing body:**

*27 March 2019*

**Policy review procedure:**

This policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years.

**Date at which this policy is due for review:**

*27 March 2024*

Museums Galleries Scotland will be notified of any changes to the collections development policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.

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<sup>1</sup> Museum refers to any Trust site, Accredited or Non-Accredited, which holds museum collections

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

- 1.1.** The Trust's statement of purpose is to protect and promote access to Scotland's historic places, objects and areas of natural beauty for the benefit of the nation.
- 1.2.** The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.
- 1.3.** By definition, NTS has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. The Trustees therefore accept the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in the Trust's collection.
- 1.4.** Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.
- 1.5.** The Trust recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Standard. This includes using Spectrum primary procedures for collections management. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.
- 1.6.** The Trust will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the Trust can acquire a valid title to the item in question.
- 1.7.** In exceptional cases, disposal may be motivated principally by financial reasons. The method of disposal will therefore be by sale and the procedures outlined below will be followed. In cases where disposal is motivated by financial reasons,

the governing body will not undertake disposal unless it can be demonstrated that all the following exceptional circumstances are met in full:

- the disposal will significantly improve the long-term public benefit derived from the remaining collection
- the disposal will not be undertaken to generate short-term revenue (for example to meet a budget deficit)
- the disposal will be undertaken as a last resort after other sources of funding have been thoroughly explored
- extensive prior consultation with sector bodies has been undertaken
- the item under consideration lies outside the museum's established permanent collection

## **2. History of the collections**

The Trust has been collecting material culture since its foundation in 1931. Collections held by the Trust are the things we have purposefully selected to keep for the future and include a broad representation of material culture of value to Scotland. We use the word 'collection' to include our collections of material culture, archives, books, and photographs. We exclude from this term, anything that cannot be moved, such as buildings and monuments (with the exception of portable archaeology). The Trust also uses the term 'collection' to describe our living plant collections. The living plant collections are not covered by this policy.

The vast majority of the Trust's material culture collections comprises the contents of the NTS built properties, together with movable fine or decorative art objects contained within its designed landscapes, and archaeological matter excavated from the land held in its care. These have been acquired with a property and its contents (or those that remain) as well as additions following the acquisition of a property whenever the opportunity arises. These additions tend to be items which once belonged to a property but might also be non-original

items which conform to each property's particular collecting policy (see section 3). The Trust has also been collecting material which reflects its own organisational history.

### **3. An overview of current collections**

3.1 The Trust has a wide-ranging material culture collection that relates principally to the histories of the built properties in our care. Included in this are the majority of the contents of each of these properties, together with movable fine or decorative art objects contained within designed landscapes, archaeological matter excavated from the land held in our care and the related historic archives, libraries and photographic collections from each of these properties.

There are approximately 520,000 items in the collection:

- 100,000 museum artefacts
- 20,000 items of archaeology
- 80,000 library books
- 120,000 archive items
- 200,000 photographs

These collections are displayed or stored principally in 50 of the Trust's 100 properties, in its HQ or one of its regional offices. There are currently nine Accredited Museums within the Trust and two collections Recognised as being of National Significance. This policy sets out the principles for developing the Trust's collections, as a whole, and is supported by individual collecting policy statements which specify the particular focus of collecting and rationalisation at each property in our care.

#### **3.2 NTS manages two categories of collection:**

**3.2.1 Permanent Collection:** These are items of significance and importance to the story of a property which the Trust commits to preserving in the long term and will only dispose of in exceptional circumstances. This is the accessioned collection.

**3.2.2 Support Collection:** These objects have little significance or importance to the story of a property. In many cases the support collection objects have been purchased, gifted or bequeathed to NTS for set-dressing purposes, to illustrate the furnishing of an interior in a particular time period but the objects themselves have no direct link to the property. These collections are not accessioned and although the Trust cares for and manages these support collections, we do not commit to the same level of long-term preservation as our Permanent Collection.

#### **4. Themes and priorities for future collecting**

**4.1** The Trust develops collections to reflect and understand the lives of people who lived and worked in Scotland and, through them, to enrich the lives of everyone today. This drive to preserve what is special about Scotland's heritage for the enjoyment of all is at the heart of the Trust's mission.

**4.2** The Trust collects to use not just to have: it is not enough for an object to have originated in a property for it to be acquired or retained. Therefore, although the themes for future collecting will be developed by properties, across the Trust our priority for future collecting will be items which allow us to tell the story of our properties and those who lived in them in ways which enrich the lives of everyone today. In assessing significance we will also take into account relevance to our audiences, today and in the future.

**4.3** The significance and relevance of an object to telling the story of a Trust property to which it is related is the main factor in deciding whether to accept an object into the collection, or to dispose of it.<sup>2</sup> The Trust collects in three main areas:-

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<sup>2</sup> Clearly there are many potential stories within each property. The statement of significance will provide guidance on the main narratives unique to particular properties.

**4.3.1 Items which are important in telling the story of a property.** This may include items which were once associated with a property but their 'originality' to the property is not enough – they must help tell an important part of the story of the property or those associated with it.

**4.3.2 Items of historical or artistic significance.** In exceptional circumstances the Trust may acquire items which have no intrinsic connection to a particular property but which have historical or artistic significance and, as such, are likely to appeal to visitors. One reason for this might be to 'dress' a room according to a particular period.

**4.3.3 Items which tell the story of the Trust.** There is considerable interest in the activities of the NTS and in decisions it takes so the Trust collects and preserves, as part of its corporate archive, any documents, objects and photographic images that describe the founding and establishment of the NTS, the acquisition and management of its properties and that record of its many and varied conservation activities.

## **5. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal**

**5.1** The Trust recognises that the principles on which priorities for rationalisation and disposal are determined will be through a formal review process that identifies which collections are included and excluded from the review. The outcome of review and any subsequent rationalisation will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well managed collection.

**5.2** The procedures used will meet professional standards. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication and discussion with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.

**5.3** The priority for rationalisation is from the Support Collection, where NTS aims to reduce the quantity of non-indigenous material purchased and acquired as set-dressing. This will only be carried out after careful

consideration of the terms under which the collections were acquired, and will enable better care and interpretation of the permanent collection.

## **6. Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items**

**6.1** The Trust recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal.

## **7. Collecting policies of other museums**

**7.1.** NTS will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

**7.2.** Specific reference is made to the following museum(s)/organisation(s):

*National Museums of Scotland*

*National Galleries of Scotland*

*National Archives of Scotland*

*National Library of Scotland*

*National Burns Collection*

*Historic Environment Scotland*

*Royal Botanical Garden, Edinburgh*

*Relevant Local Authority museum services or specialist independent museums*

## **8. Archival holdings**

### **8.1 Archive**

There are two main elements to the Trust's archive, the first of which is the institutional archive. This collection details how the Trust was founded, how it has acquired and managed its many iconic and historic properties and the various conservation projects



and disciplines which have helped to preserve them; these archives outline the history of the Trust from its fledgling beginnings into Scotland's largest conservation charity. The second element is the Special Archives and Collections: these are collections of personal papers, family papers, diaries, photos, estate records and other documents linked with the properties and the families connected with them. Although not every property has such a collection, those that do tend to remain at the properties, although some are also held at the Trust's Head Office in Edinburgh.

## **8.2 Library collection**

The National Trust of Scotland manages a number of historic libraries at many of its properties, most of which hold a large number of books. There is also a central reference library at its Headquarters at Hermiston Quay used primarily by NTS staff and volunteers. The books were printed from 1494 onwards and are a very valuable historical resource. In many properties they show the interests of the owning families there over the centuries and in most properties represent important research and study material.

## **9. Acquisition**

**9.1** The policy for agreeing acquisitions follows the Trust's Scheme of Delegation.<sup>3</sup> Responsibility for decisions about the acquisition and disposal of items in the Permanent Collection rests with the Board of Trustees. Responsibility for managing the acquisitions and disposals processes is delegated by the Trustees to the Collections Team. The Collections Team works closely with curators, conservators and regional management staff to ensure adequate research takes place prior to acquisition or disposal decisions being submitted for consideration. The Board then delegates the final decision on acquisition and disposal according to the NTS scheme of delegation, based on the overall value of the proposed acquisition or disposal:

- Decisions to acquire or dispose of items from the Trust's permanent and support collections up to a combined value of £50,000 are taken by the Loans Acquisitions and

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<sup>3</sup> <http://trustnet.nts.org.uk/Policy/IPWGAZ/Scheme%20of%20Delegation.aspx> accessed online 11/02/2019

Disposals Committee (LAD), made up of professional staff in Curatorial and Conservations Services and the Collections Team.

- Decisions to acquire or dispose of items or assemblages from the Trust's permanent and support collections with a combined value between £50,000 and £250,000 will be referred by the LAD committee to the NTS Executive Committee (ExCo) with detailed recommendations for a decision.
- Decisions to acquire or dispose of items from the Trust's permanent and support collections with a combined value that is higher than £250,000 will be referred by the LAD, to ExCo, for final consideration by the Board of Trustees.

Authorisation for the acquisition of objects by purchase, or which involves fundraising, requires:

- ExCo approval for individual objects valued up to £20,000
- Board approval for individual objects valued over £20,000

The LAD committee may also recommend referral to ExCo or to the Board of Trustees if a disposal from the Support Collection, or of low value items from the Permanent Collection was felt to be of a particularly sensitive nature.

A *significance assessment* will be prepared as part of the acquisitions process. This will determine the germaneness of an item or group of items to the scope of the collection and assess its value (social, cultural, intellectual, financial, and rarity). It will also take into account the degree of relevance to the property's target audiences, both now and in the future.

Born-digital material will be treated in exactly the same way as tangible material culture.

Both the significance and condition will influence how a collection will be managed but there are other factors influencing sustainability. A *collections impact assessment* is carried out to determine the resource implications of bringing an object into the collection. This includes: storage space, staffing, financial resources, environmental conditions, conservation treatment, and an assessment of potential demand and scope for access by a broad range of users. As a general rule, NTS only accepts items donated by gift or bequest

on an unconditional basis. Only in exceptional circumstances will the Trust accept an item identical to one already in the collection. The Trust positively seeks opportunities to make its collections accessible to new and diverse audiences (see *Advancing Access: a policy for audiences and collections*).

The condition of an item will have an affect both on the likelihood of acquiring it or its status within the collection. A *condition assessment* will be carried out for items considered for acquisition or for disposal.

**9.2** The Trust will not acquire any object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the object or specimen has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom).

**9.3** In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1 2002, The Trust will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The Trust's Board of Trustees will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.<sup>4</sup>

## **10. Human Remains**

**10.1** As the Trust holds or intends to acquire human remains under 100 years old, it will obtain the necessary licence under the Human Tissue Act 2004 and any subordinate legislation from time to time in force.

**10.2** As the Trust holds or intends to acquire human remains from any period, it will follow the guidelines in the 'Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Scottish Museums' issued by Museums Galleries Scotland in 2011 (please refer

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<sup>4</sup> *Combating Illicit Trade: Due diligence guidelines for museums, libraries and archives on collecting and borrowing cultural material*. DCMS, October 2005

to NTS Human Remains Policy, 2019).

## **11. Biological and geological material**

**11.1** So far as biological and geological material is concerned, The Trust will not acquire by any direct or indirect means any specimen that has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of the United Kingdom or any other country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

## **12. Archaeological material**

12.1 The Trust will not acquire archaeological material (including excavated ceramics) in any case where the governing body or responsible officer has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures.

12.2 In Scotland, under the laws of bona vacantia including Treasure Trove, the Crown has title to all ownerless objects including antiquities, although such material as human remains and environmental samples are not covered by the law of bona vacantia. Scottish material of chance finds and excavation assemblages are offered to museums through the treasure trove process and cannot therefore be legally acquired by means other than by allocation to The Trust by the Crown. However, where the Crown has chosen to forego its title to a portable antiquity or excavation assemblage, a Curator or other responsible person acting on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the National Trust for Scotland can establish that valid title to the item in question has been acquired by ensuring that a certificate of 'No Claim' has been issued on behalf of the Crown.

## **13. Exceptions**

- 13.1 Any exceptions to the above clauses will only be because the Trust is:
- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin
  - acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin

In these cases the Trust will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority. The Trust will document when these exceptions occur.

#### **14. Spoliation**

- 14.1** The Trust will use the statement of principles 'Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period', issued for non-national museums in 1999 by the Museums and Galleries Commission.

#### **15. The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains**

- 15.1 The Trust's Board of Trustees, acting on the advice of the museum's professional staff, if any, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the *Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Scottish Museums issued by MGS in 2011*), objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The Trust will take such decisions on a case by case basis, within its legal position and taking into account all ethical implications and available guidance. This will mean that the procedures described in 16.1-5 will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.
- 15.2 The disposal of human remains from museums in Scotland will follow the guidelines in the 'Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Scottish Museums' issued by Museums Galleries Scotland in 2011.
- 15.3 The exception to this is that as, in accordance with the procedures of the Anatomy Act (1984) as amended by the Human Tissue (Scotland) Act (2006), the proper

disposal of human remains in the Anatomy collection donated under the Anatomy Act is the legal duty of the Licensed Teacher of Anatomy. In exceptional circumstances the Licensed Teacher may be required to dispose of human remains and to have sole responsibility for the decision. The Board of Trustees will be informed of the decision and a clearly documented audit trail will be maintained.

## **16. Disposal procedures**

**16.1** All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the Spectrum 5.0 Primary Procedures on disposal.

**16.2** The Trust's Board of Trustees will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Agreements on disposal made with donors will also be taken into account.

**16.3** When disposal of a museum object is being considered, NTS will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.

**16.4** When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale, exchange or as a last resort - destruction.

**16.5** The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the Trustees, or by those delegated by the Trustees to take that decision [see Section 9.1] only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including public benefit, the implications for the Trust's collections and collections held by other museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. Expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by The Trust will also be sought.

- 16.6** A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the Board of Trustees acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff as set out in Section 9, and not of the curator or manager of the collection acting alone.
- 16.7** Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.
- 16.8** If the material is not acquired by any Accredited Museum to which it was offered as a gift or for sale, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material normally through a notice on the Museums Association's 'Find an Object' web listing service, an announcement in the Museums Association's *Museums Journal* or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).
- 16.9** The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from Accredited Museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, NTS may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.
- 16.10** Any monies received by NTS from the disposal of items will be applied solely and directly for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same

way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from Museums Galleries Scotland.

**16.11** The proceeds of a sale will be allocated so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard. Money must be restricted to the long-term sustainability, use and development of the collection.

**16.12** Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and / or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable in accordance with Spectrum Procedure on deaccession and disposal.

### **Disposal by exchange**

**16.13** The nature of disposal by exchange means that NTS will not necessarily be in a position to exchange the material with another Accredited museum. The Board of Trustees will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.

**16.13.1** In cases where NTS wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or non-Accredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in Sections 16.1-16.12 will apply.

**16.13.2** If an exchange is proposed with a specific Accredited museum, other Accredited museums that collect in the same or related areas will be directly notified of the proposal and their comments will be requested.

**16.13.3** If the exchange is proposed with a non-Accredited museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, the museum will place a notice on the MA's 'Find an Object' web listing service, or make an announcement in the Museums Association's *Museums Journal* or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).



**16.13.4** Both the notification and announcement must provide information on the number and nature of the specimens or objects involved both in the Trust's collection and those intended to be acquired in exchange. A period of at least two months must be allowed for comments to be received. At the end of this period, the Board of Trustees must consider the comments before a final decision on the exchange is made.

### **Disposal by destruction**

**16.14** If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, The Trust (via its scheme of delegation) may decide to destroy it.

**16.15** It is acceptable to destroy material of low intrinsic significance (duplicate mass-produced articles or common specimens which lack significant provenance) where no alternative method of disposal can be found.

**16.16** Destruction is also an acceptable method of disposal in cases where an object is in extremely poor condition, has high associated health and safety risks or is part of an approved destructive testing request identified in an organisation's research policy.

**16.17** Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought to establish the appropriate method of destruction. Health and safety risk assessments will be carried out by trained staff where required.

**16.18** The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of NTS staff. In circumstances where this is not possible, e.g. the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.

## References

*Advancing Access: A Policy for Audiences and Collections* (2018)

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

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

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

*Conservation, Learning, Access and Enjoyment Principles* (2018)

*Respecting Remains: A Policy on the Treatment of Human Remains* (2019)

*NTS Equality and Diversity Policy* (2012)

*NTS Equality Policy* (2013)

*NTS Collections & Interiors Review* (2017)

*NTS Experiencing Collections* (2017)

*NTS Experiencing Things* (2018)

*NTS Acquisitions Policy* (2019)

Department for Culture, Media and Sport. *Combating Illicit Trade: Due diligence guidelines for museums, libraries and archives on collecting and borrowing cultural material*. DCMS, October 2005

Museum & Galleries Commission. 'Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period'. April 1999.

Museums Galleries Scotland. *Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Scottish Museums*. 2011

Collections Trust. *Spectrum 5.0*. September 2017.



## *OUR VISION*

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

## *OUR OBJECTIVES*

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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*

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*VIBRANT*

*CARING*

*INCLUSIVE*

*CURIOUS*

*BRAVE*

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