



Seirbheisean Dualchais  
Outer Hebrides Heritage Services

# Museum nan Eilean

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

## Collections Development Policy

Two museums;



Museum  
nan Eilean  
Stornoway

Museum nan Eilean  
Lews Castle  
Stornoway  
Isle of Lewis  
Outer Hebrides  
HS2 0XS



Museum  
nan Eilean  
Lionacleit

Museum nan Eilean  
Sgoil Lionacleit  
Lionacleit  
Isle of Benbecula  
Outer Hebrides  
HS7 5PJ



Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

Approved: April 2023  
Review date: March 2028

## Background to the policy

This policy sets out the principles that will provide Museum nan Eilean with a framework for the acquisition and disposal of its collections using clear procedures and decision-making processes.

Implementing the policy will enable the Museum to demonstrate the public benefit in its actions relating to the acquisition and disposal of collections. It provides a basis for open and transparent decision-making and an informed dialogue between the governing body, donors, funding bodies and other stakeholders.

This policy applies to:

- material which the Museum owns and has accessioned into the collection or intends to own and accession into the collection.
- material which the Museum manages and stores on behalf of other trusts

The acquisition, management and disposal of collections will flow from:

- the Museum's statement of purpose
- the legal basis on which the collections are held
- the public benefit derived from the effective use and management of the collections
- an assessment of the needs of the museum's collections
- the criteria of the Collections Committee
- the collections held by other museums and organisations collecting in the same or related geographic areas or subject fields.

This policy supersedes all previous and existing practices and policies, formal or informal, relating to the acquisition of items for the collections of Museum nan Eilean and to the disposal of items from the collections of the museum.

## Governance

Museum nan Eilean's governing body is Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, the local authority for the Outer Hebrides. The Scheme of Administration (<https://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/your-council/committees/constitutional-documents>) details the membership, quorum, purpose and functions of the Comhairle and its Committees, Sub-Committees, Panels and Joint Consultative Committees. It also regulates certain aspects of procedure. It makes explicit reference on page 40 to the provision and management of museums for the display of antiquities, works of art and objects of educational and scientific interest being under the remit of the Sustainable Development Committee

Local authority museums are deemed to have the power to operate museums through the **Public Libraries Consolidation (Scotland) Act 1887**. "The library authority or museum or art gallery authority, as the case may be, may from time to time for the purposes of this Act purchase, feu or rent any land, or any suitable building; and may erect any building suitable for public libraries, public museums, or for any one or more of those objects, and may alter or extend any buildings for such purposes, and repair and improve the same respectively, and fit up, furnish, and

supply the same respectively with all requisite furniture, fittings, and conveniences..... The library or museum or art gallery authority, as the case may be, shall manage, regulate, and control all libraries or museums or art galleries established under this Act, or to which this Act applies; and shall have power to do all things necessary for such management, including the following powers; that is to say, to purchase books, newspapers, reviews, magazines, and other periodicals, statutory, pictures, engravings, maps, specimens of art and science, .... tape recordings and films]and such other articles and things as may be necessary for the establishment, increase, and use of the libraries or museums or art galleries under their control, and to do all things necessary for keeping the same in a proper state of preservation and repair.”

Section 32 of the above Act states “All libraries, museums, or art galleries established under this Act, or to which this Act applies, shall be open to the public free of charge, and no charge shall be made for the use of books or magazines issued for home reading.”

Section 163 of the **1973 Local Government Scotland Act** refers to public libraries, museums and galleries “each regional council shall have a duty in consultation with regional councils within their region to ensure that there is an adequate provision of facilities for the purposes of the said Act in that application for the inhabitants of their region”.

**Name of museums:** Museum nan Eilean, Stornoway and Museum nan Eilean, Lionacleit (the term museum below will refer to both Museums)

**Name of governing body:** Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CnES)

**Date on which this policy was approved by governing body:** April 2023

**Policy review procedure:** The collections development 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:** March 2028

***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.**

**1. Legal and governance: relationship to other relevant policies/ plans of the organisation**

**1.1. Our Mission 2023 – we do this**

We promote the value and potential of Outer Hebrides heritage by safeguarding collections and making them accessible for present and future audiences through exhibitions, engagement and research, while upholding professional standards.

**Our Vision 2023 – so that ....**

Our rich heritage will be valued, preserved and enjoyed as a key asset of the Outer Hebrides, with the necessary investment and professional skills, enabling it to grow sustainably and ethically, so that our collections, Gaelic culture and intangible heritage will enrich, educate, challenge, inspire and reflect diverse audiences.

1.2. The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.

1.3. By definition, the museum has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts 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 museum's collection.

1.4. Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

1.5. The museum 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 museum 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 museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.
- 1.7. The museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.

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

Museum nan Eilean was established in 1983 as the local authority Museum Service for Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles Council) and forms part of the Heritage Services section within the Chief Executives Department. For the most part the Collections were built up following the establishment of the Museum Service in 1983, with two significant exceptions;

1. The earliest collection material was from the Lewis Museum, run by the Lewis and Harris Museum Society, and established in the 1950s. In 1983, an agreement with The Lewis Museum Trust led to Museum nan Eilean taking on the care and management of this collection.
2. The Calbost Collection is a highly significant social history collection built up by Angus Macleod for his private museum at Calbost, over a long period. In 1999 it was brought into the care and management of Museum nan Eilean by a similar agreement to that made with The Lewis Museum Trust.

Soon after the establishment of the Museum Service, the collections were re-located to Stornoway Town Hall, where display galleries were developed. In 1988 a smaller satellite accredited museum was established on Benbecula, as part of a new Community School at Sgoil Lionacleit with material from Museum nan Eilean relating to Uist and Benbecula displayed there. A Museum Development post based in Uist was also created at this time to care for these collections and make them accessible through future exhibitions.

Richard Langhorne was the curator from when the museum was established in 1983 until 2008. He was a key figure in expanding the island wide collections, moving the museum to Francis Street, attaining Museum Registration and then Accreditation, expanding the professional heritage team to include a Conservation Officer and Islands Archaeologist. As a Monument Fellow, funded by the Museums Association's Knowledge Transfer programme, he drafted the Documentation Policy and was instrumental in the establishment of the Collections Committee.

In 2013 an archivist was employed by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, following on from the 3-year ERDF funded Tasglann project. At this time, the Comhairle archives were transferred to the care and management of the Archive Service (Tasglann nan Eilean).

In 2015 a new museum and archive was built adjacent to Lews Castle replacing the Francis Street Museum. The museum displays focus on inter-related themes of the

land, the sea, the way of life and Gaelic-rich culture of the people of the Outer Hebrides. A unique Gaelic-led approach to interpretation reflects the bilingual nature of the islands with objects, archives, oral, audio-visual and interactive displays helping to make the information and key messages accessible to all. The museum also creates an opportunity to showcase the network of independent museums and Comainn Eachdraidh groups there are across the islands.

The facility at Museum nan Eilean, Lionacleit continues as an integral part of the Heritage Service and is used for a changing exhibitions programme using our own collections for in-house curated exhibitions and for touring exhibitions, community projects and for national loans.

There has been no major change in focus for the collections and no key disposals.

### **Museum nan Eilean, holds collections at four locations:**

- Museum nan Eilean, Lews Castle, Stornoway
- Museum nan Eilean, Sgoil Lionacleit, Benbecula
- Museum Collection Store, Torlum, Benbecula
- Museum Collection Store, Marybank, Stornoway

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

The collecting area for Museum nan Eilean is the area of the Outer Hebrides as defined by the Local Government (Scotland) Act, 1994 and includes both inhabited and non-inhabited islands within this boundary. This includes the islands of St Kilda 50 miles west of the main archipelago.

Museum nan Eilean holds collections relating to the social history, regional ethnography and archaeology of the Outer Hebrides. Social, historical and ethnographic artefacts date mainly from the 19th / 20th centuries and the archaeology collections span from the Mesolithic to the present day.

The following subject areas are represented in the museum collections

- Archaeology
- Crofting
- Maritime
- Domestic
- Textiles
- Local photographs, ephemera and paintings
- Natural History

The museum collections currently comprise some 14,400 items or groups of items; of these some 20% are on loan. These loans are mostly made up of two collections, Lewis Museum Trust collection and the Calbost Collection. These collections are placed in the care of Museum nan Eilean under formal management agreements with the respective trusts. Another small number of approximately 90 items are on loan from National Museums of Scotland plus a loan of 6 chess pieces from the British Museum.

Artefacts in the museum collection range from small coins and pottery fragments to very large items, such as a full-sized threshing machine and a Grimsay boat.

### **Archaeology**

Our archaeology collections comprise site assemblages and stray finds, covering a wide spectrum from the Mesolithic up until recent times. Over this expanse of time, common themes can be drawn out through the objects in our care.

There are approximately 1,200 archaeology boxes in our stores from 37 excavation assemblages, including human remains, plus approximately 300 stray finds. The Udal assemblages are presently stored on the mainland due to ongoing research and reporting. All the archaeological material has been awarded to the museum through Treasure Trove Scotland or the Scottish Archaeological Finds Allocation Panel (SAFAP).

Since 2021, with the help of funding from Museums Galleries Scotland, we have been able to employ a project archaeologist to work on legacy issues with assemblages and to catalogue the archaeology collections with the aim of increasing our knowledge and making them more accessible. The *Sònraichte* and *Archaeology Awakened* projects were the first two phases of what will be a larger exercise to document all our archaeology collections.

<https://www.outerhebridesh heritage.org.uk/collection/archaeology/> and [Announcing 'Archaeology Awakened' - Outer Hebrides Heritage Services](#)

### **Harris Tweed**

The islands are famous for the manufacture of Harris Tweed. The earliest evidence for the weaving of wool into cloth goes back to the Iron Age, over 2000 years ago and it was almost certainly carried on long before this. Since that time, making woollen cloth was an important domestic craft. It was carried on in the house, using the wool from the family's sheep, for clothing and blankets. Museum nan Eilean has a substantial Harris Tweed collection including tweed cloth samples, trade stamps, labels and fashion items. <https://www.outerhebridesh heritage.org.uk/collection/textile-costume-collection/> and <https://www.outerhebridesh heritage.org.uk/collection/collection-1/>

### **Maritime**

Outer Hebrides fishing is well represented within our collections, with the oldest known example of a Grimsay boat being one of the most iconic and significant survivals of the open boat era of Scottish fishing. However, the industry is largely represented by much smaller artefacts, like herring barrel stencils or bone net needle and again, many of these are made from recycled or ephemeral materials. Sheepskins were converted into floats for fishing nets and lobster creels. The creels themselves were woven at home from locally grown willow. Boats' fenders were made from twisted straw rope, or from marram grass.

Models of the Muirneag and HMS Lively are nationally significant. The Muirneag was the last traditional "Zulu" – the most significant type of sailing vessel associated with the great years of the herring fishing industry. HMS Lively is associated with the Crofters' War and the Napier Commission of the 1880s, events which shaped not only the settlement pattern of the islands but of the whole Scottish Highlands too.

<https://www.outerhebridesheritage.org.uk/collection/industry-and-commerce-including-maritime/>

### **Domestic Life**

One of the most significant items in the domestic collection is a tub chair, with a solid wooden back and sides, made with recycled tongue and groove boarding. Such chairs can be linked back to the Viking era, and this piece is an indicator of the shared Viking culture of the Northern Isles and the Hebrides.

Utensils and tools made from ephemeral materials such as heather, straw and marram grass were once common in these almost treeless islands and few examples have survived. <https://www.outerhebridesheritage.org.uk/collection/domestic-life/>

### **Crofting**

Crofting is an integral part of community life in the Outer Hebrides and contributes significantly to the local environmental landscape and biodiversity. It is a system of landholding, which has had specific legislation since the Crofters Holding Act of 1886 (and succeeding Acts), that ensures security of tenure for the crofters.

Within the crofting collection are items, most of which would have been home-made, with the exception of metal parts which would have been produced by the local blacksmith or the itinerant tinsmith. We also have a number of artefacts that reflect crofting life across the generations including plans for memorials to the Clearances and land raids. <https://www.outerhebridesheritage.org.uk/collection/crofting/>

### **Fine Art**

The museum has a small collection of Fine Art including some pieces which are of national importance. The small visual arts collections reflect the limited place of the pictorial arts in the local culture in the past. Most artwork in the collection relates to the topography and history of the Outer Hebrides.

A small collection of paintings and prints, principally portraits of civic dignitaries and local personalities, was inherited from the since disbanded Stornoway Burgh Council. A handful of larger works in oil were acquired from Lews Castle, erected in the mid-nineteenth century by Sir James Matheson, the Lewis landowner.

In 2006, with assistance from the Art Fund, the museum purchased the painting "*Stornoway with a Shooting Lodge on the Isle of Lewes*" by James Barret. Painted in 1798 this is one of the earliest known oil paintings of the Outer Hebrides and shows the development of Stornoway town since then. A companion piece is held in the collections of the National Galleries of Scotland.

In contrast, two paintings that can be considered small gems are by a local amateur artist of some skill, Robert Grant Masson. Masson was active around the middle of the nineteenth century and a number of works by him have survived locally. One of those in our collection is a portrait of Thomas Mackay, piper to the island's landowner, Sir James Matheson, and handyman on his estate. The other is a splendid view of the inner harbour and town c1840. These works lack the painterly skills of James Barret but are significant to the history of Stornoway.

<https://www.outerhebridesheritage.org.uk/collection/fine-art-and-decorative-applied-art/>



## **Photography**

The museum holds a number of photographic collections including some by notable photographers such as Lady Matheson, Werner Kissling and Gus Wylie. This is an area where we are actively collecting material on contemporary themes such as the Covid pandemic and Pride.

<https://www.outerhebridesh heritage.org.uk/collection/photographic-collections/>

## **Accessioned Archival Material**

Museum nan Eilean holds a collection of postal history and subsequent postal history acquisitions made up of a number of albums of letters, postmarks, stamps, envelopes, postcards with a date from the late 18th century to present day; postcards and photographs which comprises several hundred original items supplemented by over 1000 copy prints and accompanying negatives of material in private possession.

The Gibson collection is comprised of letters, medals, journals, certificates and writings collected by William J Gibson, the first Rector of the Nicolson Institute. Of particular interest is the collection of letters written to him by ex-pupils during World War 1. These letters are from young men serving at the front and also from female pupils who have gone into nursing and domestic service on the mainland. As a whole, these letters give much information on domestic and foreign affairs of the time. This collection is accessed regularly by researchers and has recently been fully transcribed to make the content available for study and display by local groups and schools. <https://www.outerhebridesh heritage.org.uk/collection/gibson-collection/>

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

The Collecting Area for the Museum will be the area of the Outer Hebrides as defined by the Local Government (Scotland) Act, 1994 and both inhabited and non-inhabited islands within this boundary.

Museum nan Eilean will seek to collect material illustrating the prehistory, history and culture (both tangible and intangible) of the Outer Hebrides. It will collect material dating from the time of the earliest human settlement in the Outer Hebrides until the present day. Although our present collections are broad ranging they do not document any area in depth. Not only are there significant gaps in such themes covered, there are many areas which are not covered in any way and these gaps will be our priorities.

The following classes of material may be defined as suitable for inclusion within the museum collections (accessioned, handling and research collections):

- i. Original artefacts, as a central feature of the museum's activity.
- ii. Where original artefacts are no longer available, suitable and accurate replicas.
- iii. Photographs, plans, drawings, descriptions of sites, monuments, buildings, man-made features of landscape as non-mobile aspects of the material culture of the Outer Hebrides.

- iv. Photographs, plans, drawings, paintings and other visual representations of the Outer Hebrides, the topography, people, sites, monuments, buildings, artefacts etc, historic or contemporary, original or copies.
- v. Ephemera relating to the social, domestic, economic, industrial, commercial and religious life and public services.
- vi. Audio or video material; either carried out by or commissioned on behalf of the museum, original material from other sources, or copies from other collections.
- vii. Film material; historical or contemporary; as a general principle and in view of its particular conservation needs, original archival material will be lodged with the Moving Image Archive and copies retained by the Museum.
- viii. Gaelic place-name information.
- ix. Gaelic material culture names, names for processes, activities, weather and sea conditions, etc.
- x. Custom, belief, folklore and tradition, information, references, etc relating to this.

In 2013 the archive collection was transferred to the care and management of the Archive Service (Tasglann nan Eilean). Responsibility for collecting original archival and documentary material will now reside with Tasglann nan Eilean. However mixed donations will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis – please refer to Documentation Manual.

Recent sustained programmes of excavation throughout the islands have resulted in a substantial body of assemblages awaiting allocation through the Scottish Archaeological Finds Allocation Panel (SAFAP) and the museum will seek to have them allocated locally as a priority, depending on storage and capacity.

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

- 5.1 The museum 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 with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.

An inventory of the Torlum store has been completed and an inventory is underway at Marybank store. Information gathered during these inventories will allow us to identify areas which may be suitable for rationalisation.

### **Archaeology**

The archaeological assemblage collection may be rationalised to create more storage space and to make the collection easier to access and research.

### **High priority for retention**

1. Chronologically distinct but rare finds from stratified and unstratified contexts
2. Prehistoric and early medieval assemblages
3. Key stratigraphic dating assemblages crucial to the structural development of the site
4. Assemblages that are not well represented in the museum collection
5. All finds illustrated in publications or used in a type-series
6. Retention of organic materials will be determined by the feasibility of its preservation

### **High priority for disposal**

1. Unstratified material unless intrinsically dateable and unusual/rare
2. Unprovenanced finds
3. Artefacts from residual/intrusive contexts unless of key stratigraphic importance to the site
4. Repetitive assemblages already well represented in the museum collection

All finds should be fully recorded in the site archive before disposal.

Detailed information on high priority objects for retention and disposals can be found in the **Archaeological Archives: Disposal and Retention Guidelines**

Any rationalisation would be carried out in partnership with the Island's Archaeologist and in consultation with HES and TT/ FDP.

### **Social History & Natural History**

The inventory will look at duplicates, relevance and condition and a decision on rationalisation will be taken by the Collections Committee once this is complete.

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

- 6.1 The museum 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 The museum 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):

- o *Ness Heritage Centre*
- o *Berner Museum*
- o *Kinloch Museum*
- o *Ravenpoint Museum*
- o *Comann Eachdraidh Uibhist a Tuath*
- o *Kildonan Museum*

- o *Comann Eachdraidh Bharraidh*
- o *The National Museums of Scotland*
- o *The National Galleries of Scotland*
- o *Glasgow Life*
- o *High Life Highland*

## **8. Archival holdings**

ERDF funded the Tasglann nan Eilean Siar project which ran from 2010-2013. This three-year project established the archive service and focussed on creating a brand, scoping archives held by public authorities, businesses, individuals and historical societies, bringing this information together into a website and archive catalogue database. In 2013, the Governing body of Museum nan Eilean, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar incorporated Tasglann nan Eilean Siar (Hebridean Archives) into the Heritage Service to formally manage the archive collections of the Council body. The archive collection relating to pre 1975 local government in the islands has been transferred to Tasglann nan Eilean Siar along with a series of smaller archive collections. These collections were previously deposited at the Museum but not formally accessioned.

Responsibility for collecting original archival and documentary material will now reside with Tasglann nan Eilean.

## **9. Acquisition**

9.1 The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

Final decisions on which items are accessioned lies with the Collections Committee – comprising professional heritage staff - and all items should be presented at a committee meeting for formal agreement. They will make their decision based on the Collections Development Policy guidelines.

The person responsible for inputting data into the Acquisitions Register is the Collections Officer or another person nominated by them. The format for acquisition is laid out in our Documentation Procedure Manual.

The Collections Committee will make decisions on purchasing items for accession and will look for internal and external methods to fund these.

9.2 The museum 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 museum will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The governing body 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.

## **10. Human remains**

- 10.1 As the museum 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.

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

- 11.1 So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the museum 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 museum 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 *Museum nan Eilean* 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 Museum nan Eilean (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar), 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 museum 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 museum 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 museum will document when these exceptions occur.

## **14. Spoliation**

- 14.1 The museum 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 museum's governing body, 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 museum 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.

## **16. Disposal procedures**

- 16.1 All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures on disposal.
- 16.2 The governing body 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, the museum 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 governing body only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including public benefit, the implications for the museum's collections and collections held by 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 museum 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 governing body of the museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, 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 other 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 MA'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 other 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, the museum 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 the museum governing body 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 the museum will not necessarily be in a position to exchange the material with another Accredited museum. The governing body 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 the governing body wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or non-Accredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 16.1-5 will apply.
- 16.13.2 If the exchange is proposed to be made with a specific Accredited museum, other Accredited museums which 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 museum'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 governing body 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 governing body 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 the museum workforce. In circumstances where this is not possible, eg the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.