



## Collections Care and Conservation Policy

National Museums Scotland, 2015

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<b>Document Owner</b>	Heather Caven, Head of Collections Services
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## **1. Purpose of Policy**

- 1.1 Under the National Heritage (Scotland) Act 1985, the Board of Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland is responsible for the care and preservation of the collections and for making them available to the public for exhibition, study and research.
- 1.2 National Museums Scotland aims to achieve an appropriate balance between the use of, access to and preservation of collections. The principles that govern the Museum's approach to collections care and conservation are informed by:
  - risk management;
  - compliance with relevant legislation;
  - following appropriate sector standards and best practice;
  - effective training and communication of collections care and conservation issues to employees and relevant stakeholders.
- 1.3 The following definitions are set out in the British Standard PAS197:2009 'Code of practice for cultural collections management':

**Collections care:** the range of activities intended to safeguard a collection.  
*Note: these can include organisational policies, security, storage, cleaning, maintenance, handling, scientific investigation, environmental monitoring and control, exhibitions and loans, conservation, provision of surrogates and emergency planning.*

**Conservation:** interventive techniques applied to an item to achieve chemical and physical stabilisation for the purpose of extending the useful life of the item and to ensure its continued availability.

## **2. Collections care principles**

- 2.1 The Museum will apply preventive conservation measures to care for collection items over their lifespan, and as resources permit.
- 2.2 Activities involving collections will be risk assessed and managed in order to minimise the risks of deterioration, damage or loss.
- 2.3 Museum staff should follow the agreed procedures, guidelines and training for preventive care and the handling, cleaning, storing, transporting, acquisition, display, lending and disposing of collection items,
- 2.4 Any item known or suspected to contain a hazardous material will be assessed and managed in line with legal regulations and best practice.
- 2.5 Display materials / methods used for, or in proximity to, collections items will be appropriate for use.
- 2.6 The Museum aims to provide suitable and sustainable environmental conditions for the collections and display materials. Environmental monitoring systems and surveys are in use in collections stores and display areas. A survey of collections stores is undertaken on a rolling basis to inform prioritised improvements to the fabric of, environment and access to the

storage facilities. Surveys of display spaces will be undertaken on a phased basis.

- 2.7 The Museum is committed to reducing the environmental impact and overall costs of caring for the collections, where possible and appropriate.
- 2.8 The risk of pest damage to the collection is managed and monitored through an integrated pest management programme.

### **3. Conservation treatment principles**

- 3.1 Conservation treatments will be undertaken by qualified or accredited conservators, who will also oversee any work carried out by interns / technicians / work placement students / volunteers, in line with sectoral standards, best practice and ethical guidelines.
- 3.2 The conservation of collection items required for display, loan or study will be prioritised and items assessed to establish conservation requirements.
- 3.3 The Museum's guiding principle is to minimise the amount of intervention required, with the exception of restoration work (see 3.4). Treatment will be appropriate to the proposed use, intrinsic nature and significance of the item and resources available.
- 3.4 Where an item is considered appropriate for restoration, i.e. returning an object to working order, the treatment may require a higher level of intervention. Treatment will follow historically accurate methods where appropriate, preserve the integrity and original fabric of the item as far as possible, and may be detectable while not necessarily conspicuous.
- 3.5 Treatment methods will use stable and tested materials that, as far as possible, are reversible and do not compromise the intrinsic nature of the object, future treatment or use.
- 3.6 Conservation treatments will be documented and made available upon request.
- 3.7 Condition surveys will be undertaken on a rolling basis to inform collections care and conservation priorities and to identify vulnerable material.
- 3.8 The Museum does not provide advice to the general public on how to undertake conservation or recommend any one particular specialist. Enquires are referred to the UK ICON (Institute of Conservation) Conservation Register.

### **4. Research**

Scientific and technical examination and analysis will be used to identify materials, inform conservation treatments and to maintain and improve the preservation and understanding of the collections. Examination and analysis (including destructive sampling for research purposes) are undertaken following Museum procedures.