



Heritage Service

Collections Care and Conservation Policy

Reviewed: **November 2016**

Policy adopted:

Date for review:

Policy Context

The Collections Care and Conservation Policy is part of a Collections Management Strategy for the Heritage Service, comprising Museum nan Eilean, Tasglann nan Eilean (Hebridean Archives), Archaeology Service and Hebridean Connections. The Collections Management Strategy includes Collections Development and Documentation policies.

The key purpose of the Heritage Service is:

We are a gateway to the collective heritage of the Outer Hebrides – a dispersed resource comprising local museums and heritage groups, collections and archives.

We collect, record and preserve the culture and heritage of the Outer Hebrides and hold the collections in trust for the people, for their understanding and enjoyment, now and in the future.

The Heritage Service follows the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC) definition of conservation, which is *‘any action taken to determine the nature or properties of materials used in any kinds of cultural holdings or in their housing, handling or treatment, any action taken to understand and control the causes of deterioration and any action taken to better the conditions of such holdings’*.

Caring for the collections is a fundamental duty of all museums and archives. This policy is designed to ensure the long-term preservation of the collections, based on preventive and remedial conservation.

Preventive conservation aims to minimise deterioration to individual objects, or collections by controlling the environment. Remedial conservation is the interventive treatment of an object to stabilise or preserve.

For the purpose of this policy, the term object refers to all Museum nan Eilean and Tasglann nan Eilean collection items.

1 Policy Statements

- 1.1 The Policy is subject to regular review and update. This Policy is reviewed not more than three years from the date of its adoption.
- 1.2 This Policy recognizes the provisions of the Collections Development Policy.
- 1.3 The Heritage Service will meet current standards of conservation and professional practice for museum and archive collections, measured against appropriate benchmarks. We will pursue 'best practice' in our preservation and conservation procedures as established in such documentation as PD 5454 'Recommendations for Storage and Exhibition of Archival Documents', and the Collections Trust Benchmarks in Collection Care 2.0.
- 1.4 The Heritage Service accepts that all objects in the museum and archive collections are held in perpetuity.
- 1.5 The Heritage Service will implement preventive conservation measures to ensure the permanent preservation of the collections and will undertake remedial conservation of individual objects as necessary.
- 1.6 The Heritage Service will monitor the environment and conditions in which collections are stored and displayed and carry out improvements and maintenance to fittings and buildings, replacing where necessary.
- 1.7 The Heritage Service provides advice and support to the Heritage Network.

2 Operational Systems

2.1 Buildings

- 2.1.1 The Heritage Service will use suitably constructed and well-maintained buildings to ensure the security and preservation of its collections.
- 2.1.2 The Heritage Service will assess and maintain appropriate levels of security and insurance on all buildings used for the collections.
- 2.1.3 Key control, security, fire and other protection systems are regularly tested and serviced.
- 2.1.4 Arrangements should exist for restricting access to designated staff where appropriate and for implementing appropriate supervision arrangements for visitors and contractors.

2.2 Storage

- 2.2.1 The Heritage Service will apply high standards of professional practice to all collection areas, equipment, materials and procedures. It will endeavour to ensure that collection areas are kept clean, organised and pest free.
- 2.2.2 Designated collection storage areas are not used for any other purpose.

2.2.3 The Heritage Service will work with colleagues in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar to develop a digital preservation solution, to build our capability to manage and preserve digital material in line with legal obligations and recognised standards.

2.3 Housekeeping

2.3.1 The Heritage Service will apply effective management and monitoring procedures and carry out appropriate cleaning to prevent damage or deterioration of the collections.

2.3.2 The discovery of a threat to the preservation of the collections will be prioritised to remove or minimise the risk.

2.3.3 Conservation treatments carried out on the collections comply with relevant health and safety legislation.

2.3.4 There will be an ongoing programme of collections inspection.

2.4 Handling and use of collections

2.4.1 The Heritage Service ensures that all objects are subject to careful and appropriate handling to minimise the risk of damage and to contribute to future accessibility.

2.4.2 All persons working with or handling the collections are provided with appropriate training regarding the care of the collections. Written guidelines will

be made available to all staff and other users engaged in the handling, transportation, packaging, labelling, research, loan, display and use of objects.

- 2.4.3 Objects from the collections are loaned only to those borrowers who can satisfy the specified conditions for their stable and secure storage, study, interpretation or display, as set out in the relevant loan agreement.

2.5 Environmental Monitoring and Control

- 2.5.1 The Heritage Service will ensure the collections are not subjected to inappropriate or unstable environmental conditions, including temperature, relative humidity, light, pests and pollutants. Appropriate monitoring, control systems and equipment will be used. The Heritage Service aims to achieve a satisfactory compromise between long-term preservation of collections and accessibility to public and staff.
- 2.5.2 Monitoring and control equipment will be regularly monitored, calibrated and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's guidance and current health and safety legislation.

2.6 Conservation

- 2.6.1 The Heritage Service undertakes to stabilise the collection to ensure its long-term preservation and the accessibility through the use of professional, qualified staff and appropriate techniques and materials. Where appropriate or necessary, external conservation professionals with specific expertise will be consulted or engaged.

- 2.6.2 Conservation requirements will be prioritised within the framework of resources available.
- 2.6.3 Conservation assessments of objects are carried out prior to and after acquisition, loan and display.
- 2.6.4 All treatments and materials used on objects are recorded on the database as part of that object's permanent record.
- 2.6.5 The operation of working historic machinery may contribute to the preservation of tangible and intangible aspects of the object. The operation of such objects is carried out only after a condition assessment has been carried out to determine the risks to both people and object. A conservation plan and operating manual will be prepared and the object only operated if sufficient suitably trained operators and conservation staff are available.

2.7 Facsimiles and New Media

- 2.7.1 The Heritage Service may commission facsimiles of original objects to enhance interpretation and learning, and to reduce handling and risk of damage to originals.
- 2.7.2 Facsimiles will be of the necessary quality for their intended use.
- 2.7.3 Facsimiles will be maintained to ensure their future accessibility, particularly where they are in digital formats or new media.

2.7.4 The production of facsimiles is subject to professional assessment of the capability of the original object to withstand the process.

2.7.5 Archive objects will only be copied in line with the Reprographics Policy.

2.8 Emergency Procedures

2.8.1 The Heritage Service will maintain an Emergency Plan that is updated after every major incident and subject to an annual review.

2.8.2 All incidents are recorded and reported, with recommendations, to inform future response planning.

2.8.3 The Heritage Service undertakes to provide appropriate training in emergency response and provide suitable equipment and materials in disaster kits at all sites.

2.8.5 External bodies whose resources may be used in specific emergency situations will be consulted.