



Seirbheisean Dualchais  
Outer Hebrides Heritage Services

# Museum nan Eilean

**Comhairle nan Eilean Siar**

## Collections

## Documentation Policy

**2025 - 2030**

Two museums;



**Museum  
nan Eilean**

Stornoway

Museum nan Eilean

Lews Castle

Stornoway

Isle of Lewis

Outer Hebrides

HS2 0XS



**Museum  
nan Eilean**

Lìonaclait

Museum nan Eilean

Sgoil Lìonaclait

Lìonaclait

Isle of Benbecula

Outer Hebrides

HS7 5PJ



Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

Approved:  
Review date:

## **Background to the Policy**

### **Governance of Museum nan Eilean**

Museum nan Eilean's governing body is Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, the local authority for the Outer Hebrides. The [Scheme of Administration](#) 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”.

## **1. Introduction**

This policy sets out the principles that will provide Museum nan Eilean with a framework for the documentation of its collections using clear procedures and decision-making processes as set out in the Documentation Manual. This policy should be read in parallel with our Statement of Purpose, Collections Development Policy, and Documentation Plan.

Documentation underpins every aspect of museum activity. Recording collection information is central to being accountable for the collections, their accessibility, management, research, study and use. Effective documentation adds value to the collections and thus benefits the Museum and its audience.

This policy for the documentation of the collections is to ensure that the information we hold relating to the collections is accurate, secure, reliable and accessible.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that we fulfil our responsibilities in relation to security, management and access to collections by improving accountability for the collections, maintaining professional standards in documentation procedures and collection information, extending access to collection information and strengthening the security of the collections.

This policy applies to:

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

Accessioned objects are those that Museum nan Eilean has formally and legally accepted into the permanent collections.

Unaccessioned objects are not considered part of the permanent collection and have not been formally accepted. These will in most cases be part of our handling collection and will be recorded in the external section of the Collections Management System.

## **2. Ethics and Legislation**

This policy should be read in conjunction with and with consideration for the following guidelines or legislation that guides this area of Museum nan Eilean's work:

- Data Protection Act (2018)
- Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act (2002)
- Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulation (2004)
- Museums Association Code of Ethics (2015)
- Human Remains Policy (2016)
- Comhairle Customer Care Standards
- Gaelic Plan/Plana na Gaidhlig

We will review requests for confidential data such as donor information, environmental information, valuations or site details on a case by case basis, and in accordance with the applicable legislation and any legal agreements or conditions of gift.

## **3. Standards**

We are committed to ensuring that all documentation procedures meet professional museum SPECTRUM standards

(<https://collectionstrust.org.uk/spectrum/>) especially with regard to object entry, acquisition, loans, location and movement, cataloguing and exit.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Documentation Procedure Manual which sets out day-to-day procedures.

## 4. Accountability

We are committed to at least maintaining the minimum level of collections documentation that will allow us to identify and locate all items for which we are legally responsible, including all loans.

We will document our collections (including any loans for which we are legally responsible for) to either Inventory or Catalogue level, as described below:

- **Inventory level:** This includes sufficient key information to meet minimum SPECTRUM standards and to allow any object(s) in our care to be individually identified, located and verified. All accessioned items and loans inward and outward, and the unaccessioned handling collection are documented at this level.
- **Catalogue level:** We will identify the collections that merit further, more detailed documentation, thus raising the standard of information to catalogue level. Such documentation will include the known history of a specimen and references to any relevant publication etc.

In order to improve access and accountability, we will enter all new records onto the cloud based Collections Management System.

Over time and in a phased programme, we will digitise our older paper records onto the CMS, but ensuring that paper copies of all documentation is kept securely.

## 5. Security

In light of increased digital crime, we have put in place additional measures to ensure the physical security and long-term preservation of all documentation records, whether paper or digitised. This will prevent the loss of irreplaceable collection information, as far as possible.

- We will update all manual and digitised records regularly as appropriate
- Access to information within digital files will be protected from the impact of potential obsolescence in electronic systems
- A security copy of our accession register will be kept in a different building from the accession registers.
- We will do our own local backup that will be held securely by the Heritage Team
- We will move our Collections Management System to a cloud based system to increase security and minimise data loss in the future

## **6. Access to Collections Information**

We are committed to working towards improving access to the collections information for all users through improved documentation and ensuring that all enquiries are answered within the timescales set out in Comhairle policy. We will work towards ensuring that all records are kept up to date and checked for accuracy.

(<https://www.outerhebridesheritage.org.uk/collections/>) The new Heritage Service website provides users with basic information on a selection of artefacts and the aim is to grow this resource.

When full transfer has been completed from the current Collections Management System to a new system it is hoped that a publicly searchable database will be available in future through this website.

All access will take into account the confidentiality or security implications of some types of information.