



# Collections Development Policy

**Names of museums:** Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery; Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell; Stranger's Hall; Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum; Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse; Lynn Museum; Ancient House Museum of Thetford Life; Cromer Museum; Time & Tide Museum; Elizabethan House; The Tolhouse

**Name of governing body:** The Joint Museums Committee of Norfolk County Council

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

**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:** July 2022

**Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the Collections Development Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.**

## Background to the Policy

This policy sets out the principles that will provide the partners to the Joint Museums Agreement and staff of Norfolk Museums Service (NMS) with a framework for the scrupulous and ethical acquisition and disposal of collections using clear procedures and decision-making processes common to UK museums in the Accreditation Scheme. It is based upon the template provided by Arts Council England for museums applying to the Accreditation Scheme, last updated in 2014.

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

This policy applies to:

- material which NMS museums own or to which they intend to acquire legal title
- material which the NMS museums own and have accessioned into their collections or intend to own and accession into the collection.

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

- the Joint Museums Agreement and 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 collections held by other museums and organisations collecting in the same or related geographic areas or subject fields.

### **Ownership of the collections**

NMS is managed under a Joint Museums Agreement, established in 1974 and last re-negotiated in 2006, between Norfolk County Council (NCC) and district councils (Norwich City Council, North Norfolk District Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council, King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council, Breckland District Council, South Norfolk District Council and Broadland District Council). Material acquired by a museum is understood to be owned by the partner council in whose district the museum resides but managed by the Joint Museums Committee. The agreement acknowledges that in the event of the ending of the Joint Museums Agreement the collections revert to the district, except for material that was specifically acquired with purchase funds provided by Norfolk County Council.

Any disposal of collections will be approved initially by Area Museum Committees (representing the interests of the district) and ultimately by the full Joint Museums Committee.

The collections of the Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum are owned by the Trustees of the Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum, and accordingly disposals are approved by them.

## **1. NMS Statement of Purpose**

Norfolk Museums Service is a multi-award winning service comprising ten museums and a study centre. The Service aims to inform and inspire people's interest in the cultural and natural heritage of Norfolk, and address relevant contemporary issues by:

- Collecting, preserving and interpreting material evidence of the past
- Stimulating creativity, inspiration and enjoyment
- Providing an enjoyable way to learn throughout life
- Engaging with the widest possible audience
- Enriching people's lives and creating a sense of place and identity
- Enabling people to understand and value other cultures

NMS is one of 16 Major Partner Museums receiving substantial revenue funding from Arts Council England in order to achieve ACE's strategy for the arts and culture sector:

- Goal 1. Excellence is thriving and celebrated in the arts, museums and libraries

- Goal 2. Everyone has an opportunity to experience and be inspired by the arts, museums and libraries
- Goal 3. The arts, museums and libraries are resilient and environmentally sustainable •
- Goal 4. The leadership and workforce in the arts, museums and libraries are diverse and appropriately skilled
- Goal 5. Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts, museums and libraries

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

By definition, NMS 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 and due diligence must be exercised before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in NMS' collection.

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

NMS 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.

NMS 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 NMS can acquire a valid title to the item in question. This procedure will be in line with NMS Due Diligence Policy.

NMS will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons

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

NMS' collections have disparate origins. Further details about the history of individual collections are given in the appendices for each museum:

- Appendix 1 Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery
- Appendix 2 Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell
- Appendix 3 Strangers' Hall
- Appendix 4 Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum
- Appendix 5 Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse
- Appendix 6 Lynn Museum
- Appendix 7 Ancient House Museum of Thetford Life
- Appendix 8 Cromer Museum

### 3. An overview of current collections

The collections of NMS reflect the history and character of the county of Norfolk. Due to earlier collecting practices there are also collections of non-local material with wider historic and cultural significance.

- **Norwich Museums collections** comprise:

**Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery** with specialist Designated collections of archaeology, fine and decorative art, and natural history. The museum also holds a nationally-significant costume and textiles collection. The curatorial offices and many of the collections of NMS are housed at the adjacent **Norwich Castle Study Centre** in the Shirehall.

The **Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell** and **Strangers' Hall Museum** have the bulk of the social history collections, with Strangers' Hall concentrating on domestic life and the Museum of Norwich on the story of Norwich, its communities and trades and industries.

The **Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum** houses the regimental collection and since 2013 has formed part of Norwich Castle Museum.

There are also important ecclesiastical collections from the former St. Peter Hungate Museum (closed 2001), which are now housed mainly at the Museum of Norwich and the **Norfolk Museums Collections Centre** at Gressenhall.

- **Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse** houses a county-wide collection reflecting the rural way of life of the county, principally of the 19th and 20th centuries. New displays and archives relating to the stories of people who lived and worked in the workhouse. The site also includes the **Norfolk Museums Collections Centre**, the central store for collections from across NMS.
- **Lynn Museum** reflects the history and character of King's Lynn, west Norfolk and the Fens, including a Bronze Age timber circle from Holme-next-the-Sea.
- The **Ancient House Museum of Thetford Life** reflects the history and character of Thetford and Breckland.
- **Cromer Museum** reflects the history and character of Cromer and its environs. It has a strong collection of photographs of the town.
- **Great Yarmouth Museums** comprise **Time and Tide**, the **Tolhouse Museum** and **Elizabethan House Museum**. Their collections chiefly reflect the history and character of Great Yarmouth and its connections with the sea.

- Further details about individual collections, also details relating to themes and priorities for future collecting and disposal are given in the appendices for each museum:

Appendix 1	Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery
Appendix 2	Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell
Appendix 3	Strangers' Hall
Appendix 4	Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum
Appendix 5	Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse
Appendix 6	Lynn Museum
Appendix 7	Ancient House Museum of Thetford Life
Appendix 8	Cromer Museum
Appendix 9	Time & Tide, Elizabethan House, Tolhouse (Great Yarmouth Museums)

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

While historically each museum has had its own collecting policy, NMS takes a county-wide approach to its collecting ambitions. It is also reviewing and rationalising the collections which it holds.

General aims in collecting applicable to all NMS museums and collections:

To enhance the existing areas for collecting for individual departments and museums, these are described in the appendices for each museum / department.

The main collecting area is Norfolk and collections relating to the county, potentially covering all periods from prehistoric to modern. Acquisitions will include material originating from, used in or with strong connections with Norfolk and people and institutions connected with the county. Exceptions may include:

- Certain subject areas where it is desirable to collect from outside the county on a limited basis in order to place the Norfolk heritage in context.
- Where the administrative boundary of the county falls awkwardly across natural features it may be desirable to extend collecting to a limited extent. This will be subject to an understanding with neighbouring museums.
- In order to enhance the collections in selected cases where the existing collection is not primarily based on the collecting area of Norfolk, for instance in Fine and Decorative Art or Archeology.

Digital collecting: the acquisition of born-digital material, this is subject to the same policies and decision-making processes as other object types. This is an emerging area of collections development, we will work with stakeholders, for example the NRO, and professional advisors in establishing robust procedures for collecting and archiving born-digital material.

- Photographic collections are generally referred to Norfolk Library & Information Service; archival collections are generally referred to Norfolk Record Office. See section 8 Archival holdings for more detail.

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

NMS 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.

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

For rationalisation and disposal themes and priorities for individual museums see the appendices for each museum / department.

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

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**

Norfolk Museums Service 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.

Specific reference is made to the following museums/organisations:

- 100th Bomb Group Memorial Museum
- Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum
- Bressingham Steam Museum
- Diss Museum
- Fakenham Museum of Gas & Local History
- Mundesley Maritime Museum
- Museum of the Broads
- Nelson Museum
- RNLI Henry Blogg Museum
- Sheringham Museum
- Swaffham Heritage
- True's Yard Fishing Heritage Museum

- William Marriott Museum and North Norfolk Railway
- Wymondham Heritage Museum

For individual NMS museums, detailed references to the collecting policies of other museums can be found in museum / department appendices:

In addition, NMS recognises the collecting policies of other national and regional museums and will consult with those organisations before collecting material which may complement their collections. NMS also recognises and will consider the collecting policies of non-Accredited museums and other heritage organisations which aim to keep collections within the public domain. It will maintain relationships with organisations in Norfolk and further afield, including members of the Museums Norfolk group, the History of Advertising Trust, the National Trust, and English Heritage.

NMS will pay particular attention to the collecting policies of Norfolk Library & Information Service and Norfolk Record Office, as described in Section 4, Themes and Priorities for Future Collecting.

## **8. Archival holdings – photographs & archives**

NMS has historically collected photographs and archives. These collections are no longer added to, except in the circumstances described below.

### **Photographic collections**

Photographic collections are held by all NMS departments and museums, and span the period 1840s to the present day; the bulk of collections date to the late 19th to early 20th centuries and 1970s to 1990s. Overall they comprise a very significant visual record which contributes significantly to the regional and national photographic heritage.

The Local Studies Library of Norfolk Library & Information Service (NLIS) is the primary collector of historic photographic material in Norfolk. It collects photographs related to Norfolk from across the whole of the county and covering all subject areas. For this reason it is important to avoid duplication in collecting across NCC Cultural Services.

NMS museums will collect only photographs which add context to or complement objects already in its own collections. Significant photographic material, whether single images or whole collections (including albums), will only be acquired in consultation with the NLIS Local Studies Library. NMS Museums should direct all photographs unconnected to their specialist subject areas to the NLIS Local Studies Library.

### **Archives**

Archives are held by all NMS departments and museums, and span the medieval period to the present day. The most significant archives are held by the Archaeology Department of Norwich Castle Museum, and includes material relating to Norwich Castle as a prison.

The Norfolk Record Office (NRO) is the primary repository of archives in Norfolk and collects material from across the county covering all historical periods to the present day and from all subject areas. As with photographs it is important to avoid duplication in collecting across NCC Cultural Services.

NMS museums will collect only archival material which adds context to or complements objects already in its own collections. Significant archival material, from single items to entire archives, will only be acquired in consultation with NRO.

## **9. Acquisitions**

The policy for agreeing acquisitions will be managed by an Acquisitions Committee.

The Committee comprised of relevant curators, representatives from collections management and conservation departments, will convene to make decisions about potential acquisitions. Taking into consideration the individual collecting policy and resource implications.

Curators are required to provide sufficient information about the proposed acquisition to enable the Committee to come to a decision on whether to accept or reject a proposal. Information should include:

- Brief details of the object, including dimensions and condition
- A completed due diligence checklist and risk assessment
- The particular reason(s) the object is proposed for collecting, including its relevance to the museum's own collecting policy
- Details of proposed storage location
- Details of potential risks: physical or reputational

In exceptional cases the Committee may agree to retrospective approval of an acquisition. This will be where:

- The curator has carried out due diligence and risk-assessed the acquisition, has a clear idea of its significance to the collecting policy, and is able to identify suitable storage; *and*:
- it was not possible to consult about the acquisition due to pressures of time. For example, an offer which would be withdrawn if not collected immediately; or one which requires urgent fundraising and a Committee cannot be convened in time.

Once agreed, Spectrum entry procedure and documentation as outlined in the NMS Documentation Procedural manual is to be completed.



## **10. National and International Standards**

NMS 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).

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, and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003, NMS 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 Digital Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in 2005.

This will be identified in accordance with the NMS Due Diligence checklist.

## **11. Human remains**

NMS holds human remains from any period, as such it will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005.

NMS does not hold or intend to acquire any human remains under 100 years old.

This will be identified in accordance with the NMS Due Diligence checklist.

## **12. Biological and Geological material**

NMS 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, such as the 1973 Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) or the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and taking into consideration The Ivory Bill 2018. This will be identified in accordance with the NMS Due Diligence checklist.

## **13. Archaeological material**

NMS will not acquire archaeological material 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. This will be identified in accordance with the NMS Due Diligence checklist.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland the procedures include reporting finds to the landowner or occupier of the land and to the proper authorities in the case of possible treasure (i.e. the Coroner for Treasure) as set out in the Treasure Act 1996 (as amended by the Coroners & Justice Act 2009).

## **14. Exceptions**

Any exceptions to the above clauses will only be because NMS 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 NMS will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority. NMS will document when these exceptions occur.

## **15. Spoliation**

NMS will use the statement of principles issued by National Museums Directors Conference on 'Spoliation of works of Art during the Holocaust and World War II period' in 1998, updated 2016

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

NMS's governing body, acting on the advice of the NMS professional staff, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005), objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. NMS 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.

## **17. Disposal procedures**

All disposals procedures will be undertaken with reference to the Spectrum Primary Procedures on disposal, the Museums Association (MA) Code of Ethics and MA disposal toolkit.

Disposal for financial reasons is not an route for disposal of NMS collections

NMS Disposal Committee comprising the Chief Curator, Departmental Curator, Collection Development Manager, Registrar, Head of Conservation will recommend to AMC and JMC objects for disposal.

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 NMS' governing body acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the curator or manager of the collection acting alone.

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.

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.

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.

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 directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.

If the material is not acquired by any Accredited museum to which it was offered as a gift 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).

The announcement relating to gift 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, NMS may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.

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 the Arts Council England.

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.

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**

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.

If the exchange is proposed with an Accredited 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).

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**

Destruction is 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.

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.

The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the museum workforce. 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.

Objects disposed in this manner will be reported to AMC / JMC retrospectively if the object poses a risk and therefore requires immediate destruction.

