

Leeds Museums & Galleries Care and Conservation Policy

Statement of Purpose

Leeds Museums & Galleries (LM&G) exist to collect, preserve and interpret historic, scientific and cultural collections and historic sites and use them as inspiration for educating, entertaining and informing the people of Leeds as well as visitors to the city. We provide unique Learning environments through the maintenance of these sites, their collections and through the operation of high quality, welcoming visitor attractions with associated commercial activity.

Collections and our sites underpin all our activities (see our Collections Development Policy) and caring for the collections is a fundamental to that. We are committed to caring for and using our collections in ways which are sustainable and ensure that the collections are going to be available for generations to come.

We operate a risk managed approach to collection care and conservation and we strive to provide the best possible conditions for the care and use of our collections and excellence in all our activities relating to collections care within our available resources.

Overview

Collections care in our service is based on a combination of preventative and remedial conservation. Conservation, as defined by The Institute of Conservation (ICON), means the prevention, protection, care and restoration of our cultural heritage. Preventative conservation attempts to slow down or minimise deterioration of museum collections. Remedial conservation is the treatment of an object to stabilise it or enhance some aspect of its cultural/scientific value.

Legal Framework

We will adhere to all national and international statutes of law, including specifically in relation to, but not exclusively UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export

and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, Convention for International Trade in Endangered Species 1973, Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003.

Ethical Framework

We will follow national standards, ethical codes and best practice guidelines including, but not exclusively ICOM Code of Ethics, MA Code of Ethics, ICON Professional Guidelines, BS standards:

BS5454, BS4971:2002, PAS 197:2009, Benchmarks in Collections Care and Spectrum 4.0 as they relate to conservation and care of collections (see Appendix Supporting Documents). Due consideration will also be given to the emerging standard CEN/TC 346 Conservation of Cultural Property by the European Committee for Standardization.

Scope

We operate a risk managed approach to collection care and conservation and we strive for excellence in all our activities relating to collections care within our available resources.

Good collections care is of fundamental importance to the work of the museum and ranges from service-wide strategies such as emergency planning; conservation surveys of collection, to operations which have a more direct impact on the physical condition i.e. conditions of storage; transportation, display and environmental control. All carried out with the long term aim of preserving collections so that they can continue to be used by our audiences.

The historic buildings and their interiors are considered as much a part of the collections as the objects and will be managed with equal degree of care and expertise.

Decision making

We have a proactive approach to collection care through the programme of collection care assessments and plans for each collection and/or item as appropriate.

Resources and priorities for conservation and for improving collections care will be set out within our forward plans (refer to LM&G Service Improvement Plan and Site Development Plans) and in consultation with the relevant collections team members.

We will undertake remedial conservation only after appropriate research and assessment by a trained conservator. All treatments will be recorded and archived. We will opt for passive or minimal interventions in line with accepted ethical guidelines.

Staff and contractors

All our staff share responsibility for safeguarding objects and will be appropriately trained to their roles. Conservation of objects will be carried out or overseen by appropriately qualified or experienced professional staff. We strongly encourage all those working with collections to be qualified with the relevant professional museum and/or conservation qualifications, and will provide support to those undertaking professional development within the resources available.

Continuing professional development is an important part of this as it allows staff to make use of new materials and methods and develop new solutions themselves.

We are also committed to encouraging staff to share their expertise, by presenting papers at conferences, giving talks to the general public and providing work experience placements to the next generation of conservators.

We will only let contracts relating to care and/or conservation of collections to suitably qualified contractors following LCC financial regulation and procedures.

Systems and practices

Collections are safeguarded through the specification and management of the following:

Good building maintenance, physical security, mechanical and electrical maintenance storage, environmental systems, building management systems, key control, fire and evacuation procedures, collections management system, integrated pest management, housekeeping, collections surveying, emergency response or disaster plan and management of personnel and resources.

Working objects

We operate some of our historic machinery and transport as this adds considerably to our understanding of their purpose, significance and historic working condition. A 'working object' can be defined as anything that originally had an operational function and can be either stationary or mobile. We recognise that operating machinery may also contribute to its preservation and may help to retain, preserve or rediscover skills. We will only work historic machinery and objects following risk assessment and review, following best practice to ensure that our working objects are used in a safe, secure and sustainable manner.

Appendix A: Supporting and Reference Documents

We will adhere to all national and international statutes of law, ethical codes, codes of practice, guidance documents, Leeds City Council Policies and Procedures as they relate to Collections Care and Conservation including but not exclusively the following:

UNESCO Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (Hague Convention) First Protocol 1954 and Second Protocol 1999

UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, 1970 (ratified by the UK 2002)

UNESCO Convention for the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 1972 CITES Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, 1973

UNIFROIT Convention of Stolen and Illegally Exported Cultural Objects 1995

UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, 2001

UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2003

Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003

British Standards Institute, BS 5454: 2000 Guide to the Storage and Exhibition of Archival Material.

British Standards Institute, PAS 197:2009 Code of Practice for Cultural Collections Management

International Council for Museums (ICOM) Code of Ethics for Museums 2006 Museums Association Code of Ethics for Museums 2007

The Institute of Conservation Professional Guidelines

Benchmarks in Collections Care for Museums, Archives and Libraries (MLA) 2007

E.C.C.O. Professional Guidelines, European Confederation of Conservators Organisations 2002

Spectrum 4.0

Leeds Museums & Galleries Collections Access Policy 2012

Leeds Museums & Galleries Collections Information Policy 2012

Leeds Museums & Galleries Collections Development Policy 2012