



Weymouth Museum Trust (Registered Charity 1143692)

Collections Development (Acquisition & Disposal) Policy

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Approved by Weymouth & Portland BC:

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Note: This document was originally prepared using the MLA Template Acquisition & Disposal Policy (January 2010 revision). This version is a translation to the ACE Template CDP2014. Where optional paragraphs are shown in the template the most appropriate has been chosen.

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.

The Collection is owned by Weymouth & Portland Borough Council and the policy must therefore be approved by both an ordinary meeting of the trustees of Weymouth Museum Trust and by Weymouth & Portland BC's delegated authority, who's name or position shall be notified in writing with evidence of Weymouth & Portland BC Management Committee authorisation to both the Trust and to ACE. The policy will be reviewed again prior to the planned gifting of the collection to Weymouth Museum Trust.

1. Relationship to other relevant policies/ plans of the organisation:

Weymouth Museum's Statement of Purpose is: To collect, preserve, enrich and give access to objects and other material relating to the history and cultural heritage of Weymouth and the surrounding area [defined as the former town of Weymouth and Melcombe Regis, Wyke Regis, Radipole, Preston, Upwey, Broadwey, Bincombe, Osmington, Chickerell, Fleet, Langton Herring, Portesham, Abbotsbury] for the inspiration, education and enjoyment of the local and wider community.

This is an expansion of the charitable objects more formally stated in the Trust's governing document.¹

¹ Articles of Association of Weymouth Museum Trust ("the charity"). This is the governing document for the charity as well as the associated company limited by guarantee.

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

By definition, the museum 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 must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in the museum's collection.

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

The museum 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.

The museum will exercise 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 the museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.

The museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.

2. History of the collections

Until the early 1970s Weymouth did not have a museum, but in 1971 the redundant Melcombe Regis Boys School at Westham Bridge was used for a temporary local history exhibition and in 1972 the building was re-opened as Weymouth Museum. In 1974 it was amalgamated with Portland Museum to form Weymouth & Portland Museum Service. In January 1989 the Museum closed because of the impending redevelopment of the site.

A partnership was formed between the Borough Council and Devenish plc to re-house the Museum Collection in the redundant Devenish and J. Groves Brew House and in 1990 a large part of the collection was moved to the refurbished building, renamed Brewers Quay. The museum was initially integrated with the Timewalk attraction where some of the larger artefacts were housed, but in 1999 the museum was separated from the Timewalk and re-opened with free entry. It closed again, temporarily, in 2011 for the redevelopment of Brewers Quay.

3. An overview of the current collections

The existing collection is based on Weymouth and Melcombe Regis and the surrounding area known informally as Weyland. The area to which the collection shall relate is defined in a document held by the County Museums Adviser that defines the collecting area of each of the Dorset museums and includes a map showing the boundaries of these areas, attached hereto at Annex 1.

The existing collection also includes marine and marine archaeology items that relate to the area described above and, although not shown on the map, the collecting area is assumed to include the adjacent sea.

The main sections of the existing collection are:

- Art, including the Bussell collection
- Textiles
- Tools
- Local transport
- Local industry, trade and the harbour
- Local government
- Local history including written and printed material, photographs and other images, maps and ephemera relating to the local and family history of the defined collecting area
- Domestic items, from kitchenalia to toys
- Archaeology, including marine archaeology
- Geology
- Brewing; the museum is housed in the old Brewery
- Naval; ship models and torpedo development

The theme is strongly local history and the collection is a large and important one from that point of view. The time frame is prehistory to the present.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

The collecting area shall remain that defined above.

The Museum will acquire items which enhance or add another dimension to the existing collection, either as donations or, if funds permit and the item[s] are significant, by purchase. When, for a specific display or event, our collections are deficient, items will be sought on a temporary loan basis from other museums. The museum may also decide to acquire material, which will not be added to the permanent collection, but which can be used as education handling material or loan collection, on the understanding that such material is going to suffer wear and tear and is thus disposable.

The existing collection will be reviewed to establish its strengths and weaknesses and in particular how well it represents and portrays the history and culture of Weymouth.

5. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

The museum 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.

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

The museum recognises that storage space is limited. Because of the way the collections originated there is a degree of duplication and there are also items in the collection that would not satisfy the current museum development policy because they have no direct relevance to Weymouth and the surrounding area as defined in this policy. In order to conserve space it may be necessary to dispose of some of these items although some may be retained for exhibition purposes. There are also instances where items in the collection may pose a hazard to persons or other items in the collection in which case disposal will be considered.

All disposals require the approval of Weymouth & Portland Borough Council.

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

The museum 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 museum(s):

- Portland Museum
- Bridport Museum
- The Dorset County Museum, Dorchester
- The Dorset History Centre

8. Archival holdings

As the museum holds archives, including photographs and printed ephemera, its governing body will be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (3rd ed., 2002).

9. Acquisition

- a. The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:
 - Acquisitions by gift or donation, in accordance with the requirements of this policy, shall be authorised by the Museum Collection Manager.
 - Acquisitions by purchase shall be authorised by the trustees at an ordinary meeting.
 - Loans will normally only be accepted on a short term basis for specific displays or exhibitions, or for research purposes and shall be returned once that use has terminated.

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- In certain circumstances loans on a longer, fixed term, basis may be authorised by the Collection Manager, provided that they are from a public or corporate body and not a private individual and the item(s) are for display. Such loans shall be reviewed annually.

b. The museum 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).

c. 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, the museum 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 Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.

10. Human remains

10.1 As the museum holds or intends to acquire human remains under 100 years old, it will obtain the necessary licence under the Human Tissue Act 2004 and any subordinate legislation from time to time in force.

10.2 As the museum holds or intends to acquire human remains from any period, it will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005.

11. Biological and geological material

So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the museum 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, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

12. Archaeological material

The museum will not acquire archaeological antiquities (including excavated ceramics) 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.

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).

13. Exceptions

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

14. Spoliation

The museum will use the statement of principles ‘Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period’, issued for non-national museums in 1999 by the Museums and Galleries Commission.

15. The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains

The museum’s governing body, acting on the advice of the museum’s professional staff, if any, 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. The museum 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 below will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.

The disposal of human remains from museums in England, Northern Ireland and Wales will follow the procedures in the “Guidance for the care of human remains in museums”.

16. Disposal procedures

- a. All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures on disposal.
- b. 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.
- c. 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.

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d. When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale, exchange or as a last resort - destruction.

e. 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. External 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.

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

g. 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 or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.

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

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

j. Any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied 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.

j. 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.

k. 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 de-accession and disposal.

17. Disposal by exchange

The museum will not dispose of items by exchange.

18. Disposal by destruction

If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.

It is acceptable to destroy material of low intrinsic significance (duplicate mass-produced articles or common specimens which lack significant provenance) where no alternative method of disposal can be found.

Destruction is also 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, eg the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.

Annex 1

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DORSET MUSEUMS COLLECTING AREAS
AUGUST 2007

