



Accreditation

Collections development policy Template



2015

Name of museum: West Highland Museum, Fort William

Name of governing body: West Highland Museum Trust

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: 21st April 2015

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: 20th April 2020

***Museums Galleries Scotland* will be notified of any changes to the collections development policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.**

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

1.1. The museum's statement of purpose is:

The West Highland Museum Trust exists to collect and preserve objects and records of Archaeological, Antiquarian, Historical, Linguistic, Literary, Scientific and Artistic interest which by use, manufacture or association are connected with the West Highlands of Scotland or throw light on its history, traditions and antiquities of the country, including more particularly its arts, crafts and industries and to encourage the prosecution of research in all the foregoing; to preserve and from time to time publish any records or documents pertaining to the objects of the Trust all for the advancement of the education of the general public.

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

1.3. 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.

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

1.5. 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.

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

1.7 In exceptional cases, disposal may be motivated principally by financial reasons. The method of disposal will therefore be by sale and the procedures outlined below will be followed. In cases where disposal is motivated by financial reasons, the governing body will not undertake disposal unless it can be demonstrated that all the following exceptional circumstances are met in full:

- **the disposal will significantly improve the long-term public benefit derived from the remaining collection**
- **the disposal will not be undertaken to generate short-term revenue (for example to meet a budget deficit)**
- **the disposal will be undertaken as a last resort after other sources of funding have been thoroughly explored**
- **extensive prior consultation with sector bodies has been undertaken**
- **the item under consideration lies outside the museum's established core collection**

2. History of the collections

The West Highland Museum was founded in 1922. It began as a series of summer loan exhibitions and, although there was no building, the lenders were encouraged to donate or loan their items to form the core of the collection. The early exhibitions gave the Museum local and social history collections and the basis of a superb Jacobite collection. When the building was purchased in 1926 books were given and purchased for a library. A group called the Friends of the Museum was set up to purchase items for the library, archive and object collection. It ceased to exist in the late 1920s when Victor Hodgson, the leading light of the Museum, died. The emphasis of the collection has never changed throughout the Museum's existence and it has continued to grow through donation, bequest and purchase. No item from the collection has been removed or disposed of. Important Jacobite miniatures were stolen in the mid 1980s and have never been traced; these are recorded in the Museum registers.

3. An overview of current collections

1. Archaeology

The archaeology collection consists almost exclusively of local material with some comparative examples from elsewhere in Scotland and abroad. It is a small collection wholly owned by the Museum except for one or two flints on loan. The bronze hanging bowl from Castle Tioram is of national importance. Most of the material comes from chance finds, the last systematic collecting being in the 1920s.

2. Local History

This covers a wide range of material mostly concerned with life on the land although there is a considerable amount dealing with the history of Fort William. Domestic utensils and some trades are well represented. Its basis was an exhibition of Lochaber Bygones in the 1920s. Nearly the whole collection belongs to the Museum.

3. Photographs

The archive is small but important and mostly covers Fort William but there is some material from elsewhere. The photographic archive is the Museum's property.

4. Costume and Textiles

About a third of these collections are made up of the Carmichael Collection, which was on loan to the Museum and has since been donated. It is of national significance and contains very early examples of hard tartan. The Museum also holds fine examples of women's clothing, baby clothes and accessories. There are extremely good examples of tartan as samples and as clothes.

5. Musical Instruments

This collection is small but significant. It belongs to the Museum except for a clarsach on loan from the Clarsach Society and the Kinlochmoidart Fairy Pipes. It includes a set of cauld wind pipes given by Prince Charles Edward to his valet, and the Poltalloch harp.

6. Numismatics

The collection consists of coins, tokens and medals. The Museum owns most of the material except for some military medals and some coins. There is a good selection of communion tokens, a fine collection of Jacobite and Hanoverian medallions and an excellent collection of Scottish coins. The Goldman Collection of Scottish Coins was donated to the Museum with the understanding that a coin could only be sold to purchase a better example.

7. Arms

This is a small collection of swords, dirks, pistols and firearms, all of which belong to the Museum. There are also some pieces of armour on loan.

8. Applied Art

A large part of this is made up of Highland brooches from the Carmichael Collection. There are also locally interesting pieces of silverware and items of some significance such as the Breadalbane Gold Dirk. Only one piece of silver does not belong to the Museum.

9. Jacobites

The Museum has been actively seeking Jacobite material since its founding. Its collections are based on material donated for the 1925 Prince Charles Edward Exhibition. Of particular significance later was the Dr Charles Hepburn Bequest. The Museum owns paintings, drawings, miniatures, Jacobite glass, weapons, medallions, memorabilia and a considerable Jacobite archive.

10. Art

Fine art is not well represented although many recognised artists have lived or worked in the area. The Museum owns a fine Sam Bough and a Jon Shueler.

11. Natural History

There is a small collection of stuffed birds and animals of variable quality and some good geology all belonging to the Museum. There is a small collection of lepidoptera.

12. Library and Archives

There is a considerable reference library and archive belonging to the Museum. The library is particularly noted for its Jacobite material. Among the Museum archives are family papers, business accounts, minutes of local institutions and considerable Jacobite material. There are also maps.

13. Commandos

The Commando exhibition tells the story of the Commandos in Lochaber during the Second World War. Most items in the exhibition are on loan to the Museum. There is a small collection of archaeology that belongs to the Museum having been donated by Lochaber Archaeological Society in 2015.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

1. Archaeology

The Museum is happy to receive material from any excavations in the area always bearing in mind the limited space presently available for storage.

2. Local History

The Museum would like to actively build on the present collection, particularly seeking anything to do with agriculture. The main period of interest is pre-World War II but this will not preclude more modern collecting. Domestic utensils will also be collected where they fill gaps in the collection.

3. Photographs

The Museum will collect photography actively, particularly outside the Fort William area. Pre-WWI stock photographs will be sought. There is no time period for this collection: anything from the 1840s to the present day is desirable. The Museum will also take photographs to make a modern record of the area's buildings and its people.

4. Costume and Textiles

The Museum will take clothing of significance offered to it but it has very limited storage and display space for these items and will therefore be very select in what it does accept. It will always be interested in early shoes, as it has none.

5. Musical Instruments

The Museum will continue to accept gifts of appropriate instruments.

6. Numismatics

Relevant coins and medallions will be collected, outwith the West Highlands if necessary, to fill gaps or to acquire a superior example for the collection. Other items will be accepted, if offered.

7. Arms

The Museum will accept gifts of well-documented items with strong associations with the West Highlands.

8. Applied Art

The Museum will accept gifts if the items offered are well documented and have a strong association with the West Highlands.

9. Jacobites

The Museum will continue to build on the present collection when financially possible.

10. Art

The Museum intends to continue to build upon the present collection.

11. Natural History

It is not the intention of the Museum to actively build upon its existing natural history collection. This is mainly due to storage space limitations and the existing collection adequately representing the natural history of the geographical collecting area.

12. Library and Archives

The Museum will continue to buy or acquire books to fill in the gaps in the library. There is a storage problem at present, however, and until that is rectified no large collections can be accepted.

13. Commandos

The Museum does not intend to actively build on the Commando collection due to space restrictions in the current premises. Individual donations would be considered.

5. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

5.1 The museum does not intend to dispose of collections during the period covered by this policy.

The Museum Trust document states that, anent the collection, there is a strong presumption against the disposal of any specimen. There is no reason to rationalise the collection as there is little irrelevant material among the accessioned objects. There are some Natural History specimens that are badly damaged and may at some point be considered for destruction but they are not a priority at the present moment.

6 Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items

6.1 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

7.1 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.

7.2 Specific reference is made to the following museum(s)/organisation(s):

Glencoe and North Lorn Folk Museum, Clan Cameron Museum, Glenfinnan Station Museum and the Mallaig Heritage Centre.

8 Archival holdings

The Museum's considerable and important archival holdings which include both Jacobite and local material has been deposited with the Lochaber Archive for safe keeping and to allow easy access for scholars. The Museum is more than happy to add to its collections where relevant but will always be constrained by cost.

Acquisition

8.1 The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

The decision to acquire material lies with the Curator. Small value items can be acquired without first consulting the Trustees but any recommendations requiring a substantial financial outlay cannot be purchased without full discussions with the governing body.

8.2 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).

8.3 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, 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.

9 Human remains

9.1 The museum does not hold or intend to acquire any human remains.

10 Biological and geological material

10.1 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.

11 Archaeological material

11.1 The museum will not acquire archaeological material (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.

11.2 In Scotland, under the laws of bona vacantia including Treasure Trove, the Crown has title to all ownerless objects including antiquities, although such material as human remains and environmental samples are not covered by the law of bona vacantia. Scottish material of chance finds and excavation assemblages are offered to museums through the treasure trove process and cannot therefore be legally acquired by means other than by allocation to *[museum name]* by the Crown. However where the Crown has chosen to forego its title to a portable antiquity or excavation assemblage, a Curator or other responsible person acting on behalf of the *[name of governing body]*, can establish that valid title to the item in question has been acquired by ensuring that a certificate of 'No Claim' has been issued on behalf of the Crown.

12 Exceptions

12.1 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.

13 Spoliation

13.1 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.

14 Disposal procedures

- 14.1** All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures on disposal.
- 14.2** 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.
- 14.3** 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.
- 14.4** 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.
- 14.5** 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.
- 14.6** 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.

- 14.7 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.
- 14.8 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 .
- 14.9 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.
- 14.10 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 Museums Galleries Scotland.
- 14.11 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.
- 14.12 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

- 14.13 The museum will not dispose of items by exchange.

Disposal by destruction

- 14.14** If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.
- 14.15** 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.
- 14.16** 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.
- 14.17** 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.
- 14.18** 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.