

NEWPORT MUSEUMS AND HERITAGE SERVICE
NEWPORT CITY COUNCIL

COLLECTIONS DEVELOPMENT POLICY
2020

Date of Cabinet approval:

Date of review:

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

1.1. Statement of purpose is:

To keep and make accessible the heritage of Newport

Key aims are:

- Improve People's lives;
- Promote an understanding amongst the City's community of their shared heritage;
- Offer the widest range possible of learning experiences suitable for the needs of users;
- Foster pride in the City and its heritage;
- Challenge low expectations, promote excellence and make Newport an attractive destination for tourists;
- Ensure that the Museum's collections and displays reflect the broad range of community interest and experiences, and work within those communities to help them express their own heritage needs;
- Curate the collections to the highest possible standard and to make stored information accessible to all;
- Manage and conserve the collections to ensure their long term well-being for the enjoyment of future generations;
- Put the customer at the centre of everything we do and providing assistance to colleagues and external users in a helpful, enthusiastic and polite manner, while supporting the work of others in the organisation and respecting the contribution that everyone can make;
- Provide a fun and enjoyable experience.

1.2. Newport Museums and Heritage Service comprises of Newport Museum and Art Gallery (hereafter referred to as the Museum), the Medieval Ship Project and the Newport Transporter Bridge. The Collections Development Policy incorporates collections at Newport Museum and Art Gallery and – to some extent – the collections at Tredegar House and Park currently on long-term loan to the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty (hereafter referred to as the National Trust). The Newport Medieval Ship and associated archaeological archive and finds are considered part of the archaeological collections of Newport Museum and Art Gallery and as such are not addressed separately. The Museum holds archival material and some objects relating to the Transporter Bridge but the Bridge itself is not covered by this policy.

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

1.4. By definition, the organisation 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.

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

- 1.6. 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. All collections care policies, procedures and activities are guided by the Museums Association's (MA) *Code of Ethics for Museums* and other relevant published MA guidelines as well as SPECTRUM collections management procedures. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.
- 1.7. The museum will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, or bequest, 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.
- 1.8. The museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.
- 1.9. The *Collections Development Policy (2020)* replaces the *Collections Development Policy (2015)* and will be published on the website of Newport Museums and Heritage Service and reviewed from time to time but at least once every five years.
- 1.10. Welsh Government will be notified of any substantial changes to the collections development policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of the collections.

2. History of the collections

- 2.1. The history of Newport Museums and Heritage Service is entwined with the history of Newport Museum and Art Gallery. The Museum was founded in 1888. It was transferred to the present building in 1968. In its early years the Museum collected under a broader policy and displayed miscellaneous material and curiosities from all over the world. However in the 1950's and 1960's a more local policy was adopted and much of the non-local material was disposed of, often by transfer to other museums. Since then the Museum's collections have grown maintaining the concentration on items of local significance. The Newport Medieval Ship timbers and associated artefacts discovered in 2002 are a significant addition to the collections of the Museum.
- 2.2. Tredegar House is one of the most significant late 17th Century houses in Britain and was home to the Morgan family, later Lords Tredegar. The estate includes stables, an Orangery, out buildings and formal gardens. Most of the house contents were dispersed in 1951. As a result the majority of the existing collections have been acquired since its purchase by the council in 1974. In March 2012 Newport City Council has entered a lease agreement with the National Trust for the duration of 50 years. The collections relating to Tredegar House and the Morgan family as well as objects on display at the House at the time of management transfer are on long-term loan to the National Trust for the duration of the lease agreement.

3. An overview of current collections

3.1. Archaeology

The archaeology collections of the Newport Museum and Art Gallery include:

- Prehistoric material from areas of former Gwent most notably the Severn Estuary;
- Roman material mostly from the Roman sites of Caerwent and Caerleon, Mill Street as well as the Barland's Farm Boat;
- Medieval material representing mostly castles and abbeys and the Newport Ship;
- Collection of local and non-local prehistoric flints;
- Associated archive material.

Material deposited in the 1960s and 1970s originated mostly from Ministry of Works excavations. Since the 1980s the archaeology collections have been substantially increased in size as excavations were carried out on historic monuments on behalf of Cadw or prior or as part of new developments. Collections also grew due to fieldwork undertaken by staff and donations and purchases from members of the public. The bulk of the material comes from the City of Newport and other areas of former Gwent.

3.2. Social History

The social and industrial history collections include objects, photographs, film, printed material, costume, textiles and oral history relating to the social and industrial history of Newport and areas of former Gwent. Themes covered by the collections include:

- Domestic life
- Trade and commerce
- Local industries
- Transport and engineering
- Education
- Religious and civic life
- Politics and suffrage
- Ethnographic material

Key collections include the Chartist collection – a collection of lithographs, broadsheets, weapons and silver; the banner collection – a collection of religious, women's suffrage movement and trade union banners; and the Transporter Bridge Archive – negatives and photographs showing the construction of the bridge, engineering plans and construction details.

The museum holds a small number of ethnographic items from all over the world. Most of this material was collected in the late 19th or early 20th Century and represents the effort and interest of early collectors. Although much material was disposed of in the 1950's and 1960's about 350 items remain. Much of the material is recorded in publications and through the ethnographic survey undertaken some years ago. Occasionally items are used in exhibitions, displays or workshops.

3.3. Fine and Decorative Art

The art collections include:

- 19th and 20th Century oil paintings, drawings and prints;
- A small number of sculptures;
- Decorative ceramics including Staffordshire and Wemyss ware, studio ceramics and commemorative ware.

The fine art collections mainly include works by British artists but have focussed on works and artists relating to Wales or more locally relevant material since the appointment of a specialist curator in the 1970s. Large collections such as the Iris Fox bequest of decorative ceramics and John Wait's teapot collection make up the bulk of the decorative arts collections.

3.4. Natural Sciences

The following subject areas are represented by the natural sciences collections:

- Zoology
- Geology
- Palaeontology
- Botany (to a lesser extent)

The natural sciences collections are primarily local, with some exceptions, such as the Coleoptera collection which mostly derives from Essex. The institution also cares for a quantity of foreign material mostly acquired in the earlier years of the museum's history. Whilst much of the miscellaneous material is of significant scientific importance and popular interest, the major element of the collection remains the local material. Due to changing conservation attitudes, problems of storage and a shift in the Museum's focus the emphasis since the 1980s has been less on collecting specimens than on recording their existence in Gwent.

3.5. Tredegar House

Since March 2012 the National Trust manages Tredegar House. Newport City Council has leased the House to the Trust for the duration of 50 years. All collections directly related to Tredegar House, the estate or the Morgan family and all other material on display at the House at the time of the transfer are on long-term loan to the National Trust for the duration of the lease.

The collections include:

- Social history
- Photographs
- Archive material
- Paintings and drawings
- Decorative art
- Sculpture
- Furniture and furnishings

Social history material is largely confined to objects used in the House and associated buildings. Covering the period from approximately 1600 to 1950, most

objects relate to a life 'Below Stairs'. Agricultural items reflect the activity of the Home Farm and Estate.

The photographic collection contains images of the House – internal and external – as well as estate buildings, associated buildings, the Morgan family, servants, estate workers and guests, events that took place at Tredegar House and other relevant places.

The archive collection consists of estate documents, memorabilia associated with the Morgan family, their servants and estate workers and records of the work carried out on the House. Parts of the collection relate to the period when the House became a boarding school and later St. Joseph's comprehensive.

The oil paintings, watercolours and drawings on display in the House include over-mantel paintings, portraits relating to the Morgan family, pictures of servants, estate workers and livestock bred by the Morgan family.

The Collections include portrait busts of members of the Morgan family and garden sculptures. Ceramics relating to the Morgan family, in particular dinner services and other appropriate pieces are collected.

Textiles consist of tapestries, window curtains, wall and bed hangings, floor coverings, table and bed linen. While the tapestries originate from the 18th Century and are on loan, a majority of soft furnishings are reproductions and classified as props.

3.6. Education Collections

Certain material has been and will be collected specifically for educational use. This includes use for demonstrations, workshops and handling by school pupils and other groups. It is anticipated that much of this material will get damaged or lost. As such it forms a separate collection, independent of the accessioned collections of the Museums and Heritage Service. This collection is generally referred to as 'education collection'.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

4.1. General principles

- 4.1.1. Potential acquisitions must be of relevance for the interpretation and understanding of Newport's past and present;
- 4.1.2. Acknowledging that the collections currently do not represent Newport's diversity, we actively seek to collect material linked to under-represented communities and themes.
- 4.1.3. Material must have potential for display or to support displays; Material without display potential will only be collected when there is demonstrably exceptional research potential.
- 4.1.4. Material must be well contextualised;
- 4.1.5. The impact of potential acquisitions on available resources including storage and conservation requirements should be considered. Under normal circumstances, large objects or extensive collections will no longer be accepted.
- 4.1.6. Material born digitally will not be collected.

- 4.1.7. Material will only be collected where a valid title of ownership can be obtained and without the condition to display for any length of time in parts or as a whole.

Archaeology

- 4.1.8. Future collecting will focus on the acquisition of material from the geographical area administered by the City of Newport. Material from the historic County of Gwent will only be acquired when it relates directly to existing archives and collections and in consultation and agreement with other museums collecting in the relevant area.
- 4.1.9. Archives from archaeological excavations and fieldwork are only accepted where standards outlined in the *Procedures for the Deposit of Archaeological Archives to Newport Museum & Art Gallery* are met. These procedures were developed with reference to the *National Standards for Wales for Collecting and Depositing Archaeological Archives* and relevant guidelines developed by the Archaeological Archives Forum.
- 4.1.10. Human remains will only be collected where older than 100 years, appropriately contextualised and as part of an archaeological archive.

4.2. Social History

- 4.2.1. Future collecting will focus on items of significance to the people and industries of Newport. Material with no or tenuous links to the city will not be collected.
- 4.2.2. Future collecting will aim to ensure that the collection reflects Newport's diversity.
- 4.2.3. Oral histories generated as part of Museum activities or projects should be deposited with the National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales. Offers of oral histories generated externally will be directed to the Archive.
- 4.2.4. Film will no longer be collected. The existing collection has been deposited in the care of the National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales. Offers of film will be directed to the Archive.
- 4.2.5. Photographs will no longer be collected unless they relate directly to existing collections or objects in the collections. Offers should be directed to Gwent Archives.
- 4.2.6. Purely archival material will be directed to Gwent Archives or the most suitable County record office.
- 4.2.7. Newport Museum and Heritage Service will continue to care for the existing ethnographic collection but not add to it.

4.3. Art

- 4.3.1. Future collecting will focus on works with links to Newport either through the subject of a work or the artist.

4.3.2. Selection will be based on artistic merit and material should represent the best of what is available.

4.3.3. Contemporary works will only be collected where above criteria are satisfied and the general principles for future collecting outlined in Section 4.1. are met.

4.4. Natural Sciences

4.4.1. Newport Museums and Heritage Service will continue to care for its historic collections under relevant policies, however all natural sciences collections are now closed. No further material will be added.

4.5. Tredegar House

4.5.1. The management of the collections at Tredegar House falls to the National Trust as long as the loan agreement is in place. Terms and conditions of the *Chattels Loan Agreement* between the National Trust and Newport City Council apply.

4.5.2. The Museum will not pursue the acquisition of material directly relating to Tredegar House, the estate or the Morgan family nor will it seek to initiate the disposal process for material on loan to the National Trust without agreement. Offers of relevant material will be directed to the National Trust.

4.5.3. The National Trust will seek to collect items as outlined within its *Collections Development Policy* for Tredegar House. Objects acquired while the lease agreement between the National Trust and Newport City Council is in place, are owned by the National Trust.

4.5.4. Objects relating specifically to Tredegar House, the estate or the Morgan family are of special significance to the interpretation of the House and its history. When the lease agreement comes to an end and management passes back to Newport City Council relevant objects collected by the National Trust will therefore be offered to the Museum. There is however no obligation on the Museum to accept the objects. A definition of the terms and conditions under which the objects are offered to the Museum is beyond the purpose and scope of this policy.

5. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

5.1. 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.

5.2. The procedures used will meet professional standards (see Section 15). The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.

5.3. Reviews are to be undertaken on an object-by-object basis or on discreet collections of objects.

- 5.4. General principles and criteria to be considered include:
 - 5.4.1. An object's/collection's relevance for the interpretation of Newport's history;
 - 5.4.2. An object's/collection's provenance and contextual information;
 - 5.4.3. An object's/collection's potential for display;
 - 5.4.4. An object's/collection's condition and impact on resources.
- 5.5. The Museum stores some material including costume and furniture in three designated rooms at Tredegar House. These items are exempt from the loan agreement with the National Trust and their rationalisation and re-location to a space under the Museum's direct control is a priority for the period covered by this policy.
- 5.6. A rationalisation process on material previously stored at a chapel at St. Woolos Cemetery has been carried out and remaining items were removed from the chapel and relocated to Museum premises in November 2020.

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. The Museum recognises the collecting policy of the National Museum Wales/Amgueddfa Cymru (NMW/AC) which is based on NMW/AC's Charter and the leading objective to advance the education of the public. Potential conflicts between NMW/AC's and Newport Museum and Art Gallery's collecting efforts will be addressed as they occur.

8. Acquisition

- 8.1. The Museum will only acquire material where relevant collecting criteria as set out in Section 4 are met.
- 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, 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.

9. Human remains

- 9.1. Human remains will only be collected where older than 100 years, appropriately contextualised and as part of an archaeological archive. The museum will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005 and other relevant guidelines.

10. Biological and geological material

- 10.1. The museum will not acquire any biological or geological material but continue to care for its historic collections.

11. Archaeological material

- 11.1. The museum 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.
- 11.2. In Wales 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).

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. The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains

- 14.1. The disposal of human remains will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums'.

15. Disposal procedures

- 15.1. All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures on disposal.
- 15.2. The governing body will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Agreements about disposal made with donors will also be taken into account.
- 15.3. 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.
- 15.4. When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons, the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale, or - as a last resort - destruction.
- 15.5. 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.
- 15.6. A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, 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.
- 15.7. 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.
- 15.8. 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.
- 15.9. 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.
- 15.10. 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 Welsh Government.

- 15.11. 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.
- 15.12. 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.
- 15.13. The museum will not dispose of items by exchange.
- 15.14. If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.
- 15.15. 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.
- 15.16. 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.
- 15.17. 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.
- 15.18. 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.