

# **Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums**

## **Collections Care & Conservation Policy**

Name of governing body: Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums Joint  
Committee

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## 1. Introduction

This policy will guide TWAM in the field of collections care and conservation. TWAM's collections care and Conservation Plan will help to deliver the statements made in this policy.

Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums' collections are at the heart of the organisation. The museum collections number approximately 1.5 million items, while the archive collections are among the largest in the country. The Art, Natural Sciences, Maritime and Science and Industry museum collections and the archives of shipbuilding and maritime trade are Designated as being of outstanding national and international importance. The management and care of the collections is central to the mission of Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums (TWAM) **to help people determine their place in the world and define their identities, so enhancing their self respect and their respect for others.**

The Conservation Team will co-ordinate collections care through preventive and interventive conservation across TWAM.

Caring for the collections is a fundamental duty for all museums. This policy includes a combination of preventative and remedial conservation measures, designed to ensure long-term preservation.

- Preventative conservation covers the measures necessary to slow down or minimise the deterioration of museum objects and specimens and structures.
- Remedial conservation involves a treatment to an object or specimen to bring it to a more acceptable condition or state in order to stabilise it or enhance some aspects of its cultural or scientific value.

## 2. Ethics and legislation

TWAM is obliged to work within the following ethical guidelines and legislation

Institute of Conservation Code of Conduct  
Institute of Conservation Professional Standards  
Museum Association Code of Ethics  
Health and Safety at work (1974)  
Control of Asbestos regulations (2012)  
COSHH regulations (2002)

All care, conservation and use of human remains will conform to the Policy on Human Remains, and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums (2005).

Any x-raying of the collection for Radiation will be contracted out. TWAM seeks additional advice from an external independent Radiation Protection Advisor (Peak RPA)

### **3. Standards**

TWAM aims to store museum collections in accordance with PAS198:2012. While archival collections will take additional guidance from PD 5454:2012, and digital media in accordance with BS 4783:1988. This will be reviewed as new guidelines become available

Work undertaken by TWAM's conservators will conform to the standards set down in the Code of Ethics of the Institute of Conservation (ICON) Code of Conduct and Professional Standards and to British Standard 4971:2002 'Recommendations for Repair and allied processes for the conservation of documents'.

All treatments will be photographed and documented on EMu (museum objects). Archival interventive treatment records will be added to CALM (documents stored in Archives) and records will be maintained in accordance with SPECTRUM (version 4.0 2011) standards.

TWAM will continue working toward meeting and improving on basic benchmarking standards in all of its stores as per the Collections Trust Benchmarks in collections care version 2 – self assessment check list.

### **4. Collections Care and Preventative Conservation**

TWAM is committed to managing the collections in accordance with the sector guidance set out in *Benchmarks in Collection Care*. For more detailed information please refer to TWAM's Collections Care and Conservation Plan.

#### **4.1 Collections Conditions Overview**

TWAM will survey, benchmark and visually inspect the conditions in which collections are kept to determine priority areas for improvement in line with best practice as defined by the Collections Trust's '*Benchmarks in Collections Care for Museums, Libraries and Archives Self Assessment Checklist*' (*Benchmarks in Collections Care 2.0 Published 2011 by MLA*).

#### **4.2 Environmental monitoring**

TWAM will:

- Monitor the environment in storage and display areas, and measure and record relative humidity (RH), temperature, visible light, ultra violet radiation (UV) and atmospheric pollutants where applicable
- Collect environmental data using continuous recording systems and hand held meters
- Collate, utilise and act upon data to provide stable and appropriate collection environments
- Monitor, manage and eradicate pests.

### **4.3 Environmental control**

TWAM will store and display collections in managed environments that minimise their rates of deterioration.

### **5. Care of working objects**

See separate policy

### **6. Health and Safety within the collection**

All hazardous materials within the collection will be identified and made safe where possible, this includes objects containing radioactive sources, asbestos and poisons such as arsenic, mercuric chloride, and lead among others. This also includes collections stored in chemicals such as formaldehyde and industrial methylated spirits. EMu will be used to record where a collection item is potentially hazardous.

TWAM will run in house training on identifying and working with hazardous items within the collection for all new staff who will work with the collections and will provide refresher training periodically.

### **7. References to other plans and policies**

The following policies and plans may impact on TWAM's Collections Care and Conservation Policy:

- Emergency Plan
- Collections Care and Conservation Plan
- Environmental Sustainability Policy

TWAM's Collections Care and Conservation Policy may impact on:

- TWAM's Collections Development Policy

### **8. Expertise, Advice and Access**

#### **8.1 Expertise**

Conservation work will only be undertaken by an appropriately qualified person, or under the supervision of an appropriately qualified person.

Conservation work should be underpinned by knowledge and understanding of the collection item. Critical to this is documentation of its condition and treatment, and a long term plan for the care of the collection item.

Conservation work should be planned and carried out in consultation with curatorial staff and/or archivists.

TWAM is committed to continuing development of its staff and to the building of relevant knowledge and expertise.

For a detailed breakdown of TWAM's Conservation Team please refer to TWAM's Collections Care and Conservation Plan.

Where TWAM works with freelance conservators due diligence will be carried out in checking relevant qualifications, experience and gaining references.

## **8.2 Advice**

Caring for the collections is the responsibility of all staff. The Conservation Team is committed to training and to raising awareness of collections care issues. By promoting these to staff, volunteers and researchers TWAM will communicate the message that safe handling and use of the collections will preserve them for the future and in doing so allow access to them for longer.

Guidelines and information relating to collections care practices and procedures will be accessible to all staff via the TWAM shared drive.

The Conservation Team will provide advice and information to the public and to other museum and archives professionals regionally, nationally and internationally.

TWAM will make available selected conservation services and training to its North East regional partners.

## **8.3 Access**

TWAM will promote good practice in handling collections and provide suitable environments and equipment to protect them while in use eg gloves, supports, weights, polyester sleeves as appropriate.

TWAM will provide microfilm or digital access to collections and information about collections as appropriate.

TWAM may withdraw collections from public access if they are identified as at serious risk from handling or display. Where possible, access under supervision will be facilitated or clearly identified replica copies made if appropriate.

This policy is available to all staff, volunteers and freelancers in the following location G:\Corporate Policies. It will be shared with new staff as part of their induction and revised versions will be distributed to all staff via email.