



Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums
Collections Development Policy
for
Museums and Galleries

Date approved by Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums Strategic Board:

19/09/2021

Date for review:

2026 / regular review through Collections Working Group

Table of Contents

		Page
	Policy review procedure	3
1.	Relationship to other relevant polices/plans	3
2.	History of the Collections	5
3.	Overview of the current collections	6
4.	Themes and priorities for future collecting	6
5.	Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal	6
6.	Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal	8
7.	Collecting policies of other museums	9
8.	TWAM Archival holdings	9
9.	Acquisition procedures	9
10.	Human Remains	10
11.	Biological and geological material	10
12.	Archaeological material	11
13.	Exceptions	11
14.	Spoliation	11
15.	The Repatriation and restitution of objects and human remains	12
16.	Disposal procedure	12

Collections Development Policy

Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums (TWAM)

Governing body: Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums Strategic Board

Please note: this policy contains references to Collections Appendices- these will be updated separately and will be available from early 2022.

Policy review procedure

The Collections Development Policy (formerly known as the Acquisitions and Disposals Policy) was last reviewed in **2016** by TWAM Strategic Board (TWAM's governing body). This review dates to 2021. The policy will be published on the TWAM website. The Collections Working Group will monitor the policy and ensure it is updated as necessary, with a formal review at least once every five years.

The date when the policy is next due for formal review is **2026**. The policy will continue to be monitored by the Collections Working Group and formally reviewed by the TWAM Strategic Board (Governing body).

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 existing collections.

Relationship to other relevant policies / plans of the organisation:

1.1 TWAM's statement of purpose:

Our mission is to help people determine their place in the world and define their identities, so enhancing their self-respect and their respect for others.

Our vision for the future is for everyone to have access to museum and archive provision in Tyne and Wear, to use this access and to value it for the significant and positive impact that it makes upon their lives. We will provide real or virtual, worldwide access to our museums and archives and their collections.

Our commitment is to a world-class service that is innovative, imaginative, creative, totally inclusive, secure and sustainable.

- 1.2** The Strategic Board 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 Strategic Board 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** TWAM 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. Acquisitions will be guided by the advice of TWAM conservators regarding any hazards inherent in the collection and consideration of an object's condition. Acquisitions will take into account TWAM's current and future storage capabilities.
- 1.6** TWAM 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** TWAM will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.
- 1.8** This policy should be read in conjunction with:
 - The Great North Museum's Acquisitions and Disposals Policy

- The Great North Museum’s Human Remains Policy
- The Great North Museum’s Repatriation Policy
- The Great North Museum’s Sacred Objects Policy
- Sunderland Museums Acquisitions and Disposals Policy.
- TWAM’s Archives Collection, Acquisition and Disposal Policy
- TWAM’s Collections Care and Conservation Policy and Documentation Procedural Manual (in development) are also relevant as these documents outline procedures to be followed to complete an acquisition and care after an acquisition has been accessioned.
- Appendix A to this policy which detail the collections which make up TWAM including details on: history; scope; collection priorities; areas for rationalisation.

1.9 The Collections Development Policy is intended as a guiding document for the governing body and museum staff and for public understanding of TWAM’s collecting remit and activity.

2. History of the Collections

2.1 TWAM brings together a wide range collections from Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside and South Tyneside councils. Appendix A details the history and development of each area of the collection. The Fine Art, Maritime and Science and Industry Collections were designated by the Government as of national importance in 1997. These individual collections are subdivided into, and discussed under, the following collections areas:

- Archaeology
- History
- Maritime
- Social History
- Costume and Textiles

- Fine Art
- Decorative Art
- Contemporary Craft
- Design
- Ethnography
- Biology
- Geology

3. Overview of the current collections

- 3.1** Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums (TWAM) holds collections in the fields of archaeology, art (including fine art, decorative art, contemporary craft and design), history (including social history, costume, maritime history and engineering, science and industry) and natural sciences (including geology and biology).
- 3.2** Please see Appendix A for very detailed descriptions of the existing collections, their history and collecting themes.
- 3.3** Please also see the Collections Development Policy for the Great North Museum (revised September 2016), which is governed by a separate body and so requires a separate policy document.
- 3.4** The collections held by Tyne & Wear Archives are covered by a separate Collection, Acquisition and Disposal Policy (revised November 2015).
- 3.5** TWAM is engaged with Sunderland Museums in an ongoing process of separating out collections belonging to Sunderland Council. In the case of any recommendations for rationalisation, agreement from both governing bodies will be sought.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

All collecting activity must take account of the following principles:

- 4.1** Items collected should normally have a strong connection with North East England or with existing collections.
- 4.2** Future collecting will reflect the diversity of the North East's people and places both past and present. The contemporary collecting programme will continue to be inspired and guided by diverse audiences. Items collected should serve TWAM's statement of purpose and be useful for research, a broad range of exhibitions, learning and other public programmes in order to promote and share diversity in all its forms.
- 4.3** Future collecting will show particular regard for people with protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity) and for people in different socio-economic groupings. This will be especially so where there are gaps in representation within the existing collections.
- 4.4** Please see Appendix A for more detailed information relating to future collecting by collection and/or venue.
- 4.5** Where appropriate, items collected should be in good condition and require minimal conservation treatment (with the exception of archaeological items).
- 4.6** Items collected should not contain materials that pose a risk to health or safety, without a plan in place to manage the risk presented and should take account of current legislation, for example, Ionising Radiation Regulations 2017 (IRR17) and the associated approved code of practice (L121 Work with Ionising Radiation ACoP).
- 4.7** Items collected must not duplicate items already in the collection unless an exceptional case can be made, for example, group value for display purposes or better provenance.
- 4.8** Items that are in better condition or have better provenance may be collected to replace items already in the collections; the items replaced will be disposed of in accordance with the Disposal section of this Policy (see 13 below).

- 4.9** Where appropriate, transfer to TWAM of copyright/and or reproduction rights will be sought at the time of acquisition. If this is not possible, then permission to make and use reproductions will be requested.
- 4.10** All available sources of funding for purchases will be explored and made use of where appropriate.
- 4.11** Loans will be accepted where these would enhance displays and/or contribute significantly to research or project work. Five years is the maximum period before review with the lender. Where a loan meets the criteria laid out (points 4.1-4.4) they will be considered for acquisition in the event of being offered as such.
- 4.11** Advice will be sought from qualified persons outside TWAM where existing curatorial advice in the particular field is limited.
- 4.12** TWAM recognises its responsibility, in acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Accreditation Standard. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.
- 4.13** Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in very exceptional circumstances, and then only after proper consideration by TWAM Strategic Board itself, having regard to the interests of other museums.

5. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

- 5.1** TWAM 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. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.
- 5.3 Please see Appendix A for each collection/venue's approach to rationalisation and disposal. The documentation backlog remains the priority in order to support any future rationalisation projects.

6. Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items

- 6.1 TWAM recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museums Association Code and Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal.
- 6.2 TWAM will abide by the legal and ethical standards as detailed below (9 to 13).

7. Collecting policies of other museums

- 7.1 TWAM 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 Please see Appendix A for details of specific organisations whose collecting policies relate to TWAM by venue/collection.
- 7.3 TWAM would consider any opportunities presented regarding joint acquisition.

8. TWAM Archival holdings

- 8.1 TWAM archives are covered by separate policy but there is significant areas of overlap in particular through the history collection, please see appendix A for details.

- 8.2** As TWAM holds archives, including photographs and printed ephemera, the Strategic Board will be guided by the Archives and Records Association 'Code of Ethics' (February 2020) and the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (3rd ed., 2002).

9. Acquisition procedures

- 9.1** Normally, acquisitions are authorised by the Keepers of the collections. Major acquisitions will be authorised at senior management level. Access to museum/gallery purchasing funds requires permission from the Director and a financial limit will be agreed in advance of any purchase, e.g. at auction.
- 9.2** As per 1.6 TWAM will undertake vigorous due diligence in order to determine that the donor/vendor of a potential acquisition holds full legal title to the object being acquired.
- 9.3.** In particular, TWAM 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).
- 9.4.** 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, TWAM 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.
- 9.5** TWAM will not acquire any material without reference to the TWAM Collection Care and Conservation Plan or without reference to TWAM conservation officers to ensure that specific and potential health and safety hazards are considered as well as potential costs to the service to dispose of hazardous items in future.

10. Human Remains

- 10.1** If TWAM were to acquire human remains under 100 years old, it would obtain the necessary licence under the Human Tissue Act 2004 and any subordinate legislation from time to time in force.
- 10.2** As TWAM 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

- 11.1.** So far as biological and geological material is concerned, TWAM 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

- 12.1.** TWAM 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.
- 12.2** In England, Northern Ireland and 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).

13 Exceptions

- 13.1** Any exceptions to the above clauses 10,11 or 12 will only be because TWAM is either: acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin; or acquiring an item of minor importance that lacks secure ownership history but in the best judgement of experts in the field concerned

has not been illicitly traded; or acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin; or in possession of reliable documentary evidence that the item was exported from its country of origin before 1970. In these cases TWAM will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

14. Spoliation

- 14.1** TWAM 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

- 15.1** The Strategic Board, acting on the advice of TWAM's professional staff, 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. TWAM 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 16.1-.5 will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.
- 15.2** 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 procedure

- 16.1** All disposals will be undertaken openly and with transparency. By definition, TWAM holds collections long term and in trust for society in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons for disposal must be established before any consideration is given to disposal of any item in the collection.

- 16.2** Any disposals will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures on disposal and to TWAM's Documentation Policy.
- 16.3** The Strategic Board will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Agreements on disposal made with donors will also be taken into account.
- 16.4** When disposal of a museum object is being considered, TWAM 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.
- 16.5** 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. TWAM will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.
- 16.6** The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the Strategic Board 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.
- 16.7** 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 Strategic Board acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff and not of the curator or manager of the collection acting alone.

- 16.8** 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.
- 16.9** 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).
- 16.10** 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, TWAM may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.
- 16.11** Any monies received by TWAM's 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 Arts Council England.

16.12 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.

16.13 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

16.14 The nature of disposal by exchange means that the museum will not necessarily be in a position to exchange the material with another Accredited museum. The Strategic Board will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.

16.14.1 In cases where the Strategic Board wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or non-Accredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 16.1-7 will apply.

16.14.2 If the exchange is proposed to be made with a specific Accredited museum, other Accredited museums which collect in the same or related areas will be directly notified of the proposal and their comments will be requested.

16.14.3 If the exchange is proposed with a non-Accredited museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, TWAM will place a notice on the MA's Find an Object web listing service, or make an announcement in the Museums

Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).

16.14.4 Both the notification and announcement must provide information on the number and nature of the specimens or objects involved both in the museum's collection and those intended to be acquired in exchange. A period of at least two months must be allowed for comments to be received. At the end of this period, the Strategic Board must consider the comments before a final decision on the exchange is made.

Disposal by destruction

- 16.15** If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the Strategic Board may decide to destroy it.
- 16.16** 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.
- 16.17** 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.
- 16.18** 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.
- 16.19** The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of TWAM's workforce. In circumstances where this is not possible, e.g. the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.

Documenting disposal

16.21 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. In accordance with TWAM's Documentation Policy 2016, item 4.7, disposals will be documented on Emu as part of the object exit procedure.