



# Collections care and conservation policy

June 2023

*Name of museum:*

The Nicholson Museum & Art Gallery

The Nicholson Institute

Leek

Staffordshire Moorlands ST13 6DW

*Name of governing body:*

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

Moorlands House

Stockwell Street

Leek

Staffordshire Moorlands ST13 6HQ

*Date on which this policy was approved by governing body:*

**Insert date**

*Policy review procedure:*

This policy will be reviewed every five years.

*Date at which this policy is due for review:*

**Insert date.**

## **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 The purpose of the Collections Care and Conservation Policy is to set a framework for the:

- Preservation of the collections in the care of the museum and art gallery
- Preventative and remedial conservation of the collections
- Safe use of and access to collections, within the limits of available resources.

1.2 This policy has been written in accordance with the Nicholson Museum & Art Gallery's Statement of Purpose and Collections Development Policy.

1.3 The Collections Care and Conservation Policy should be read in conjunction with the Collections Care and Conservation Plan, which sets out the way the policy will be put into action, and with all other plans affecting the collections and the museum buildings.

## **2.0 Definitions**

For clarity in this context the terms used are defined as:

2.1 *Collections Care* is the range of activities intended to safeguard the collection including organisational policies, security, storage, cleaning, maintenance, handling, scientific investigation, environmental monitoring and control, exhibitions and loans, conservation, and emergency planning.

2.2 *Conservation* covers both:

- *Remedial conservation* is the application of interventive techniques to an item to achieve chemical or physical stabilisation for the purpose of extending the life of that object and ensuring its continued availability to the public. All measures and actions should respect the significance and physical properties of the object.
- *Preventive conservation* is all measures and actions aimed at avoiding and minimising future deterioration and loss, carried out within the context or on the surroundings of an item or group of items. Examples are appropriate measures and actions for storage, handling, packing and transportation, security, environmental management (light, humidity, pollution and pest control), emergency planning, training, public awareness and legal compliance.

2.3 *Preservation* refers to the overall management of the collection in order to reduce deterioration, prevent damage and extend the life of the objects. It includes establishing and implementing policies and procedures to manage all aspects of collections care for example the environment, physical protection, conservation treatment and emergency planning.

## **3.0 Context**

3.1 The museum aims to improve the care and condition of all objects in its collection in accordance with Benchmarks in Collections Care, Signposts to Collections Care or other approved standards within the limits of its resources.

3.2 The safety and preservation of the collection will be considered from the outset of any plans to alter the displays or storage, to modify the buildings or to allow access to any part of the collections.

## **4.0 Care responsibility**

4.1 The care of the collections is the responsibility of everyone who works in or visits the museum.

4.2 All staff and volunteers who handle the collections in the course of their work should have appropriate training and instruction. No untrained personnel are allowed to handle items from the accessioned collection. All staff (paid and volunteer) agree to abide by this policy.

4.3 Researchers or other visitors working with the collections will be briefed on how to handle the items they are working on and will be supervised at all times.

4.4 Any problems or concerns relating to the care of the collection should be referred to the Cultural Services Officer and will be escalated to their line manager if necessary. Suitably qualified conservators will be consulted as appropriate.

4.5 The suitability of conservators chosen to work or advise on the collections will be checked. A professionally accredited conservator or a conservator listed on the Conservation Register will normally be chosen. Only suitably trained and qualified conservators will carry out remedial treatment on objects.

4.6 No item in the collections will be modified or altered until advice has been obtained from a suitably qualified conservator.

4.7 Detailed records will be kept of all treatments carried out on objects.

## 5.0 The Buildings

5.1 The maintenance of the buildings in which the collections are housed is fundamental to the preservation of the collection. The museum's collection is stored and displayed in the following buildings:

<b>Building</b>	<b>Used for</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Upkeep carried out by</b>
Nicholson Museum & Art Gallery	Library, museum & art gallery	Staffordshire County Council	Staffordshire County Council
Moorlands House	Council offices and museum store	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

5.2 Staff check the museum and art gallery premises daily Monday to Saturday and notify the Library Manager of any defects or issues that require attention. Staff check Moorlands House storage areas monthly and report any issues to the Duty Caretaker.

## 6.0 The Collections

6.1 The museum is aware of the risks to the collection from environmental factors, poor handling, storage and display materials and methods, and of the need to record the condition of the collection. The museum cares for the collections in store, on display and, by setting suitable conditions, on loan.

6.2 The details are listed in the Collection Care and Conservation Plan and include:

- Overview of current care and conservation
- Collection needs and vulnerable objects
- Monitoring and improving environmental conditions

- Managing the threat from pests
- Housekeeping
- Conservation cleaning
- Documentation of the condition of the collection
- Storage materials and methods
- Display materials and methods
- Object handling, movement and transportation
- Loans in and out
- Training
- Plans for improvement

## **7.0 Condition checking**

7.1 Condition checks will be carried out on all items before entering the Museum and relevant information recorded on Entry forms and in Modes. As the museum has no in-house conservation resources it will generally only acquire objects which are in fair, good or excellent condition. In exceptional circumstances objects which are in poorer condition may be considered for acquisition if resources are available to carry out any necessary conservation works and/or they are extremely important unique items.

7.2 Condition checks will be carried out on all loans out both before and after the loan, and loans in, on arrival and departure. The borrower/lender should be supplied with a copy of the condition report.

7.3 Additional checks should be carried out on items identified as at risk, e.g. items likely to attract pests such as taxidermy or woollen fabrics, or items that deteriorate over time such as silk textiles.

7.4 Additional checks should also be carried out if there is a significant change in environmental conditions, after fire, flood, suspected pest infestation or vandalism.

7.5 Condition checking should be carried out or supervised by the Cultural Services Officer. If risks are identified mitigating action should be planned and implemented.

## **8.0 Conservation and preservation principles**

8.1 The museum will strive to provide an appropriate climate of temperature, relative humidity and light levels in a pest-free environment that achieves a satisfactory balance between the long-term preservation of the collections and accessibility.

8.2 It is recognised that making collections accessible, whether by display, loan, arranged viewing, moving or handling, will always introduce a degree of risk to those objects. When facilitating use of the collections the risks and benefits must be considered and mitigating action taken to minimise potential damage.

8.3 A preventive conservation strategy is the preferred approach to collections care, supported by interventive approaches where required.

## **9.0 Insurance and indemnity**

9.1 All collections items owned by the museum and art gallery are fully insured through Zurich with an annual renewal date of 1<sup>st</sup> July.

9.2 Loans and transportation insurance will be arranged on a case-by-case basis as required.

## **10.0 Valuation**

10.1 A valuation of the majority of the collection was undertaken by Winterton's Fine Arts in 2009, two paintings were valued by Bonhams in 2012. These valuations should be revised annually and increased by an inflation-linked amount to ensure they remain up-to-date.

10.2 If an object is loaned to another organisation and the object is considered to be of high value a formal valuation will be sought from a relevant specialist.

10.3 The museum does not offer valuations to members of the public for ethical reasons as set out in the Museum Association Code of Ethics.

## **11.0 Damage or loss**

11.1 If objects are damaged or suspected to have been lost or stolen the Cultural Services Officer should be informed immediately and will escalate to their line manager. Suspected theft will be reported to the police.

11.2 Missing objects should be noted in the Modes catalogue record.

11.3 If an object is damaged there should be a review of the circumstances and action taken to prevent future damage as appropriate. Assistance from a qualified conservator should be sought if necessary.