



Collections care and conservation plan

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 plan was approved by governing body:

Insert date

Policy review procedure:

This plan will be reviewed annually.

Date at which this plan is due for review:

Insert date.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This plan sets out the actions required to implement the Care and Conservation Policy. It should be read in conjunction with the Collections Development Plan and all other plans affecting the collection and the museum buildings.

1.2 The Nicholson Museum & Art Gallery is committed to making improvements in the standard of care and conservation of the collection.

2.0 Overview of current care and conservation

2.1 Currently the Nicholson Museum & Art Gallery collection care activities are carried out by the Cultural Services Officer who reports to the Head of Communities, Culture and Climate Change. Conservation of the collection is only carried out by appropriately trained and experienced conservators appointed on a case-by-case basis.

2.2 Records of collection care activities are kept in a filing cabinet in the Art Gallery store. The museum retains records of every treatment carried out on objects. Records are added to an object's catalogue entry on Modes.

2.3 It is the Cultural Services Officer's responsibility to ensure the measures relating to documentation of the condition of collections and any treatment carried out are in place, communicated and acted upon.

3.0 Collection needs and vulnerable objects

3.1 The condition of the collection is recorded by the Cultural Services Officer who checks objects being put on display or returned to storage, loans in and out, carries out regular checks on vulnerable objects and conducts a survey of all objects every three to five years. The results are recorded electronically in Excel and noted on Modes.

3.2 Changes in the condition of any object are notified to the Cultural Services Officer for action.

3.3 The museum is aware that the following objects and collections have particular needs or are vulnerable:

Object or Collection type	Need or Vulnerability	Required actions
Taxidermy wallaby	Pest infestation	Kept in display case with pest trap checked regularly
Silk moths and associated cocoons, larvae etc	Pest infestation, light damage	Sealed in glass cases, checked regularly, light levels monitored, positioned in area to avoid direct sunlight, windows UV filtered
Silk textiles	Light damage, humidity, prone to fracture due to deterioration with age	Checked regularly, light levels monitored, positioned in area to avoid direct sunlight or in drawers, windows UV filtered
Woollen textiles	Pest infestation, light damage	Kept in display case with pest trap, checked regularly, light levels monitored, positioned in area to avoid direct sunlight, windows UV filtered
Art works in store	Physical damage, inappropriate wooden storage racks	Replace racking. Use bubble wrap to cushion. Don't overcrowd.
Objects in store	Physical damage, overcrowding due to lack of space, boxes not acid free	Find more suitable storage space. Replace boxes with acid free versions.

4.0 Monitoring and improving environmental conditions

4.1 Temperature and relative humidity

4.1.1 The museum monitors and records the temperature and relative humidity (RH) in the storage and display areas.

4.1.2 The museum aims to maintain conditions which are as stable as possible, within the range 12 – 20°C and 45 – 60% RH. If the conditions fall outside the desired range the cause is investigated and action taken to improve conditions where possible.

4.1.4 The current system uses Tiny Tag data loggers in the museum, art gallery and both storerooms. Data should be downloaded every three months. A hand-held UV monitor is used in the museum and art gallery, readings should be taken weekly and recorded on an Excel spreadsheet. The readings are taken and monitored by the Cultural Services Officer.

4.1.5 There is no method of controlling the environment in the museum and art gallery. The building has a central heating system, repaired and maintained by the building's owners Staffordshire County Council. Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) provide supplementary heaters and fans for the comfort of staff and visitors when necessary. The object and art stores are located beneath Moorlands House, the building has a central heating system maintained by SMDC, the bunker store is located below ground level and retains a stable environment.

4.2 Light

4.2.1 Objects are protected from unnecessary exposure to light, e.g. when the museum is closed. Storage areas are kept dark when not in use. Light-sensitive material is not left on permanent display or is displayed in drawers opened only when viewing.

4.2.2 Ultra violet light is excluded as much as possible. Windows and skylights in the museum and art gallery are fitted with UV filter film.

4.2.3 Light levels in the museum and art gallery are checked with a hand-held monitor that records lux levels and UV. This is the responsibility of the Cultural Services Officer, the results are recorded on an Excel spreadsheet.

4.2.4 The museum aims to keep light exposure for very light-sensitive material to a minimum. The museum will remove objects from display if light exposure is deemed to be too high.

4.3 Dust

4.3.1 Objects are protected by being kept in boxes or display cases or covered with Tyvek or cotton covers or acid-free tissue paper. If objects need to be protected with

bubble wrap, they are first covered with acid-free tissue paper. Covered objects and objects in boxes should be clearly marked to identify.

4.3.2 Dust levels in the museum are controlled by keeping the floor and other surfaces clean when possible. Floor cleaning is carried out on a daily basis, there is no cleaner employed to clean other surfaces, the Cultural Services Officer cleans the display cases when time allows.

4.3.3 Dust levels in the bunker store are relatively low. There is no cleaning programme for this area.

4.3.4 It is the Cultural Services Officer's responsibility to ensure the measures relating to monitoring and improving the environment are in place, communicated and acted upon.

5.0 Managing the threat from pests

5.1 Quarantine

5.1.1 Any object coming into the museum (including objects returned from loan) will be kept separate from the collection until it has been fully examined by a member of staff.

5.1.2 Objects awaiting examination will be kept away from the collection or isolated by placing them in a polythene box on a pad of acid-free tissue or wrapping them in bubble wrap, lined with acid-free tissue. They will be examined as soon as possible.

5.2 Monitoring

5.2.1 Sticky traps are placed in the storage and display areas, along the floors, near doorways and windows, on window sills and shelves as required, to monitor insect activity especially in dark, quiet areas.

5.2.2 The traps should be checked monthly between February – June and then every two months for the rest of the year (i.e. February, March, April, May, June, August, October, December).

5.2.3 The pest traps should be numbered and their location recorded on a plan. If pests are found which are potentially harmful to the collection or building a conservator should be consulted.

5.3 Prevention

5.3.1 Staff should be aware of the risk of pests and report any observed pests or suspected pest damage. Areas where vulnerable parts of the collection are kept should be identified and labelled.

5.3.2 No food or drink is kept in any area where the collections are stored or displayed. Waste bins are emptied daily. Good housekeeping reduces the risk of infestation by pests.

5.3.3 Windows and doors are shut when the building is closed.

5.3.4 Storage areas should be subject to deep clean in areas full of boxes and objects every two years. All boxes and objects should be removed from shelving, the shelving and walls wiped clean with microfibre cloths and then the objects are replaced.

5.3.5 Good ventilation is important for preventing mould and pest infestation. Objects should be stored in a way to allow air movement around them. Boxes should be kept at least 100mm (4 inches) away from walls. Objects should not be left on the floor or stacked against external walls. Any mouldy or pest infested packing material is thrown out promptly.

5.4. It is the Cultural Services Officer's responsibility to ensure the measures relating to pests are in place, communicated and acted upon.

6.0 Housekeeping

6.1 No polishes, cleaning agents or sprays should be used in the museum without the approval of the Cultural Services Officer. Synthetic (not feather) dusters should be used on walls (**not** on objects). Microfibre cloths (dry or dampened with clean water), brushes and vacuum cleaners should be used for cleaning the building.

6.2 Housekeeping does **not** include cleaning objects on open display.

6.3 Storage areas

- Floors should be vacuumed.
- Shelves, worksurfaces and ledges should be wiped down with microfibre cloths as necessary.
- Rubbish bins are emptied daily by anyone using the store.
- Walls should be wiped down as necessary.
- The areas should be deep-cleaned every two years.

6.4 Display areas

- Floors are cleaned by the cleaning staff every day.
- Cases are wiped with microfibre cloths by the Cultural Services Officer as time allows.
- Shelves, worksurfaces and ledges are wiped down with microfibre cloths by Cultural Services Officer as time allows.
- Rubbish bins are emptied daily by the cleaning staff.
- There is currently no schedule for cleaning windows (internally) and walls, they should be cleaned with microfibre cloths and synthetic dusters.

7.0 Conservation cleaning objects on open display/open storage

7.1 Where it is not possible to use display cases or boxes/covers and objects are on open display objects should be monitored and only cleaned when necessary in order to protect the object from abrasion and surface damage.

7.2 Delicate objects including oil paintings, gilded frames and clocks should only be cleaned by an appropriate conservator.

7.3 More robust surfaces may be cleaned using the brush vacuum method:

- Examine the object carefully and make sure that it is safe to clean
- Choose a suitable soft brush and make sure the metal ferrule is covered with masking or electrical tape.
- Cover the crevice nozzle of a vacuum cleaner with a piece of soft net or tights, held in place with a rubber band.
- Taking care not to touch the object with the vacuum cleaner hose or other apparatus, gently brush the loose dust off the object into the nozzle of the vacuum. Do not touch the object with the nozzle.
- Examine the object again, record your treatment of it and any observations.

7.4 It is the Cultural Service Officer's responsibility to ensure the measures relating to conservation cleaning of objects on open display are in place, communicated and acted upon.

8.0 Documentation of the condition of the collection

8.1 The museum should keep records of all condition checks and any treatments carried out on objects either in hard copy or electronically and should record details on the Modes catalogue.

8.2 Any conservator carrying out treatments on objects from the collection is required to supply copies of the treatment records in a format suitable for the museum's recording system.

9.0 Storage materials and methods

9.1 The museum is aware that all objects should be protected in inert packaging materials in a way which protects the object from chemical or physical damage.

9.2 The museum aims to replace any inappropriate boxes and packing materials with more appropriate materials such as acid-free tissue paper, Tyvek fabric, polythene foam or polyester wadding covered with scoured cotton calico, and boxes made from acid-free card, polythene, inert styrene or polypropylene as detailed in *Signposts Factsheet No 2 Materials for Storage and Display* (downloaded from the Collections Trust website).

9.3 Objects which are too large to be boxed should be covered with acid-free tissue or Tyvek fabric.

9.4 No object should be stored on the floor. Very large objects should be raised on padded chocks or a pallet. Smaller objects should be stored on shelves which are lined with Jiffy polythene foam or acid-free tissue.

9.5 It is the Cultural Services Officer's responsibility to ensure the measures relating to storage materials and methods are in place, communicated and acted upon.

10.0 Display materials and methods

10.1 The museum uses secure display cases whenever possible.

10.2 New cases should be chosen in accordance with the *Signposts Factsheet No 2 Materials for Storage and Display* and the *Guidance Note Choosing New Display Cases* (downloaded from the Collections Trust website).

10.3 Cases are lined with acid-free board, scoured unbleached calico or scoured polyester cotton cloth or polythene foam.

10.4 Mounts should be constructed using materials as listed in *Signposts Factsheet No 2 Materials for Storage and Display* to provide support for the object and protect it from physical damage during display and handling.

10.5 No object is permanently changed by its attachment to a mount (e.g. by drilling or using adhesive). Mounts should be suitably padded and sealed to protect the object (e.g. metal hooks or pins are sealed with an inert varnish or heatshrink polythene tubing).

10.6 Objects on open display are secured using the least damaging method possible.

10.7 It is the Cultural Services Officer's responsibility to ensure the measures relating to display materials and methods are in place, communicated and acted upon.

11.0 Object handling, movement and transportation

11.1 Only trained people are allowed to handle objects from the collection. The handling of some objects may be restricted due to the condition, vulnerability or fragility of the objects.

11.2 Objects are carried between rooms and buildings in suitably padded containers.

11.3 Changes of location longer than part of a day should be recorded using movement control slips and noted on Modes.

11.4 Transport of objects should always be accompanied by appropriate documentation. Objects must never be left unattended in vehicles.

11.5 It is the Cultural Services Officer's responsibility to ensure the measures relating to display materials and methods are in place, communicated and acted upon.

12.0 Loans in and out

12.1 The museum treats all incoming loans according to the requirements set out in the loan agreement between it and the lending body. The museum will notify the lending body if there is any change in its circumstances which mean that it can no longer meet the requirements set out in this agreement. If the lending body does not supply a Condition Check Form for each object, the museum will conduct its own Condition Check.

12.2 All requests for loans from the collection will be assessed individually before a decision is reached. The condition of the objects, the location, environment and security of the venue, transport and personnel involved will all be reviewed.

12.3 Every borrower will be asked to fill out a Facilities Report using the template available from the *UK Registrars Group* or the museum's equivalent. For particularly valuable objects, additional information regarding display cases and security may be requested using the supplementary templates available from the *UK Registrars Group* or the museum's equivalent.

12.4 Security, environmental, handling and conservation conditions are stipulated by the museum and agreed with the borrower as part of the loan agreement.

12.5 If agreed, the object to be loaned will be Condition Checked and photographed, with any existing damage clearly marked. This forms part of the loan agreement and a copy will accompany the object when it leaves the building.

12.6 Every object is checked against the original condition report when it is returned to the museum. The loan details and the outcome of the check are recorded on the object's Modes catalogue entry.

12.7 It is the Cultural Services Officer's responsibility to ensure the measures relating to loans in and out are in place, communicated and acted upon.

13.0 Training

13.1 It is the museum's policy that only people who have received appropriate training should handle or work with objects from the collections. Volunteers should be supervised and instructed appropriately by a member of paid staff.

14.0 Plans for improvement

14.1 Priority actions for the next five years designed to improve the care and conservation of the collections to meet at least the minimum standards of this plan are:

- To conduct a basic Condition Survey of all collections on display and in store.
- To devise and implement a planned programme of environmental monitoring.

- To make improvements to the storage of objects in the Bunker Object and Art Stores including:
 - devising and implementing a cleaning schedule
 - acquiring suitable acid-free storage boxes and repacking items currently boxed inappropriately
 - moving all boxes away from walls
 - acquiring suitable pallets and lifting large objects off the floor
 - covering objects on open storage with appropriate inert material
 - lining shelves with appropriate inert material.
- To improve basic housekeeping in the museum and gallery in particular the cleaning of the exterior of glass display cases and of all other surfaces not covered by present cleaning schedule.