

Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales

Policy on Collection Access and Use

1. Introduction

1.1 Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales holds collections in trust for the people of Wales. Accordingly, we make them accessible to all and facilitate their use by both present and future generations. Our 2015 Vision document, *Inspiring People, Changing Lives*, has reiterated our commitment to making the collections ever-more relevant and accessible for people today and for future generations. However, enhancing access and use must be balanced against the conservation, care, and security of the collections, all of which aim to ensure their long-term survival.

1.2 We recognize that collections are acquired for the knowledge they encapsulate as well as any aesthetic value and their relevance to Wales. Providing access to collections and knowledge and making them available for research, learning, engagement, exhibition and loan is a fundamental duty of our museums.

1.3 This policy is one part of our Collections Management Framework, accordingly it operates alongside other related museum strategies and policies listed in our *Collections Management Policy*.

2. Objective

2.1 This policy sets out how we will make the collections accessible and useable to all within the reasonable constraints of resources, conservation and security.

3. Definition of Collections Access

3.1 Collections access is the right, opportunity or means of finding, using or approaching objects or specimens and/or information about objects or specimens. (PAS197:2009).

4. Principles for Access and Engagement

4.1 The Museum is committed to offering the widest and most appropriate forms of access to its collections, expertise, facilities and services. The Museum is actively working to overcome any physical, intellectual, cultural, attitudinal, digital and financial barriers, through integrating equality and diversity into everything that we do.

4.2 Physical access is provided through display, temporary exhibitions, loans, learning and engagement programmes (which may place at an Museum site or within the community) and access to study and reference collections.

4.3 The Museum will manage the competing demands of access and long-term collection care in accordance with the *Collections Care and Conservation Policy* and any relevant legislation.

4.4 We will work towards making all our collection information available through a variety of digital platforms. This will include on-line catalogues, the use of social media, and interactive gallery displays. Users will be able to view our on-line content and also to engage and contribute to user-generated content.

4.5 Any charges for access will be made in accordance with our Charging Policy and further information can be found on our website <https://museum.wales/freedom-of-information/public-task-document/>. Requests for information under the Freedom of Information procedure will be dealt with in line with the Freedom of Information Act.

4.6 We champion access to collections in order to promote knowledge and unlock creativity. However, access to special temporary exhibitions, facilitation, events and some collection enquiries may be subject to charges being levied in accordance with our charging policy.

4.7 Where a request for access cannot be granted e.g. as a result of conditions of donation or loan we will offer full reasons for a refusal if that is our decision. However, the opportunity to examine a photograph or replica of the objects or specimens concerned will be granted whenever reasonably possible.

4.8 We will restrict access to objects or specimens of particularly high value, fragility or sensitivity (for instance, type specimens or human remains (see Policy for Human Remains)) only to those whose access is justified for cultural or research needs.

4.9 Requests for samples or material required for DNA-based studies (plant or animal), will be subject to a formal application for destructive analysis (see Appendix A, and the Policy for Human Remains).

5. Specific Ethical and Legislative Considerations

5.1 The Museum will provide access to collections in accordance with the Museums Association's Code of Ethics for Museums and the Ethical Guidelines on Access and Use. Our Policy on Human Remains ensures we comply with the Human Tissue Act 2004 and guidance issued by the Human Tissue Authority associated with access and public display of human tissue. Access for DNA sampling must comply with criteria in Appendix A.

5.2 Access to collection information will be made in accordance with Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts as detailed in our Policy on Collections Information.

6. Access and Engagement through Display, Exhibitions and Events

6.1 We will present a broad range of exhibitions and displays. We define target audiences and develops interpretation, informed by evaluation, to suit these audiences (see *Interpretation Strategy*).

6.2 We will provide longer-term and temporary exhibitions of specimens and objects in the collections.

6.3 We will undertake temporary exhibitions which allow items to be displayed in different contexts and alongside items borrowed from other collections (see *Museum Display Guidelines*).

6.4 Our displays will present information about items on display through labels, wall texts and other contextual and complementary information. We will take advantage of new technologies to present information in innovative ways allowing access to information about the items and themes both within, and beyond, the galleries.

6.5 We will advertise exhibitions and events widely in publicity material, on our website, through the use of social media and in the local and national press and other media.

6.6 We will provide a wide range of learning and engagement programmes which are developed to meet the needs and learning styles of our diverse users, interests and learning styles.

7. Physical access to objects or specimens

7.1 We make no discrimination regarding access on the basis of physical, sensory or intellectual ability, cultural origin, age or social status, and will seek to widen general access and social inclusion.

7.2 We will actively identify objects or specimens from amongst the collections that can be handled unsupervised. We will also seek to acquire objects or specimens for this purpose (see *Collection Development Policy*).

7.3 We will offer facilities for the study and use of collections. These facilities will be open to all, within the normal constraints on access and use and subject to collection-specific collection handling guidelines and staff availability.

7.4 Wherever possible we will take items from our collections to off-site locations for events (e.g. to community workshops, Eisteddfod) in order to maximize access and engagement.

7.5 We will make spaces that display our collections available for commercial use (functions, filming) as long as this does not create an ethical position contrary to our own. We will ensure that such events are undertaken in accordance with Government Indemnity Scheme Guidance.

7.6 We will ensure that any materials (e.g. ink, watercolours, ball-point pens etc.) used in proximity to our collections are approved prior to their use.

8. Outward Loans

8.1 We will encourage and enable other museums and galleries to display items from the collections (see *Policy on Outward Loans*).

8.2 We will encourage other institutions and scholars to borrow items from the collections (see *Policy on Outward Loans*).

9. Inward Loans

9.1 We may borrow items for research projects to enhance the narratives presented in displays and to generate new knowledge about the collections.

9.2 We will borrow items from other collections to display in temporary exhibitions to enable us to display collections in different contexts.

10. Provision and Use of Collection Information

10.1 The Museum provides on-line access to the collections and collections information through the Museum website and collection catalogues, which are updated regularly with new information as it becomes available (see *Policy on Collections Information*).

10.2 More detailed collections information is provided through catalogues (printed or unpublished) and through our collections registers and indexes.

10.3 Copies of information or Museum materials, where permissible by copyright regulations and there are no data protection issues, will be available but may be subject to appropriate charges in line with what it costs us to make that information available. All charges will be made in accordance with our Charging Policy and further information can be found on our website <https://museum.wales/freedom-of-information/public-task-document/>. Requests for information under the Freedom of Information procedure will be dealt with in line with the Freedom of Information Act.

10.4 The Museum will answer enquiries regarding its collections in order to supplement information provided elsewhere.

10.5 The Museum provides a service, subject to resources, whereby curatorial staff provide an opinion on items for which it has the relevant expertise.

10.6 It may sometimes be necessary for us to restrict or to keep confidential information regarding the acquisition of a specimen or object (for instance, in order to protect vulnerable sites or in order to respect an individual's request for confidentiality).

10.7 We will make notes from research carried out by, or on, our behalf available three years after completion of the active collection of specimens or data, regardless of whether or not the work is published, and in accordance with any relevant information legislation.

11. Photography and filming

11.1 Photography is allowed at our Museum sites for personal, non-commercial purposes only.

11.2 The use of flash and tripods is prohibited as is the use of selfie sticks in areas where there are unglazed artworks or other unprotected objects.

11.3 Photography in loan exhibitions, or of loan items, is not permitted at any time.

11.4 Photography of human remains in displays is not permitted at any time (See *Policy on Human Remains*).

11.5 We will supply and license images for commercial purposes through AC-NMW Enterprises

Appendix A – Requests for samples and analysis (including DNA)

We welcome the opportunity for the collections in our care to be used in as many ways as possible for the furtherance of scientific study.

A.1 All requests for research involving the extraction of a sample from an item or specimen in the Museum collection should be addressed to the Head of the relevant collecting discipline. The enquirer will be asked to complete a sampling request form which will address:

- The nature of the project.
- A justification for the use of the material requested.
- Evidence of the proven track record in the proposed technique.
- Evidence that the proposed technique produces reliable results.
- Support from acknowledged experts in the field.

A.2 We will evaluate any proposal with regard to scientific importance and technical feasibility.

A.3 All requests for destructive samples from human remains will be subject to assessment by both internal and external assessors.

A.4 A successful applicant will be required to enter into a formal legal requirement to:

- Submit sequences extracted from Museum specimens to an established publicly accessible archive (e.g. EMBL or SRA) and provide us with the accession numbers of computer-readable copies of sequence data as soon as possible but no later than the date of submission for any publication arising from the work.
- Provide copies of experimental protocols that differ from published methods.
- Publish jointly with Museum staff if they have contributed significantly to the work.
- Acknowledge use of the collections in publications involving use of Museum specimens.
- Provide feedback to us indicating possible reasons for problems encountered, especially if the project fails.
- Material can only be passed to third parties or subsequently used for an alternative project with our prior approval.

A.5 We will retain all rights to DNA sequences derived from specimens in our collections, unless rights are still held by the country of origin. The research and the results of the research may not be commercially exploited in any way without our prior agreement. We may refuse such agreements at our absolute discretion, or grant them, subject to such conditions as we may decide and we may well require agreement as to the sharing of the financial benefits arising from such exploitation. Such decisions will be informed by the principles of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.

A.6 Non-UK biological specimens collected after 12th October 2014, may fall under the scope of the Nagoya Protocol and require the relevant permissions in place for

DNA analysis from the provider country (see <https://www.cbd.int/abs/nagoya-protocol/signatories/default.shtml>). Any contracts with provider countries agreed prior to the Nagoya Protocol coming into force must also be complied with. We will not permit DNA sampling of specimens if they do not have the required permissions (Mutually Agreed Terms and Prior Informed Consent). If considered beneficial we may support requesting retrospective permission from the provider country.

A.7 We retain the right to insist that tissue extractions are undertaken in an appropriate laboratory.

A.8 We retain the right to refuse permission for destructive sampling of Museum specimens.

A.9 We undertake not to disseminate any data we receive from any research or publicize any innovations until they have been published.

A.10 We will make a charge for any expenses it may incur in the facilitation of an application for destructive analysis.