

DORSET NATURAL HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

COLLECTIONS CARE AND CONSERVATION POLICY

Name of Museum: Dorset Museum

Name of Governing Body: Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society

Policy approved by the Board of DNHAS: 28 July 2022

Policy review date: July 2027

1. DNHAS collections care commitment

Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society's (DNHAS) museum collections are at the heart of everything it does; they are the reason why the organisation exists and what makes it unique. The collections comprise approximately four million objects.

Management and care of Dorset Museum's collections are central to the aims and objectives which underpin DNHAS.

DNHAS has the duty of:

- maintaining and developing Dorset Museum's collections
- preserving and conserving Dorset Museum's collections for the future benefit of all

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

- the preservation of the collections and buildings in the care of the museum
- preventive and remedial conservation of the collections
- the safe use of and access to collections, within the limits of the museum's resources

The Collections Care and Conservation Plan sets out the way that this policy will be put into action.

Collections team staff co-ordinate collections care through monitoring, documentation, research, and preventive and remedial conservation, across Dorset Museum, in line with the Memorandum of Articles and Association, Vision, Mission and Strategic Aims, and Forward Plan and annual budgets, whilst promoting access for visitors, researchers and all other users.

Any concerns regarding the collections should be reported in writing to the Collections Manager and/or the Curator. The Collections team report issues to the Museum's Director; if the issues are significant, the Director will report them to the DNHAS Board of Trustees.

DNHAS is committed to training and raising awareness of collections care issues. By promoting collections care issues to staff and voluntary team members, the Collections team 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.

The safety and preservation of Dorset Museum's collections 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.

2. Preventive conservation

2.1 Introduction

Dorset Museum stores and displays collections in managed environments that minimise their rate of deterioration and exposure to damaging conditions. The following measures are in place to control spaces where objects are housed:

- Dorset Museum's buildings are maintained in robust conditions (i.e. wind-proof, watertight and with appropriate floor loadings) that provide appropriate environmental conditions for its wide-ranging collections
- Dorset Museum's Facilities Manager is responsible for the provision, regular inspection and maintenance of suitable building conditions; they work closely with the Collections team and conservation advisors to achieve the best possible conditions for the collections

Collections are safeguarded through the management of the following:

- Building maintenance
 - galleries are laid out so that objects are away from sources of heat, air conditioning vents and direct sunlight, and lit by LED lighting that emits negligible UV radiation
 - all windows and doors can be closed so that the building provides protection from airborne pollutants and dust
 - where appropriate, objects on display will be cased, and the internal case environments will be inert and tailored to suit the objects within
 - where practicable and appropriate, stored collections will be housed in closed racking, inert crates, inert boxes, or covered pallets to protect from dust
 - all materials used in storage areas and for display purposes (e.g. wood, fabrics, paints, adhesives and shelving) will be checked for suitability, and tested where appropriate prior to use
- Mechanical and electrical maintenance
 - all relevant mechanical and electrical systems are covered by service contracts and inspected periodically
- A building management system that controls gallery and storage environments
- Secure cases and object display fixtures
- Intruder alarms
- Fire and evacuation systems

If capital developments are planned, the care of the collections will be of paramount importance, and curatorial staff will be involved in the planning process. Any such plans will be set out in Dorset Museum's Forward Plan.

As of July 2022, Dorset Museum's collections are stored and displayed in both the Museum itself and in four external sites in the Dorchester area. One of these external sites is owned by Dorset Museum, the others are leased from Dorset Council.

The Museum carries out inspections of the buildings that house its collections, and notifies the body responsible about any maintenance work required.

Dorset Museum's Hardy and Barnes archives, photography and glass negative collections, and a regional newspaper archive are on loan to Dorset History Centre; this arrangement is in place to secure optimal storage conditions for their long-term preservation (they can be accessed at the Dorset History Centre by researchers on request).

2.2 Vulnerable objects

Dorset Museum is aware that the following collections have particular needs or are vulnerable:

- Paper collections (require low light and low humidity levels)
- Watercolour paintings (require low light levels)
- Entomology specimens in the natural history collection (require low light levels and pest monitoring)
- Taxidermy specimens in the natural history collection (require low light levels and pest monitoring)
- Pyritic specimens in the geology collection (require low humidity conditions)
- Sub-fossil specimens in the geology collection (require stable humidity conditions)
- Shale objects in the archaeology collection (require stable humidity conditions)
- Metallic objects in the archaeology collection (require low humidity conditions)
- Wooden objects (require stable humidity conditions and pest monitoring)

The Dorset Museum Care and Conservation Plan sets out how Dorset Museum cares for vulnerable objects in its care.

Dorset Museum does not care for any working historical items.

2.3 Environmental monitoring

Dorset Museum will monitor the gallery and storage environments in which its collections are housed to maintain them within set limits, namely:

- Temperatures between 18°C and 23°C, with less than a 5°C fluctuation in any 24 hour period
- Relative humidity between 45% and 60%, with less than a 10% fluctuation in any 24 hour period
- Visible light radiation between 50 lux and 250 lux in display areas, depending upon the light sensitivity of the objects; lights switched off when any space is not being accessed
- UV radiation less than 75 mw/lm (micro watts per lumen), with 0 mw/lm UV in Natural Dorset, People's Dorset, Artists' Dorset and Special Exhibitions galleries

Additional controls are put in place where objects require special measures.

Environment monitoring is carried out by the Collections team using the building's environment management system, Fort Echo case and artwork logger tags, and thermo-hygrometers.

2.4 Housekeeping

Good housekeeping keeps Dorset Museum clean, reducing the risk of infestation by pests.

All Collections team staff and volunteers receive regular training to ensure that the cleaning of storage and display areas is carried out in such a way that the objects are safe.

Dorset Museum storage areas and storage furniture are cleaned and inspected by Collections team staff and volunteers at least quarterly. Advice from qualified, experienced conservators regarding the most appropriate cleaning approach will be sought as appropriate.

Environment monitoring is carried out by the Collections team. All storage and display areas are monitored for invertebrate pests using pheromone insect traps, and are checked monthly. The costume and textile, paper, and natural history collections are closely observed. Should pests be detected, the trap contents will be recorded, the pest source located and eradicated in the area, and objects treated where necessary. A log is kept of objects that are frozen. If any staff or

volunteer team member spots pests in or near any collection objects, the Collections Management team should be notified immediately.

All records relating to environment and pest monitoring are collated and stored by the Collections team. They are accessible on the museum's computer network drive here: <T:\Shared\Collections and Public Engagement\1. Collections\#Environmental monitoring\Pest traps>.

Monitoring and control equipment is regularly inspected, tested and calibrated, and serviced, in accordance with the manufacturer's guidance, and current health and safety legislation, and as set out in the Care and Conservation Plan.

Any incoming material (including returning loans), or objects in Dorset Museum showing signs of pest infestation or mould, will be isolated from other objects in the quarantine room, and frozen where appropriate. Only after inspection and any necessary treatment will such objects be introduced into areas containing other collection items.

Food and drink consumption is prohibited in all collections storage and display areas.

It is the responsibility of the Facilities Manager, Collections Manager and Curator to ensure the measures relating to housekeeping are in place, communicated, and acted upon.

2.5 Handling, moving and transport

Dorset Museum will move its museum objects safely and securely, and document object movements, in accordance with the guidance set out in the Dorset Museum Documentation Procedural Manual, Section 4. Only staff, volunteers, visitors and researchers who have received appropriate training or information can handle or work with objects from the collections; full training in object handling is given to all Collections team staff and volunteers.

The movement of large or awkward items will be planned in accordance with advice from the Collections team and Facilities Manager. Such moves will be risk assessed and method statements will be produced in advance.

All objects that are transported will be suitably wrapped and packaged to give them optimal protection, as specified by the Collections and Technical teams. Trolleys, dollies, sack or pallet trucks, or other appropriate lifting and/or moving equipment will be employed where necessary. This equipment is kept well maintained. No object will be left unattended outside of Dorset Museum until it has reached its destination and being cared for elsewhere.

Items that are transported abroad will be accompanied by a courier, who will be either a member of Dorset Museum's staff or a delegated representative from another museum.

It is the responsibility of the Facilities Manager, Collections Manager and Curator to ensure the measures relating to transport methods are in place, communicated and acted upon.

The Museum treats all incoming loans according to the requirements set out in the relevant loan agreement between it and the lending body, as set out in the Documentation Procedural Manual, Sections 9 and 10. All requests for loans from the collection over the value of £1,000 will be assessed individually by the Board of Trustees before a decision is reached.

3 Remedial conservation

3.1 Introduction

Dorset Museum does not have an in-house conservator. External conservators are sometimes brought in to work on projects where funding allows. Dorset Museum will check the suitability of conservators chosen to work or advise on the collections. A professionally accredited conservator or a conservator listed on the Conservation Register will normally be chosen. Dorset Museum will contact its regional Conservation Development Officer, Helena Jaeschke at Royal Albert Memorial Museum Exeter, for advice as necessary.

Dorset Museum will carry out remedial conservation work on objects in its care where this is necessary to contribute to their continuing survival and accessibility, and in line with the following principles:

- Regular object inspections and condition assessments will be carried out, and advice sought from appropriately qualified, experienced conservators; they will work in conjunction with the Collections team in the prioritisation of objects in need of remedial treatment, and the development of the Museum's Care and Conservation Plan for the long-term treatment and care of its collections
- Any cleaning or minor repair carried out by curatorial staff or volunteers must occur under the instruction of appropriately qualified, experienced conservators
- Work undertaken by conservators employed by DNHAS will conform to the standards set down by the Institute of Conservation (ICON), and will be in line with the Health and Safety at Work Act

The Director must give authorisation for any object's standards of care to change, or for any objects to receive conservation treatment, if an inspection suggests that an object is vulnerable to deterioration without treatment.

As set out in the Care and Conservation Plan, records of all conservation work undertaken on objects, including the name and contact details of the person or company that undertook the work, are retained in Object History Files (located in the corridor between the collections offices, West Wing of building), and on the museum's Collections Index+ database. Following conservation work, if necessary, objects should be re-examined on agreed check dates.

4. Associated documentation

Dorset Museum's Collections Care and Conservation Policy should be read in association with the following documents:

- Collections Care and Conservation Plan
- Documentation Procedural Manual
- Documentation Policy
- Museum Association Code of Ethics for Museums