

Acquisition and Disposal Policy - Draft

Name of museum	Wirral Museums Service
Name of governing body	Metropolitan Borough of Wirral
Date on which this policy was approved by governing body2009
Date at which this policy is due for review2012

1 Museum's statement of purpose**WIRRAL MUSEUMS' MISSION STATEMENT**

To make the exploration of Wirral's Life and History an interesting and entertaining experience, accessible to all sections of society.

KEY AIMS

- To collect items of local, regional, national and international importance to reflect Wirral's life and history, and to place that in a meaningful context
- To encourage and enable access to museums collections by all sections of society
- To ensure the on-going development of the learning opportunities within the Museums Service
- To continue to develop the sites and venues of the Museums Service through an on-going capital investment programme and to secure external investment
- To attract visitors and tourists to Wirral through the promotion of the Museums Service

2 Existing collections, including the subjects or themes and the periods of time and /or geographic areas to which the collections relate**THE COLLECTIONS IN BRIEF**

Wirral Museums Service is responsible for several historically and educationally significant collections. These are housed at the Williamson Art Gallery, Wirral Museum, Birkenhead Priory and Wirral Transport Museum. At the time of writing, while the future of buildings currently operated by Wirral Museums Service is under review, collections will be transferred as appropriate within the Service.

The **Williamson Art Gallery** collection largely comprises;

- Fine and decorative art, particularly 18th and 19th century watercolour paintings and drawings;
- Lee's Tapestry Works, an archive collection of drawings, photographs and fabric samples illustrating the work of Arthur H Lee & Sons up to closure in 1970
- Ceramics – most noteworthy is the Della Robbia pottery collection which was made in Birkenhead;
- Maritime models, particularly the Mersey ferries, and vessels linked with the Cammell Laird shipyard;
- Social history artefacts, together with some military, archaeological and geological items – particularly useful as educational tools but fully displayable collections.

Wirral Museum was developed as the main centre for displaying and interpreting Wirral's social history. This includes:

- the Council's civic silverware and regalia collection
- a display relating to the history of Cammell Laird's shipyard
- a scale model of the Woodside area as it was on the day in July 1934, when the first Mersey Road Tunnel was opened by King George VI
- a changing programme of special interest and topical displays.

Birkenhead Priory is a museum object in itself, as Scheduled Ancient Monument and with a variety of Grade I, II* and II listed buildings on site. On display are archaeological items from the site itself with a selection of contextual items and a changing exhibition of other works drawn from the Williamson's collection or from contemporary artists.

Wirral Transport Museum has developed collections, some on loan, to trace the development of public road transport in Wirral, from the first tramway in 1860, to bus deregulation in 1986. Particularly significant are the historic trams from the former Birkenhead, Wallasey, and Liverpool tramways, restored by the Merseyside

Tramway Preservation Society. Of increasing interest is the historic bus collection covering the period from 1943 to the late 1970s, some of which are still undergoing restoration in an effort to retain vehicles in working order. A small collection of cars, motorbikes, models, etc has been developed, some on loan, especially where they are of local significance.

3 Criteria governing future acquisition policy including the subjects or themes, periods of time and/or geographic areas and any collections which will not be subject to further acquisition.

Wirral Museums Service is appreciative of increasing pressure on storage space and the cost of appropriate conservation work, both preventative and restorative.

The expansion of collections is achieved by donation, bequest and purchase using both the Museums Service's own small purchase fund and grant-aid from the Friends of the Williamson Art Gallery & Wirral Museums, The Art Fund and the MLA Purchase Funds administered by the Victoria & Albert Museum and Science Museum.

The collection breaks down into the following areas, with notes on collection development:

Fine Art *British watercolours*

Additions primarily where weak – 20th century, Pre-Raphaelite artists

Liverpool School

Additions sought, especially to fill gaps in collection

Philip Wilson Steer

Additions sought if contribute to demonstration of artistic development

Work by local artists

Continue regular purchase of contemporary work, including commissions, & historic Wirral topography; also acquisition of work in depth and appropriate archive material related to significant artists

Historic British paintings

Not to be purchased unless also fitted into another category

Contemporary British paintings

Continue collection to contextualise local purchasing

Foreign paintings

Not to be sought unless also fitted into another category

Prints

Continue to trace development of print as an artistic medium

Photographs

Not to be sought unless also fitted into another category

Sculpture

Not to be sought unless also fitted into another category and within the resources of the Museums Service to store & conserve as appropriate

Decorative Arts

Liverpool Porcelain

Additions only sought for exceptional pieces

Della Robbia Pottery

Additions to complete areas of collection, including for purposes of reference or comparison and exceptional pieces

Other Merseyside ceramics

Seacombe Pottery to be actively pursued, others to be considered a low priority

British ceramics

Additions in 20th century industrial ceramics or to contextualise existing collections only

Contemporary crafts

Acquisitions by local craftspeople and to reflect diversity of materials & techniques

Oriental

Not considered a priority

Continental

Not considered a priority unless to contextualise existing collections

Lee Tapestries

Additions to complete areas of collection, including for purposes of reference or comparison and exceptional pieces

Textiles & costume

Not considered a priority unless to contextualise existing collections

Glass

Not to be sought unless also fitted into another category

Metalwork

Not to be sought unless also fitted into another category

Jewellery

Not to be sought unless also fitted into another category

Furniture & clocks

Not to be sought unless also fitted into another category

Maritime

Models

Additions only to complete areas of collection, including for purposes of reference or comparison and exceptional pieces

Pictures

Additions sought for locally significant items

Artefacts

Additions sought for locally significant items

Social History

Additions sought for locally significant items, especially with educational/handling potential

Domestic

Additions sought for locally significant items, especially with educational/handling potential

Commercial

Additions sought for locally significant items, especially with educational/handling potential

Natural Sciences

Not to be sought unless also fitted into another category

Archaeology

Local

Donations sought where no conflict with other local collections

National & international

Not to be sought unless also fitted into another category

Ethnography

Not to be sought unless also fitted into another category

Geology

Not to be sought unless also fitted into another category

Military

Not to be sought unless also fitted into another category

Transport

Not to be sought unless also fitted into another category

4 Limitations on collecting

The museum 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.

5 Collecting policies of other museums

The museum 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 specialisms, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

Specific reference is made to the following museum(s):

National Museums Liverpool

Victoria Gallery & Museum, University of Liverpool

Grosvenor Museum, Chester

6 Policy review procedure

The Acquisition and Disposal Policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years. The date when the policy is next due for review is noted above.

The MLA will be notified of any changes to the Acquisition and Disposal Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of existing collections.

7 Acquisitions not covered by the policy

Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in very exceptional circumstances, and then only after proper consideration by the governing body of the museum itself, having regard to the interests of other museums.

8 Acquisition procedures

- a. The museum will exercise 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.
- b. In particular, the museum 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).
- c. 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, the museum 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.
- d. So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the museum 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.
- e. The museum 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.

(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 as defined by the Treasure Act 1996.)

- f. Any exceptions to the above clauses 8a, 8b, 8c, or 8e will only be because the museum 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 the museum will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

- g. The museum does not hold or intend to acquire any human remains.

9 Spoliation

The museum 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.

10 The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains

The museum does not hold or intend to acquire any human remains.

The museum's governing body, acting on the advice of the museum's professional staff, if any, may take a decision to return objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The museum 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 12a-12d, 12g and 12s below will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.

11 Management of archives

As the museum holds archives, including photographs and printed ephemera, its governing body will be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (3rd ed., 2002).

12 Disposal procedures

- a. The governing body will ensure that the disposal process is carried out openly and with transparency.
- b. By definition, the museum has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for society in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons for disposal must be established before consideration is given to the disposal of any items in the museum's collection.
- c. The museum will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item and agreements on disposal made with donors will be taken into account.

- d. When disposal of a museum object is being considered, the museum 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.
- e. When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined in paragraphs 12g-12s will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale or exchange.
- f. The museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons
- g. The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the governing body only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including the 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. External 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.
- h. 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 governing body of the museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the curator of the collection acting alone.
- i. Any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied 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 MLA.
- j. The proceeds of a sale will be ring-fenced so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard.
- k. Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain, unless it is to be destroyed. 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.
- l. If the material is not acquired by any Accredited Museums to which it was offered directly 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 an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal, and in other specialist journals where appropriate.
- m. 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, the museum may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.

- n. 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 governing body will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.
- o. In cases where the governing body wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or unaccredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 12a-12d and 12g-12h will be followed as will the procedures in paragraphs 12p-12s.
- p. 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.
- q. If the exchange is proposed with a non-accredited museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, the museum will make an announcement in the Museums Journal and in other specialist journals where appropriate.
- r. 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 governing body must consider the comments before a final decision on the exchange is made.
- s. 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.