



**ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL'S MUSEUMS SERVICE COLLECTIONS DEVELOPMENT POLICY**

**Policy Summary**

<b>Policy Status</b>	Approved and finalised by the committee on 04/09/2025
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Amy Miller, Museums Development Co-ordinator, Live Life Aberdeenshire Culture Team
<b>Policy Sponsor</b>	Chris Murphy, Service Manager, Live Life Aberdeenshire
<b>Authorised By</b>	Communities Committee
<b>Policy Review Date</b>	04/09/2030

**1. Policy Statement**

Aberdeenshire Museums Service maintains, develops, researches, conserves, and provides access to historic and artistic collections held in trust for by Aberdeenshire Council for future generations. This policy sets out the how this collection will be developed over the next five-year period, including accessions and disposals to the managed collection.

The Collections Development Policy highlights future key priorities and themes that will strengthen our collections and forthcoming developments for the purposes of exhibition, interpretation of stories, or research.

**2. Scope of Policy**

2.1 This policy applies to all historic and artistic property held by Aberdeenshire Council and under the care of Aberdeenshire Museums Service.

2.2 It excludes other historic and artistic collections held by:

- Aberdeenshire Libraries Local Studies
- Aberdeenshire Archives

2.3 This policy applies to operations at Live Life Aberdeenshire Museums facilities including the Discovery Centre / Museum HQ, Aberdeenshire Farming Museum, and Banchory Museum.

**3. Policy Principles & Equalities**

As a responsible custodian of public collections, the Museums Service is required to review its museum policies every five years. This is an essential element of fulfilling the nationally agreed standards of our accreditation status.



This suite of documents covers a range of requirements and are presented to Communities Committee for approval as the governing body.

Approval of these policies is essential to maintain Spectrum museum documentation procedural standards and fulfil national requirements set by Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS).

The intervening period since the last review has seen significant changes for Aberdeenshire Museums Service; notably the appointment of a new professional team and a multi-million-pound investment from the UK Government in a new museum representing the whole of Aberdeenshire. As a team we now have a far better understanding of our facilities and collections and this knowledge has resulted in a refocus as we plan for the next five years.

During the development and review of policies, Officers and Elected Members are legally required to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Fairer Scotland Duty.

### **3.1 History of the Collections**

The collections in the care of Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service are an amalgam of several independent collections, the earliest dating back to 1828 in the case of the collection once resident in Banff Museum. Consisting of some of the finest archaeological objects in Scotland, including the Iron Age Deskford Carnyx and the Gaulcross Hoard of Pictish silver, the collection was complemented by donations of arms and armour from the Duke of Fife and the natural history collection of noted Scottish naturalist Thomas Edward, who was also the former curator of Banff Museum.

Adam Arbuthnot, a merchant from Peterhead, began collecting archaeology, numismatics and objects from world cultures in the first half of the 19th century, and James Kerr of Inverurie was an avid collector of archaeology and ephemera.

Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service also holds a collection of agricultural material purchased in 1994 by Banff & Buchan District Council from Adamston, Huntly, and collected by the late Hew McCall-Smith. This was supplemented by the purchase and relocation of Hareshowe Croft in 1990, to form the core collection located at Aden Country Park, Aberdeenshire. The collection was awarded Recognised Collection of National Significance status in 2008 (See C.1).

The enthusiasm of Aberdeenshire collectors has resulted in an eclectic and diverse collection that encompasses the length and breadth of the history of north-east Scotland, including farming, fishing, whaling, archaeology and the county's unique contribution to cultural and economic development world-wide.

In 1975, all museums were transferred to local authority control, and in 1996 became the responsibility of Aberdeenshire Council. Live Life Aberdeenshire (LLA), the Council's new and innovative way of delivering high quality cultural and sports services, including museums, was created in 2019. All reserve collections have been relocated to Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service Headquarters in Mintlaw since 2004, allowing ease of access by staff and communities alike.



The collections have been available to the communities in which they were collected since their creation and have long been appreciated and accessed by those communities, an ethos which Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service is committed to uphold.

### **3.2 Collections – an overview**

#### **A. Fine and Applied Art**

For ease of consideration the Art collection has been divided into sub-headings:

- a) Fine Art – includes paintings (oils and watercolours), drawings (pencil, ink, charcoal and pastel) and prints.
- b) Applied Art – includes sculpture, silver, glass, ceramics, furniture, horology, metalwork and some miscellaneous domestic and religious material.

#### **A.1 Fine Art**

The core of the Fine Art collection largely comprises the former burgh collections. While there are four pre-19th-century portraits, the greatest concentration is on 19th- and early 20th-century Scottish painting, particularly portraits, maritime paintings and a few landscapes, and some contemporary 20th- and early 21st-century material by Aberdeenshire artists.

##### **A.1.1 Oil Paintings**

This group comprises portraits (mainly of former Provosts), maritime paintings, landscapes, still life and some genre paintings. Important names in this group include Sir David Wilkie, Robert Brough, Joseph Farquharson, James Giles, George Sherwood Hunter, R. Gemmell Hutchison, Norman Macbeth, John Phillip, Sir George Reid and George Fiddes Watt. Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service holds the only collection in public hands in Northern Scotland of works by the Peterhead artist James Forbes, the teacher of John Phillip. Several contemporary paintings by Aberdeenshire artists were acquired pre-2015.

##### **A.1.2 Watercolours and Drawings**

This is a small group, the most significant of which are the 18th-century portraits by James Ferguson, and the series of watercolours of Peterhead painted in 1795 by Montague Beattie. There is a small number of contemporary watercolours and drawings by Aberdeenshire artists.

##### **A.1.3 Prints**

This group falls into two distinct sections. One group is of 19th-century prints, largely landscape views, nearly all of which are of Aberdeenshire scenes. The other group is a larger collection of late 20th-century prints, mostly by contemporary artists from the North East.



## **A.2 Applied Art**

The Applied Art collection covers a wide variety of objects and materials, of which the silver sub-collection (especially that of Banff) is of national importance.

### **A.2.1 Silver**

This group of artefacts includes material produced in Banff, Peterhead, Ballater and Stonehaven. The collection of Banff silver is the largest in Scotland. Half of the known Banff silversmiths are represented in the collection. There is an important series of silver prize trophies associated with the mid-19th-century Volunteer movement in Aberdeenshire.

### **A.2.2 Sculpture and Ceramics**

There is a small number of sculptures and ceramics, some of which are by contemporary Aberdeenshire artists.

### **A.2.3 Furniture and Horology**

This is a small collection, the most significant items being several 17th-century chairs, the chair of Inverurie poet William Thom, and a few longcase clocks.

### **A.2.4 Metalwork**

This group of material includes brass, copper, pewter and plated wares. It incorporates secular and religious material such as presentation gifts and trophies and community plate, mostly of local manufacture and association.

## **B. Natural Sciences**

For ease of consideration the Natural Sciences Collection has been divided into sub-headings: the collection is composed of Vertebrate Zoology, Invertebrate Zoology, Botany and Geology.

### **B.1 Vertebrate Zoology**

#### **B.1.1 Taxidermy and Skeletal Material**

This collection consists largely of British birds, mammals, some reptiles and fish, with some foreign species. Much of the material represents what survives of 19th-century collections. Some 20th-century specimens have been acquired for display purposes.

#### **B.1.2 Bird's Eggs**

This is a small collection, largely of British birds, with some exotic species (e.g., ostrich). Legislation now prohibits the collecting of eggs of British birds; this collection will not expand in the future.



## **B.2 Invertebrate Zoology**

This is the largest collection in Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service comprising several thousand specimens from various sources. The two principal components are mollusc shells and insects.

The mollusc shell collection is largely of foreign species; much comes from historical collections, and there is an extensive and high-quality late 20th century collection. The historical collections reflect scientific collecting during the 19th-century period of "Scots abroad", while the modern collection has good accompanying data.

The insect collection derives from historical collections; no recent additions have been made to this section.

## **B.3 Botany**

The botanical collection mainly consists of a small herbarium of Arctic plants collected by Captain Francis Rawdon Moira Crozier who accompanied Sir John Franklin on his last expedition, and a small miscellany of algae, plant specimens etc., collected in the 19th century. There is a small collection of seeds, nuts and dried plant material collected in the 19th century.

## **B.4 Geology**

The collections of rocks, minerals and fossils are variable in quality.

### **B.4.1 Rocks**

The rock collection consists of a few hundred specimens from Aberdeenshire, Britain and Europe. There is patchy coverage of local rock types, though there is a representative collection of granites.

### **B.4.2 Minerals**

This collection contains a fairly representative group of minerals, suitable for display, education and research.

### **B.4.3 Fossils**

The fossil collection includes representative specimens of the major fossil groups and has important Old Red Sandstone fish material. Much of the material, however, is not of display quality, although the Old Red Sandstone fish material has been the subject of research work in the past.



## **C. Human History**

For ease of consideration the Human History Collection has been divided into the following sub-headings:

Farming	Social History	Archives
Costume and Textiles	Archaeology	Numismatics
Ethnography	Arms and Armour	Photography

### **C.1 Farming**

The agricultural collections of the Aberdeenshire Farming Museum were awarded Recognised Collection of National Significance, designated by Museums Galleries Scotland, in 2008.

The collection is based on the original agricultural collection amassed at Adamston, Huntly by the late Hew McCall-Smith and purchased by Banff & Buchan District Council in 1984. The original collection was augmented by further acquisitions by the former North East Scotland Agricultural Heritage Centre (NESAHC), including the relocation to Aden Country Park of the Hareshowe croft in 1990. The NESAHC collections were supplemented in 1996 by the agricultural collection of North East Scotland Museums Service (NESMS).

The collection presents an extensive view of farming and country life in North East Scotland over the last two to three hundred years, with a strong focus on the 19th and 20th centuries. The collection includes some important items such as the early wooden ox plough from the NESMS collection. The range of larger agricultural implements demonstrates the importance of the local burgh foundries to farming in Aberdeenshire.

Archives relating to this collection include some rural farming business material such as Barclay, Ross & Hutchison of Turriff. There is a good, though incomplete, run of the Transactions of the (Royal) Highland & Agricultural Society of Scotland from 1872 to 1968, as well as Clydesdale stud books and catalogues of important breeders and their herds of Aberdeen Angus cattle.

### **C.2 Social History**

The social history collection covers a wide range of material including bicycles, prams, shop fittings, industrial machinery, ship models, medical, musical and scientific instruments, commemorative and ornamental items, toys and games, weights and measures, photographic and textile equipment, and everyday domestic material.

Much of the material has a specific association with Aberdeenshire, such as civic regalia and weights and measures. In particular, the maritime collections relate to the herring fishing, the whaling trade and harbour development.

### **C.3 Archaeology**



The archaeology collection comprises material from North East Scotland, with a small collection of Egyptian and classical Greek material. The material from the North East is generally confined to individual items from Aberdeenshire.

In the past, individual finds came to the collection mainly by donation. The Scottish Archaeological Finds Allocation Panel (SAFAP) has allocated copious items to the collection in recent years.

The collection is strongest in Neolithic and Bronze Age material, with a large collection of flints of various ages, a significant collection of beakers and cinerary urns, and an important collection of carved stone balls. The most important parts of the archaeology collection comprise the Neolithic Ardiffery jet necklace (part of the Ardiffery/Greenbrae assemblage), the Iron Age Deskford carnyx, and the Pictish Gaulcross silver hoard (the latter two, on temporary loan to National Museums Scotland, are of national importance). The medieval period has been augmented by several excavation assemblages.

#### **C.4 Arms and Armour**

This is a varied collection of British and foreign firearms, swords and daggers, shot and powder flasks, and some armour. There are two significant sub-collections: (a) the arms and armour donated by the Duke of Fife; and (b) the Anderson Bey collection of North African and Afghan militaria formerly held by Rhynie School.

#### **C.5 Costume and Textiles**

This collection comprises costume, textiles and accessories. The collection comprises mainly ladies' costume with some notable 19th-century dresses, including a fair sample for the period 1850 to 1920, and for the 1960s and 1970s. There are also several banners, most notably the banner of the Banff Hammermen.

#### **C.6 Numismatics and Par anumismatics**

The core of this collection is the Arbuthnot Coin and Medal Collection. This is a representative collection which includes Greek, Roman, English, Scottish, and British coins, and 18th- and 19th-century commemorative medals, together with associated archive material related to its acquisition by Adam Arbuthnot. There is a more general collection which includes trade and church tokens, as well as miscellaneous material including beggars' badges. The church tokens form a representative collection across Scotland.

The core of the commemorative medal collection is the Arbuthnot collection. There is a collection of military medals representing the Boer War, the First and Second World Wars, as well as a Waterloo Medal.

#### **C.7 Photography**

This collection holds over 17,000 catalogued images, as glass negatives, lantern slides, original photographs, postcards and flexible sheet negatives. Over half of this material relates to the Peterhead area.

The glass negatives primarily derive from the Shivas collection (959 images) of Peterhead and provide a record of the area between about 1860 and the 1950s. Original photographs



and postcards provide a record up to the 1960s, supplemented by flexible negatives. The Broughall collection comprises 2,200 35mm and medium format negatives from the Peterhead area during the last two decades of the 20th century.

The Morrison collection comprises 670 glass negatives and 45 black and white prints of farming scenes in the Foveran area between 1890 and 1920.

There are also two large collections from the Banff area: the Bodie collection of late 19th- and early 20th-century glass plates (1,500 – 2,000) which include rare glass plate negatives by Banff photographer George Bremner, and the Ritchie collection of early- to mid-20th-century roll film negatives with an excess of 500 glass negatives totalling approx. 8,500 images. Both collections are in the process of being catalogued to item level.

There is a need to maintain dialogue regarding the collecting of photographs with Aberdeenshire Libraries, Aberdeen City & Shire Archives, and various community heritage groups.

## **C.8 Ethnography**

The Ethnography collection is based on the Arbuthnot collection and on other 19th-century collections. The most significant section in the collection is the Inuit material, brought back by whaling ships in the 19th century; other items come from Africa, the Americas, Australasia and China.

## **3.3 Themes and Priorities for Future Collecting**

From 2020 to 2025, Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service will not proactively collect Fine Art, Applied Art (except for Banff-made silver) or Natural Sciences material. Numismatics as well as arms and armour are currently not collecting priorities.

The key focus of collecting will be seeking to acquire objects and archival material which represent local identity and strengthen our understanding of place across Aberdeenshire, particularly in Banchory and Peterhead which are currently cultural spotlights.

N.B. In 2021 the present library and museum building in Banchory will be transformed into a multi-purpose Cultural and Visitor Centre, with new museum displays focusing on Banchory as the gateway to Royal Deeside, archaeology, and Scottish traditional music including James Scott Skinner (1843-1927) and John Junner (1919-2009).

The refurbishment of the Arbuthnot Museum, one of Peterhead's key cultural assets, is a long-term goal. It is an opportunity to tell the town's story of travel and global connections, complementing similar narratives in Aberdeenshire Council's Peterhead Regeneration Action Plan.

The subject areas listed below direct the focus for collecting during this five-year period:

### **Silver**

There is currently a renewed interest in silversmithing in Banff, a town which had a thriving silver trade during the 18th and 19th centuries. In recent years a centre of excellence for



silversmithing and jewellery opened in Banff, and the Museum of Banff, where Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service's silver collection is displayed, was refurbished.

Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service will seek to acquire silver by Banff silversmiths currently not represented in the collection: William Scott (I), Patrick Scott (I), Patrick Gordon, Thomas Forbes, Gilbert Bannerman, Alexander McKay, Peter Gill, James Paterson, George Duncan, David Elder, John Watson, William Simpson (II), William and John Simpson. The collection would also be strengthened with acquisitions of Banff-made silver hollowware (e.g., cups, bowls, teapots, snuff boxes etc.).

## **Farming**

Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service will acquire photographic and archival items such as original sales catalogues or acquisitions of farming business records. Modern farming material which complements the existing collection and takes the story up-to-date or represents the wholly changed character of current farming and rural business will be collected.

Space restrictions dictate against any further acquisitions of large objects.

## **Social history**

Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service will acquire social history material which reflects the history of Aberdeenshire, particularly Banchory and Peterhead. Storage space is limited which precludes the acquisition of many large items. If material of specific importance to Banchory and Peterhead does become available, every effort will be made to acquire such items.

## **Archaeology**

Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service will acquire archaeological material from Aberdeenshire through the Scottish Archaeological Finds Allocation Panel (SAFAP), Historic Environment Scotland Finds Disposal Panel, and Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service. Priority will be given to finds from the Iron Age, Roman, Viking and medieval periods in order to strengthen the existing collection, which also needs to be complemented with material from the Early Historic period.

## **Costume and Textiles**

Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service will seek to actively collect working costume relevant to Aberdeenshire, such as modern fisherman, fish packer, lifeboat and farmers.

## **Photography**

Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service will acquire historic and contemporary photographic material of relevance to Aberdeenshire, particularly pertaining to Banchory which is currently not well represented in this collection.

## **Ethnography**



Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service will seek to actively collect material relating to Eastern European communities in Aberdeenshire in order to represent changing demographics, especially in the Peterhead area.

### **3.4 Themes and Priorities for Rationalisation and Disposal**

Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service recognises that the principles on which priorities for rationalisation and disposal are determined will be through a formal review process that identifies which collections are included and excluded from the review. The outcome of review and any subsequent rationalisation will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well-managed collection.

The procedures used will meet professional standards. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.

Responsible, curatorially motivated disposal may take place as part of Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service's long-term plans for its museum collections, in order to increase the public benefit derived from those collections.

Disposal is ongoing for objects in such poor condition that conservation is not an option; objects with high associated health and safety risks, duplicates (e.g. pairs of butter pats and other domestic items which can be transferred to education/handling collections); and objects not relevant to Aberdeenshire (e.g. Shetland peat shovels) which can be offered/transferred to appropriate institutions after disposal procedures have been instigated and strictly followed.

### **3.5 Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items**

Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal.

### **3.6 Collecting policies of other museums**

Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service will consider the collecting policies of other museums and 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 museums:

- The Portsoy Salmon Bothy
- Grampian Transport Museum
- The Auld Post Office Museum and Session Cottage, Turriff
- Blairs Museum
- Gordon Highlanders Regimental Museum
- Museum of Scottish Lighthouses
- Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums
- University of Aberdeen Museums



### **3.7 Archival holdings**

A variety of miscellaneous archival records are held, many of which relate directly to other items in the collections. Some archival material, such as posters, has been collected for display purposes. Amongst the older records held are 17th-century rentals for the Peterhead area and the earliest minute book of the Peterhead Trades (1728-92). Business records include material relating to Crosse & Blackwell and Cleveland Twist Drill in Peterhead, as well as some rural trade and farming businesses such as the account books from the McBain shoemakers' business at Whitehills. There are a small number of whaling journals kept by crew members of Peterhead whalers. Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service also has the prisoner of war diaries of Thomas Ainsworth who was held at MARLAG und MILAG NORD camp from 1941 to 1945.

Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service holds a major archive relating to the Troup and MacDonald families from Huntly, descended from the preacher and author, George MacDonald. This archive includes original manuscripts, correspondence, photographs and other memorabilia from George MacDonald.

The archive collection also includes the bound volumes of the Peterhead Sentinel (1857-1913) and the Buchan Observer (1871- present) newspapers.

Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service will actively acquire archival material which relates directly to the collections. Most offers of civic archival material will be referred to the Aberdeen City & Shire Archives.

As Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service 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).

### **3.8 Acquisition**

The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service 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(s) is satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.

Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service 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).

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 1 November 2002, Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service 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.

### **3.9 Procedures for Accessions**

Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service will hold an Accession Panel quarterly, consisting of at least three members of museum professional staff. The proceedings of the Panel will be fully recorded in formal minutes.

Acquisitions under consideration for accession must fulfil the criteria laid out in Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service's Collections Development Policy.

Whether an acquisition is accepted into the collection or rejected, the reasons will be recorded in the Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service's Day Book.

### **3.10 Human Remains**

As Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service holds human remains, it will follow the guidelines in the 'Guidance for the care of Human Remains in Scottish Museums' issued by Museums Galleries Scotland in 2011.

### **3.11 Biological and Geological Material**

So far as biological and geological material is concerned, Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service 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.

### **3.12 Archaeological Material**

Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service 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 Scotland, under the laws of bona vacantia including Treasure Trove, the Crown has title to all ownerless objects including antiquities. Scottish archaeological material cannot therefore be legally acquired by means other than by allocation to Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service by the Crown. Where the Crown chooses to forego its title to a portable antiquity, a Curator or other responsible person acting on behalf of Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service can establish that valid title to the item in question has been acquired by ensuring that a certificate of 'No Claim' has been issued on behalf of the Crown.

### **3.13 Exceptions**

Any exceptions to the above clauses will be only because Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service is either:



- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin in acquiring an item that lacks secure ownership history but, in the best judgement of experts in the field concerned, has not been illicitly traded
- acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin
- in possession of reliable documentary evidence that the item was exported from its country of origin before 1970.

In these cases, Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority. Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service will document when these exceptions occur.

### **3.14 Spoliation**

Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service 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.

### **3.15 The Repatriation and Restitution of Objects and Human Remains**

Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service's governing body, acting on the advice of the museum's professional staff, if any, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the "Guidance for the care of human remains in Scottish museums" issued by MGS in 2011), objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service will take such decisions on a case-by-case basis, within its legal position and taking into account all ethical implications and available guidance.

The disposal of human remains from museums in Scotland will follow the guidelines in the "Guidance for the care of human remains in Scottish museums" issued by Museums Galleries Scotland in 2011.

### **3.16 Disposal Procedures**

#### **3.16.1 Disposal Preliminaries**

- The governing body will ensure that the disposal process is carried out openly and with transparency.
- All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM 5.0 Primary Procedures on disposal.

By definition, Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service 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 Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service's collection.



Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item and agreements on disposal made with donors will be taken into account.

When disposal of a museum object is being considered, Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service 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.

### **3.16.2 Motivation for Disposal and Method of Disposal**

When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons, the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale, exchange or, as a last resort, destruction.

### **3.16.3 The Disposal Decision-Making Process**

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 Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service'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 Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service will also be sought.

- A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, sale, exchange 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 Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service acting on the advice of professional museum staff, and not of the curator of the collection acting alone. The Communities Committee will be informed of disposal proposals as part of the process.
- Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.
- If the material is not acquired by any Accredited Museum to which it was offered as a gift or sale, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material. This is normally done through a notice on the Museums Association's 'Find an Object' web listing service, an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal, or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).
- The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number 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, Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service may consider disposing of the



material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.

### **3.16.4 Use of Proceeds of Sale**

As per the Museums Association's Code of Ethics, Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service's governing body recognises the principle that collections should not normally be regarded as financially negotiable assets and that financially motivated disposal risks damaging public confidence in museums. Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service's governing body refuses to undertake disposal principally for financial reasons, except where it will significantly improve the long-term public benefit derived from the remaining collection.

This will include demonstrating that:

- the item under consideration lies outside the museum's established core collection as defined in the Collections Development Policy
- extensive prior consultation with sector bodies and the public has been undertaken and considered
- it is not to generate short-term revenue (e.g. to meet a budget deficit)
- it is as a last resort after other sources of funding have been thoroughly explored

Any monies received by Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service's 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 Museums Galleries Scotland.

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. Money must be restricted to the long-term sustainability, use and development of the collection.

### **3.16.5 Disposal by Exchange**

The nature of disposal by exchange means that Aberdeenshire Council Museums Service 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.

In cases where the governing body wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or non-Accredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 16.1-4 will be followed.

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.

If the exchange is proposed with a non-Accredited museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, the museum will place a notice on the Museums



Association's 'Find an Object' web listing service, make an announcement in the Museums Journal and in other specialist journals and websites where appropriate.

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.

### **3.16.6 Disposal by Destruction**

If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service's governing body may decide to destroy it.

It is acceptable to destroy material of low intrinsic significance (duplicate mass-produced articles or common specimens which lack significant provenance) where no other method of disposal can be found.

Destruction is also an acceptable method of disposal in cases where an object is in extremely poor condition, has high associated health and safety risks, or is part of an approved destructive testing request identified in an organisation's research policy.

Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought to establish the appropriate method of destruction. Health and safety risk assessments will be carried out by trained staff where required.

The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the museum workforce. In circumstances where this is not possible (e.g. the destruction of controlled substances), a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.

### **3.16.7 Documenting Disposal**

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 5.0 Procedure on deaccession and disposal.

## **4. Supporting Policies and Documents**

The following sector guidance and policy documents have assisted in the creation of this policy:

- [Collections Trust Spectrum standard for museum collections management](#)
- [Museums Association Code of Ethics](#)
- [Museum Accreditation Standard](#)
- [Standing Conference on Archives and Museums' Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom](#)
- [ICON Professional Standards and Judgement & Ethics](#)
- [UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property](#)



- [Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Scottish Museum Collections](#)
- [Statement of Principles relating to the Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period](#)
- [CITES multilateral treaty](#)

## 5. Council Strategic Priorities

Pillar	Priority	How does the policy reflect the Council's strategic Priorities?
A sustainable economy	We will support a strong and diverse economy by attracting people of working age to our region, complementing our highly skilled local workforce.	This policy helps to deliver Council priorities Connected Communities, Living Well Locally as the Museum Service and its policies underpin access to high quality cultural experiences with an increased sense of place and local connection that promote positive social interactions, lifelong learning, improve wellbeing and reduce mental health issues in all ages
Connected communities	We will work with communities and partners to enhance the sense of connection among our places. This includes supporting communities to come up with innovative solutions to ensure our places are resilient and vibrant.	
Living well locally	We will encourage and support our residents to lead healthy and active lives and contribute meaningfully to their communities. We will make proactive choices that will allow us to cater to the needs of our increasingly ageing population.	

## 6. Policy Revision

Version Number	Revision Date	Committee Approval Date	Summary of Changes
2.0	12/05/2025	04/09/2025	<p>Throughout the document, update to latest Spectrum version of 5.1.</p> <p>Section 2. History: refined and updated based on ongoing research carried out by the team over the last 3 years.</p> <p>Section 3. Collections Overview: following three years of work to process and clear collection management backlogs, updates have been made based on a clearer and more comprehensive understanding of the</p>



Version Number	Revision Date	Committee Approval Date	Summary of Changes
			<p>strengths and weaknesses of the collections, and where gaps in holdings exist</p> <p>Section 3. Human History: This section has been restructured to better reflect the breadth of material within the collection and to highlight more clearly strengths and weaknesses in each area. Archives have been incorporated and where there was previously no mention of maps and books, of which we have large collections, these are now reflected.</p> <p>Section 4. Themes &amp; Priorities for Future Collecting. Material to be collected had previously been restricted to Banchory and Peterhead as that reflected the main venues for collections development and display in the last 5-year period. However, with the current project to create a new museum of Aberdeenshire, the focus for the next five-year period has moved to be representation for all six areas of Aberdeenshire, to fill gaps in holdings and strengthen existing collections.</p> <p>Section 4. Themes and priorities for collecting have been identified (as part of the interpretive development for the new venue) to include the active collection of material to reflect underrepresented groups such as women, Page 286 Item 12 immigrants and traveller communities and the active collection of material to fill gaps in chronological representation across the existing holdings.</p> <p>Section 4. This section has also been restructured to better reflect the material that will be actively collected, based on a stronger understanding of the collection. More notable names in the collection have been specified, such as John Junner. Naming our collection strengths will also make it more obvious and easier for researchers to identify and understand</p>

Version Number	Revision Date	Committee Approval Date	Summary of Changes
			what material we hold with academic potential.

### 7. Policy Distribution

Name	Designation	Organisation
Allan Rae	Head of Service, Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships	Aberdeenshire Council
Chris Murphy	Service Manager, Programme Development	Aberdeenshire Council
Saskia Gibbon	Cultural Engagement Manager	Aberdeenshire Council
Julia McCue	Libraries Development Co-ordinator	Aberdeenshire Council
Katy Kavanagh	Senior Archivist	Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire Archives
Jacob O'Sullivan	Museum Development Manager – Collections & Interpretation	Museums Galleries Scotland
Helen Fothergill	Service Manager- Archives, Gallery & Museums	Aberdeen City Council
Neil Curtis	Head of University Collections	University of Aberdeen
Jamie Hyde	Curator	Gordon Highlanders Museum
Ross McKirdy	Museum Manager	Grampian Transport Museum
Michael Strachan	Collections Manager	Museum of Scottish Lighthouses
Jenny Brown	Curator, North East	National Trust for Scotland
Sarah Connolly	Regional Collections Manager (North)	Historic Environment Scotland
Alison Wright	Trustee	Elgin Museum
Emma Gilliland	Curator	ANGUSalive Culture Leisure and Sports Trust

[ENDS]