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Version Control

Version	Date	Status	Prepared by	Reason for amendment
1.0	9 Sept 2015	Final	Heather Caven, Head of Collection Services	
2.0	25 October 2018	Final	Chante St Clair Inglis, Head of Collection Services	Updated to reflect changes in relevant sector standards, policy and strategy
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5.0	12 March 2026	Final	Yvonne Brownlee, Head of Collections Services	Updated to reflect changes in policy and strategy

1. Purpose of Policy

- 1.1. Under the National Heritage (Scotland) Act 1985, the Board of Trustees of National Museums Scotland is responsible for the care and preservation of the collections and for making them available to the public for exhibition, study, and research.
- 1.2. National Museums Scotland aims to achieve an appropriate balance between the use of, access to and preservation of collections. The principles that govern National Museums Scotland's approach to collections care and conservation are informed by:
 - Risk management
 - Compliance with relevant legislation
 - Conservation and heritage science, research and data
 - Following appropriate sector standards and best practice
 - Effective training and communication of collections care and conservation issues to employees and relevant stakeholders
 - Sustainability
 - Professional standards in documentation and collections information.
- 1.3. The following definitions are set out in the British Standard PAS197:2009 'Code of practice for cultural collections management':

Collections care: the range of activities intended to safeguard a collection.
Note: these can include organisational policies, security, storage, cleaning, maintenance, handling, scientific investigation, environmental monitoring and control, exhibitions and loans, conservation, provision of surrogates and emergency planning.

Conservation: interventive techniques applied to an item to achieve chemical and physical stabilisation for the purpose of extending the useful life of the item and to ensure its continued availability.

2. Collections Care Principles

- 2.1. National Museums Scotland will apply preventive conservation measures to care for collection items over their lifespan, following a risk management approach, and as resources permit.
- 2.2. Activities involving collections will be risk assessed and managed to minimise the risks of deterioration, damage, or loss.
- 2.3. National Museums Scotland staff will follow the agreed procedures, guidelines and training for preventive care and the handling, cleaning, storing, transporting, acquisition, display, lending and disposing of collection items.
- 2.4. Any item known or suspected of containing hazardous material will be assessed and managed in line with legal regulations and best practice.
- 2.5. Display materials and methods used for, or in proximity to, collections items will be appropriate for use.

- 2.6. National Museums Scotland aims to provide suitable and sustainable environmental conditions for the collections and display materials. Environmental monitoring systems and surveys are in use in all collection areas. A survey of collections is undertaken on a rolling basis to inform prioritised improvements to buildings, facilities, and environments housing collections.
- 2.7. Building improvements and new buildings to store collections will take into consideration the care of collections and sustainability
- 2.8. National Museums Scotland is committed to reducing the environmental impact and overall costs of caring for the collections, where possible and appropriate. National Museums Scotland will take a risk managed approach to environmental requirements for collection materials, balancing the needs of the collections with the demands of sustainability.
- 2.9. The risk of pest damage to the collection is managed and monitored through an integrated pest management programme across National Museums Scotland's Estate

3. Conservation Treatment Principles

- 3.1. Conservation treatments will be undertaken by qualified or accredited conservators, who will also oversee any work carried out by interns, technicians, work placement students, or volunteers, in line with sector standards, best practice and ethical guidelines.
- 3.2. The conservation of collection items required for display, loan or study, or where conditions require urgent action to prevent loss, will be prioritised and items assessed to establish conservation requirements.
- 3.3. National Museums Scotland's guiding principle is to minimise the amount of intervention required, with the exception of restoration work (see 3.4). Treatment will be appropriate to the proposed use, intrinsic nature and significance of the item and resources available.
- 3.4. Where an item is considered appropriate for restoration, e.g., returning an object to working order, the treatment may require a higher level of intervention. Treatment will follow historically accurate methods where appropriate, preserve the integrity and original fabric of the item as far as possible, and may be detectable while not necessarily conspicuous.
- 3.5. Treatment methods will use stable and tested materials that, as far as possible, are reversible and do not compromise the intrinsic nature of the object, future treatment or use, nor the authenticity of the object
- 3.6. Conservation treatments will be documented in the Collections Information Systems (CIS) and made available upon request.
- 3.7. Condition surveys will be undertaken on a rolling basis to inform collections care and conservation priorities and to identify vulnerable material.
- 3.8. National Museums Scotland does not provide advice to the general public on how to undertake conservation or recommend any one particular specialist.

Enquiries are referred to the ICON (Institute of Conservation) Conservation Register.

4. Research

- 4.1. Scientific and technical examination and analysis will be used to identify materials, inform conservation treatments and to maintain and improve the preservation and understanding of the collections. Examination and analysis (including destructive sampling for research purposes) are undertaken following National Museums Scotland's procedures.

5. Collections Information Principles

- 5.1. Conservation and Collections Care information, as it relates directly to collection items, will be recorded and made available through the CIS in line with the Collections Information and Access Policy, 2015 (updated 2026).