

**Monmouthshire County  
Council**

**Collections  
Documentation  
Policy  
2016 – 2021**

**Abergavenny Museum,  
Chepstow Museum,  
Monmouth Museum,  
Caldicot Castle**

Date which this policy was approved by governing body: xxx 2016

Date at which this policy is due for review: September 2017

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Documentation underpins every aspect of museum activity. Recording collection information is central to being accountable for the collections, their accessibility, management, research, study and use.

Our policy for the documentation of the collections is to ensure that the information we hold relating to the collections is accurate, secure, reliable and accessible.

In our Vision and Mission statement we make the following commitments:

- Devising enjoyable and inspiring opportunities for learning and discovery
- Creating exhibitions and events that engage, excite and entertain people
- Providing optimum access, real or virtual, to our collections, resources and expertise at and beyond our museums
- Caring for, using and developing our collections held in trust for society and for the benefit of future generations
- Collecting stories and information as well as objects of relevance and interest

It is only possible to carry out these activities successfully if our documentation procedures are robust and up to date. Our aim is therefore to ensure that we have a fully documented Museum Collection that meets Spectrum Standards to at least a level required by the Accreditation Standard. We acknowledge that we have a backlog and our aim to reduce and remove this is set out in a separate Documentation Plan.

## **2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

**2.1.** The aim of this Policy is to ensure that we fulfil our guardianship, stewardship and access responsibilities. Through implementation of this policy our objective is to:

- improve accountability for the collections;
- maintain at least minimum professional standards in documentation procedures and collection information and attain the very highest standards wherever possible;
- extend access to collection information;
- strengthen the security of the collections.

Many of our existing records are paper-based. In order to improve access and accountability, we will enter all new records onto computerised databases. Over time and in a phased programme, we will convert our older paper records to a computerised format, ensuring also that copies are kept in a safe separate location.

**2.2.** We take a common-sense approach as to the level to which we document material. Ideally for the majority of the collections, especially those that have high monetary or scientific value, our curatorial staff will document to individual item level. However, for certain collections, such as bulk archaeological excavation material, it is neither feasible nor practical to document the material in this detail, and we will document items at group level. We therefore aim to have a basic 'inventory' record for all groups within the collection,

Our overall aim is that where items are catalogued individually they will be documented to a more detailed 'catalogue' level.

'Inventory Level' and 'Catalogue Level' are defined below.

### **3. DEFINITIONS**

We will document our collections to either Inventory or Catalogue level, as described below:

- Inventory level: This includes sufficient key information to allow any object(s) in our care to be individually identified and verified. All large bulk groups of accessioned items, loans inward and outward, and any other unaccessioned objects as appropriate are documented at this level.
- Catalogue level: All accessioned items will be documented at this level. Information will include indentifying details as well as detailed information where known on the history of the item, including associated information relating to its maker, previous owners and any related published information. Additional facts recorded will include information about its condition and any specific concerns relating to its care.

### **4. ACCOUNTABILITY**

#### **4.1. Definition of accountability**

The Museums and Galleries Commission defined the essence of accountability as follows:

*"to enable museums to fulfil their fundamental responsibilities for collections and the information associated with them. The principles are that a museum should know at any time exactly for what it is legally responsible (this includes loans as well as permanent collections), and where each item is located."*  
(MGC 1993)

#### **4.2. Controlled access to sensitive information**

All requests for information will be considered in terms of compliance with the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and Data Protection Act (1998) and the Environmental Information Regulation (2004). We will review requests for confidential data such as donor information, environmental information, valuations or site details on a case by case basis, and in accordance with the applicable legislation and any legal agreements or conditions of gift.

#### **4.3 Security against loss of irreplaceable collection information**

We have in place measures to ensure the physical security and long-term preservation of all documentation records, whether paper or computerised. We will update all manual and computerised records as appropriate. Regular backups will be made to secure digital data. Where collection information is manually held or computerised we will make backup copies of all key files, and where considered appropriate, house them securely off-site.

**Signed:**

**Date:**

**Position:**

**Date of Next Review: Sept 2017**