

Monmouthshire County Council

Care and Conservation Policy

2016 – 2021

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

Date policy was approved by governing body: xxx 2016

Date policy is due for review by governing body: Sept 2017

Background

This policy will guide the activities of Abergavenny Museum, Chepstow Museum and The Nelson Museum and Local History Centre at Monmouth and the accessioned collections of Caldicot Castle. It has been developed with reference to Monmouthshire Museums Service's Environmental Sustainability Policy; Collections Development Policy; Collections Documentation Policy and Monmouthshire County Council's Volunteer Policy. Nationally recognised guidelines and standards have also been consulted including PAS:198.2012 : Specifications for Managing Environmental Conditions for Cultural Collections; PD:5454. 2012 Guide for the Storage and Exhibition of Archival Material; Benchmarks in Collections Care; SPECTRUM procedures and the Institute of Conservation's Professional Guidelines.

1. Purpose of Conservation and Collections Care Policy

- Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) recognises that caring for its collections is a fundamental duty for all museums. This Care and Conservation Policy acts as a statement to guide our approach to delivering the care of our collections.
- This policy recognises the role which Monmouthshire Museums Service's (MMS) diverse collections have in creating dynamic museums that play a revitalising role in Monmouthshire's communities, act as agents of social change and promote good and active citizenship. It is acknowledged that appropriate care and conservation of collections is required to enable collections to be utilised to connect the past with the present to inform and shape the future.
- In guiding the activities of MMS, this policy seeks to maximise the care of, use and development of our collection held in trust for society and the benefit of current and future generations.
- MMS recognises its role of promoting the conservation ethic to a wider audience through communicating and teaching the principles and methods of conservation.
- This policy relates to all staff of MMS. Any contractors engaged by MMS who may have impact on the Museums' buildings and collections should also be made aware of this policy.

2. General Principles

- This Care and Conservation Policy covers the preservation of items of moveable cultural heritage which form the collections of Abergavenny Museum, Chepstow Museum and The Nelson Museum and Local History Centre (Monmouth Museum). These museums combine to form Monmouthshire Museums Service which is part of the Enterprise Directorate of MCC.
- Responsibility for delivery of the care of Monmouthshire Museums Service's Collection lies primarily with the service's collection staff. At the time of writing this consists of two Curators and a part time Object's Conservator. MMS's front of house staff should also have a commitment to preservation and an awareness of this policy.

- This policy also guides the care and conservation of the accessioned collections at Caldicot Castle, delivery of which now lies within Monmouthshire County Council's Attractions. In developing this policy MMS collections staff have visited Caldicot Castle to perform an audit of current collections and to advise on future preservation. Actions for how this should be delivered will be outlined in Caldicot Castle's Conservation and Collections Care Plan.
- The Collections covered by this policy are housed within Grade II Listed buildings or Scheduled Ancient Monuments. Reference is only made to the care of the building where it has direct impact on the preservation of the Museums Collection. It is noted that responsibility for the care and conservation of these buildings lies with Monmouthshire County Council's Property Services Department. Consequently, guiding the approach to the care of these buildings lies outside the remit of this policy.
- Within MMS long term preservation of the collections is achieved through a combination of preventative and remedial conservation measures. Preventative conservation covers the measures necessary to slow down or minimise deterioration of museum objects and specimens and structures. Remedial conservation involves a treatment to an object or specimen to bring it to a more acceptable condition or state in order to stabilise it or enhance some aspects of its cultural or scientific value.
- This Care and Conservation Policy has been drawn with consideration of the resources currently available within MMS at the time of writing. The Policy will be reviewed annual to take account of any changes. Where change does occur we will aim to continue achieving policy recommendation.

3. Buildings and Museum Environment

- MMS collections are housed within secure, water tight buildings. MMS recognises that the maintenance of a building's fabric and services is fundamental to the preservation of both buildings and collections. To achieve this MMS staff will liaise with MCC'S Property Services Department to ensure these buildings are appropriately maintained and any faults reported immediately.
- The majority of MMS' collections are housed in secure, collections only, storage rooms or gallery displays within each Museum. Where necessary, the environment in these spaces is controlled to ensure nationally approved standards are met.
- A minority of oversized and bulk insensitive archaeological finds are currently housed in an additional storage unit at an Industrial Estate in

Caldicot. As the environment in this store is not controlled or routinely monitored, storage is limited to collections considered to be of low risk.

- The environment within the Museum buildings is constantly monitored using MEACO telemetric software to ensure the climate within the buildings is understood and changes efficiently acted upon to prevent damage to the collection. Short term localised monitoring is also deployed using Tiny Tag Monitors. Environmental monitoring equipment will be calibrated annually.
- MMS is mindful of its environmental impacts and environmental control within the museums is delivered with consideration of this in accordance with MMS' Environmental Sustainability Policy. Environmental impacts should be identified when considering future developments and possibilities of passive environmental control explored.
- Parameters for environmental control have been set through understanding of the collections and the museum's natural environment and by consulting nationally recognised standards including PAS198 and PD 5454.
- Once objects have reached equilibrium within the museum environment, they will not be exposed to Relative Humidities above 65%RH in storage or display areas. This is to prevent accelerated decay and mould growth. In addition, the environment within galleries and stores will not fall below 30%RH to reduce the risk of accelerated physical damage to organic collections. More specific microclimates for more vulnerable objects will be created as conservation staff consider appropriate.
- The environment within the Museum's stores will be monitored and controlled to prevent sudden extreme changes in RH that occur at a rate considered to cause unacceptable irreversible physical change in collections. Gradual seasonal changes in RH and Temperature are acceptable.
- The upper limit for temperature in MMS's Museum buildings will be 25°C, whilst the lower limit for store temperatures will be 5°C. This is to prevent accelerated deterioration of the collection and risks associated with freezing and subsequent flood damage respectively.
- MMS recognises that light within a collection space can cause extensive and irreversible damage to collection materials. Where it can not be eliminated, collections exposure to Ultra Violet Light (UV) light shall not exceed 75 $\mu\text{W}/\text{lumen}$. Light levels for collections on display will be determined by conservation staff that enable expected collection lifetimes to be achieved. This will be based on an understanding of individual items sensitivity to light, UV radiation and IR radiation. It is

recognised that when setting parameters for light levels the need for staff and any visitors to see the collection should be taken into account. The collections' exposure to light will be routinely monitored.

- MMS will remain abreast of developments in lighting technology taking measures to optimize energy efficiency of light systems and identify lower energy light sources. This is in line with MMS Environmental Sustainability Policy.
- MMS recognises the potential damage internally generated pollutants can cause to its collections. Sensitivity of collections in enclosed storage and display cases will be determined and the potential of materials used in enclosed storage and display cases to emit pollutant will be evaluated. This knowledge will be used to ensure materials are selected that do not emit gaseous pollutants to an extent that would be expected to cause unacceptable irreversible change to the contents of the enclosure. Monitoring enclosures for pollutants will be undertaken if there is a considered risk.
- Objects in open storage and display will be evaluated to determine their sensitivity to outdoor generated pollutants and dusts. Steps will be taken to reduce their exposure to this based on an understanding of pollutants within the surrounding environment and material sensitivity of each individual object.
- MMS recognises the role which cleaning, housekeeping and pest management plays in preserving collections. An Integrated Pest Management scheme is in place and standards such as Benchmarks in Collections Care will be utilised to ensure best practice is achieved in this area.

4. Remedial Conservation

- When objects require remedial conservation work for condition or display requirements, MMS will ensure that only trained conservators conduct this work.
- When remedial conservation work is contracted to external specialists, conservators accredited by the Institute of Conservation (ICON) will normally be selected.
- Volunteers or interns may be employed to conduct basic object cleaning only at the discretion and supervision of MMS conservation staff. Involvement of volunteers or interns in conservation activities will be conducted in agreement with MCC's Volunteer Policy.
- Any remedial conservation work undertaken will be in agreement with ICON's Professional Guidelines and accompanied by full documentation to current national standards.

- Materials utilised in conservation treatments will be selected with a consideration of their environmental impact and in accordance with COSHH regulations.
- MMS will ensure that appropriate Personal Protective Equipment is available and always worn when required.

5. Collections & Handling

- All staff and volunteers required to handle MMS collections will be appropriately trained in accordance with national standards.
- Specialist trained staff or contractors will be enlisted to handle or transport large, heavy or fragile items.
- A risk assessment approach will be utilised to select appropriate levels of object access and to guide selection of objects for short or long term displays and for handling by the general public. This will be based on an understanding of the sensitivity of individual objects.
- MMS will routinely assess the condition of collections within its care.
- Before making new acquisitions MMS staff will consider the storage and cost implications of providing long term conservation and care for the prospective item.
- Condition of new acquisitions will be assessed and those considered to present a risk to the rest of the collection will immediately be quarantined and monitored until the threat is no longer identified.
- Should MMS conclude that it is unable to provide appropriate care or accommodation for an object or better access and/or care can be provided by other organisations collection rationalisation will be considered using our Collection Development Policy and the Museums Association's Disposal Toolkit in order to follow best practice.

6. Loans

- MMS will ensure that the lender's conservation requirements can be met before agreeing to borrow objects.
- Before agreeing to loan an item from its institution to another organisation MMS will consult conservation staff and conduct a risk assessment of all factors involved. A thorough condition assessment will be made before MMS lends an item from its collection.
- Objects borrowed and loaned by MMS will be condition checked on arrival and departure.

7. Emergency Plan

- MMS holds an emergency plan for each of its museums and recognises the need to immediately consult conservation staff when collections are at risk.

8. Training

- When considered appropriate MMS staff will provide training in conservation and collections care for the museums' staff, interns and volunteers, using external providers if necessary.
- MMS recognises that the continued professional development of its staff is imperative to ensure the long term preservation of its collections. MMS will share its collections care and conservation expertise and knowledge as widely as possible.

9. Review of Care and Conservation Policy

- This policy and all efforts to improve the care and conservation of Monmouthshire Collections will be reviewed annually by curatorial and conservation staff.

Signed:

Date:

Position:

Date of Next Review: Sept 2017