



Collections Development Policy 2021-2026

Name of museum: Museum of Barnstaple & North Devon

Name of governing body: North Devon District Council

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: 1st November 2021

Policy review procedure:

The collections development policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years.

Date at which this policy is due for review: November 2026

Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the collections development policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.

1. Relationship to other relevant policies/ plans of the organisation:

1.1. The museum's statement of purpose is:

The Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon exists to improve the quality of life for everyone in North Devon by providing a high quality museum service and supporting other cultural resources and activities throughout the year.

1.2. The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.

1.3. By definition, the museum has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in the museum's collection.

- 1.4. Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.
- 1.5. The museum recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Standard. This includes using Spectrum primary procedures for collections management. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.
- 1.6. The museum will undertake 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.
- 1.7. In exceptional cases, disposal may be motivated principally by financial reasons. The method of disposal will therefore be by sale and the procedures outlined below will be followed. In cases where disposal is motivated by financial reasons, the governing body will not undertake disposal unless it can be demonstrated that all the following exceptional circumstances are met in full:
- the disposal will significantly improve the long-term public benefit derived from the remaining collection
 - the disposal will not be undertaken to generate short-term revenue (for example to meet a budget deficit)
 - the disposal will be undertaken as a last resort after other sources of funding have been thoroughly explored
 - extensive prior consultation with sector bodies has been undertaken
 - the item under consideration lies outside the museum's established core collection

2. History of the collections

- 2.1. The Museum was founded by North Devon District Council in 1989, with significant parts of the collections deriving from its predecessors, the Barnstaple Literary and Scientific Institute (1845), later re-founded as the North Devon Athenaeum in 1889 and St. Anne's Chapel Museum, established by the Barnstaple Borough Council in 1923.
- 2.2. Parts of the historic North Devon Athenaeum collection held by the museum are still the property of the North Devon Athenaeum, now a library and archive based

at Barnstaple Library. The Regimental Collection of the Royal Devon Yeomanry is also held on loan. The museum is the repository for excavated archaeology and associated archives from the northern part of Devon.

3. An overview of current collections

3.1. The collections number over 80,000 items which are of all periods and from all over the world. However the emphasis is upon natural or man-made items with significance to the natural and human social history of Barnstaple, the North Devon District Council area and northern Devon (with adjacent parts of North Cornwall and Somerset). The Royal Devon Yeomanry Collection is a County of Devonshire collection.

3.2. **Archaeology:** material from the Palaeolithic period to the 18th century, including local excavated and chance finds, the archives of the North Devon Rescue Archaeology Unit 1984-1990, and other northern Devon excavations.

3.3. **North Devon Pottery** from the mediaeval period to the present day, including pieces by the Fishleys of Fremington and the Art Potters C.H.Brannam, Alexander Lauder & William Baron, and the important collection and archives of C.H.Brannam Ltd;

This collection is considered to be of international significance and includes excavated archaeology from 14th, 16th and 17th century kiln sites in Barnstaple, 17th century kiln sites elsewhere in North Devon and the archives of C.H.Brannam Ltd from 1879 to 2007.

3.4. **Photographs, prints and documents**, mainly of local interest (including portraits, topographic pictures and maps)

3.5. **Social history** items from architectural to decorative, mostly local including domestic, recreational and working life, trades, industries, local government and education.

3.6. **Ethnographic** items from New Zealand, Africa, North America etc.

3.7. **Fine art**, focusing on local views and significant local painters, including Joseph Kennedy, F. R. Lee, Francis Carruthers Gould, Brian Chugg, Wilfred Avery and Vernon Boyle.

3.8. **Decorative arts:** locally used or produced items and comparative material, including church silver and pewter (particularly the Stanley Thomas Collection of West Country Pewter and the Keith Abraham Collection of Barnstaple silver

spoons) and the important furniture collection and archives of Shapland and Petter of Barnstaple.

3.9. Numismatics, including tokens, medallions and coins and a small collection of banknotes

3.10. **Geological material** (over 5,000 specimens) including the Townsend Hall Collection, the Ethel Partridge Collection, the Inkerman Rogers Collection plus other local and non-local comparative material.

3.11. **Natural History** material (local and non-local) including vertebrate, invertebrate and herbaria, including the Hore collection of algae and the Sharland herbarium and historic birds egg collections.

3.12. **Militaria**, including the Royal Devon Yeomanry Museum Trust Collection and other Royal Devon Yeomanry, Devonshire Regiment, and earlier material.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

4.1. The MBND aims to collect in accordance with the following principles:

- We balance further collecting with the imperative to better understand and make use of existing collections.
- In considering an item for our collection, we take into account the need for collections information, collections care, collections access and space available in museum galleries and storage.
- We seek to fill gaps in our collection only where this will strengthen existing collections themes, enrich visitor experience, or contribute to opportunities for discussion and debate.
- We will acquire an object only if it has clear potential for display, interpretation, research, learning, access or outreach.
- We will not acquire material whose care and conservation needs are out of proportion to its potential for display, interpretation, research, learning or outreach.

4.2. Archaeology

- Archaeological archives from planning and development projects in Northern Devon, in line with the museum's Guidelines for the Deposition of Archaeological Archives.

- Chance finds, with priority given to objects not previously represented in the collection, such as mediaeval or earlier material, including treasure, according to the procedures set out in the Treasure Act Code of Practice.

4.3. North Devon Pottery

- Due to the large size of the existing Art Pottery collections, items will only be accepted if it will help further understanding of the industry in North Devon and is not already represented in the collection.
- Priority given to the products of C. H. Brannam, Alexander Lauder, William Baron and the Fishleys of Fremington, and especially under represented decorators.
- Archives, equipment and other social history items relating to the Northern Devon clay and pottery industries

4.4. Photographs, prints and documents

- Selective acquisitions may be made according to the criteria of any of the principal collection areas. We will seek to develop the collection with a particular focus on photography that represents the diversity and social complexity of North Devon.

4.5. Social history

- Only objects with clear and distinctive connections to Barnstaple and North Devon or that enhance understanding of our existing collections. Large items or collections will only be accepted under exceptional circumstances.
- Priority given to industries or ways of life characteristic of and specific to Northern Devon

4.6. Ethnographic items

- Only items with a clear link to North Devon people or events

4.7. Fine art

- Local views and significant local artists, such as Joseph Kennedy, F. R. Lee, Francis Carruthers Gould, Brian Chugg, Wilfred Avery and Vernon Boyle (*with regard to Burton Art Gallery as the main centre for Fine Art Collections in Northern Devon*)

4.8. Decorative arts

- Locally made or locally used if of high significance (for example church silver)

- Priority given to Barnstaple silver, Shapland & Petter furniture and items that illustrate Barnstaple's role in the Arts and Crafts movement such as that made by Fred Partridge of the Barnstaple Guild of Metalworkers.

4.9. **Numismatics**

- Locally made items or those associated with local people, businesses or events only

4.10. **Geology**

- Northern Devon, under-represented or important local or comparative material & specimens, only systematic collections with data.
- Significant historic collections that enhance our understanding of the history of science in Northern Devon

4.11. **Natural History**

- Northern Devon, under-represented or important local or comparative material & specimens, only systematic collections with data.
- Significant historic collections that enhance our understanding of the history of science in Northern Devon

4.12. **Militaria**

- All acquisitions are to be considered in relation to the Royal Devon Yeomanry and the Devon and Dorset Regimental Collections. Donors of Yeomanry material are to be given a choice of donating to the Regimental collection or to the museum's own, specifically North Devon collection.
- With the exception of the Royal Devon Yeomanry Collection, which is a County of Devon Collection, the museum will only accept objects that have a local connection to Barnstaple and North Devon.

4.13. **Digital Collections**

- The museum holds a growing digital archive of oral histories, images, videos and exhibition content relating to the core museum themes and will seek to find a means of accessioning, storing and preserving digital objects.

5. **Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal**

5.1. The museum 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.

5.2. 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.

5.3. There is a significant need to reduce the physical size of the museum collections due to lack of storage space. Work is in progress focusing on non-accessioned collections i.e. loans, handling collections and the extensive excavation archives generated by the North Devon Council excavation unit during the 1980s, which have not yet been published.

5.4. The museum will then begin a formal collections rationalisation process according to the Arts Council's Disposal Toolkit. We will focus initially on social and natural history items, looking at condition and fit with the priorities of this policy. This may prove problematic for those parts of the collection (principally pre-1989) with inadequate documentation, and resources will have to be found to ensure any rationalisation is professionally and ethically managed.

6. Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items

6.1. The museum recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal.

7. Collecting policies of other museums

7.1. 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 specialism, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

7.2. Specific reference is made to the following museum(s)/organisation(s):

- Braunton and District Museum
- Ilfracombe Museum
- Combe Martin Museum
- Lyn and Exmoor Museum, Lynton
- Morteohoe Museum
- South Molton Museum
- Torrington Museum
- Burton Art Gallery & Museum

- Holsworthy Museum
- North Devon Maritime Museum
- Arlington Court and Carriage Museum
- Tiverton and District Museum
- Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter
- Museum of Dartmoor Life, Okehampton
- North Cornwall Museums
- North Devon Records Office
- North Devon Athenaeum
- Somerset Museums
- Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery
- Museum of British Surfing, Braunton
- Various National Museums (e.g. The Natural History Museum, The British Museum)

8. Archival holdings

8.1. The museum collection includes material that may be considered archival in nature, for example documents and photographs, where they relate to our main collecting areas i.e. C. H. Brannam Archives, the Royal Devon Yeomanry Archives and the Shapland and Petter Design Archives.

8.2. Where documents are concerned, it is recognised that the North Devon Record Office is often likely to be the most appropriate recipient.

9. Acquisition

9.1. The policy for agreeing acquisitions is that acquisitions may be decided by the senior museum professional guided by this policy. Acquisitions by purchase with a cost to the Council of over £500 must be approved by the governing body.

9.2. 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).

9.3. 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.

10. Human remains

10.1. As the museum holds or intends to acquire human remains from any period, it will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005.

11. Biological and geological material

11.1. 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.

12. Archaeological material

12.1. The museum will not acquire archaeological material (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.

12.2. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland the procedures include reporting finds to the landowner or occupier of the land and to the proper authorities in the case of possible treasure (i.e. the Coroner for Treasure) as set out in the Treasure Act 1996 (as amended by the Coroners & Justice Act 2009).

13. Exceptions

13.1. Any exceptions to the above clauses will only be because the museum is:

- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin
- acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin

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. The museum will document when these exceptions occur.

14. Spoliation

14.1. 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.

15. The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains

15.1. The museum'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 museums' issued by DCMS in 2005), 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 16.1-5 will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.

15.2. The disposal of human remains from museums in England, Northern Ireland and Wales will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums'.

16. Disposal procedures

16.1. All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the Spectrum primary procedures on disposal.

16.2. The governing body will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Agreements on disposal made with donors will also be taken into account.

16.3. 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.

16.4. 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.

16.5. 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 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. 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.

- 16.6. 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 or manager of the collection acting alone.
- 16.7. 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 or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.
- 16.8. If the material is not acquired by any Accredited museum to which it was offered 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 a notice on the MA'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).
- 16.9. 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.
- 16.10. Any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied solely and directly 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 the Arts Council England/Welsh Government /Museums Galleries Scotland/ Northern Ireland Museums Council (delete as appropriate).
- 16.11. The proceeds of a sale will be allocated 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.

- 16.12. 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.

Disposal by exchange

- 16.13. 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.

16.13.1. 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 16.1-5 will apply.

16.13.2. 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.

16.13.3. 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 MA's Find an Object web listing service, or make an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).

16.13.4. 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.

Disposal by destruction

- 16.14. If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.
- 16.15. It is acceptable to destroy material of low intrinsic significance (duplicate mass-produced articles or common specimens which lack significant provenance) where no alternative method of disposal can be found.
- 16.16. 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.
- 16.17. 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.
- 16.18. 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.