



CABINET – 19 NOVEMBER 2021

**UPDATED POLICIES FOR LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S
MUSEUM SERVICE**

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES

PART A

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the revised and updated Collections Development Policy (Appendix A) and Access Policy (Appendix B), for the County Council's Museum Service.
2. These policies are a requirement of museum accreditation and were due for review in 2020, but due to the pandemic this work was deferred.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that:
 - a) the Leicestershire County Council's Museum Collections Development Policy 2021–2025 be approved.
 - b) the Leicestershire County Council's Museum Access Policy 2021–2025 be approved.

Reasons for Recommendation

4. The current Collections Development Policy and Access Policy have expired and are due for renewal. The policies must address the key requirements set out in the Accreditation standard, administered by Arts Council England.
5. The Collections Development Policy sets the vision and purpose for Leicestershire County Council's Museum Service and how it will deliver against these through its collections, acquisitions, disposals, and collections care.
6. The Access Policy sets out Leicestershire County Council's Museum Service commitments to create a culture where people of all backgrounds and experiences feel appreciated and valued, providing access for everyone.

7. These two policies form the basis of the Collections Management Framework, which contains action plans and guidance used by the Museum Service to guide its' activity and ensure consistency, transparency, effective use of resources and adherence with museum ethics.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

8. The Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report on 8 March 2021 and its comments have been included in the revised policies.
9. The revised policies have been shared with officers from Charnwood Borough Council, Harborough District Council, and the Market Harborough Historical Society, with whom the Council has partnership arrangements for Charnwood Museum and Harborough Museum respectively.
10. The Museum Service expects to be invited to resubmit for accreditation for its five museums early in 2022. Approval of these two policies is a key element in preparing for this submission.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

11. These policies last came to the Cabinet for approval in 2015 and form part of a wider suite of documents, called the Collections Management Framework (CMF). The CMF includes detailed operational guidance and delivery plans on key processes, such as documentation, loans, working objects, conservation, and the transfer of archaeological archives as part of the planning process.
12. These two policies will support the Adults and Communities Department's ambition to "Save and make accessible the cultural and historic heritage of the County, which is a key commitment in its strategy "Delivering Wellbeing and Opportunity 2020–2024".
13. The policies also support the County Council's Strategic Plan 2018–2022, in particular the 'Great Communities' outcome by ensuring "Cultural and historical heritage and the natural environment are enjoyed and conserved".
14. Museum Accreditation is the UK Industry Standard for Museums and Galleries. The scheme is administered by Arts Council England.

Resource Implications

15. There are no additional direct resource implications associated with these policies, however, the policies set the standards by which Leicestershire County Council Museum Service will operate and care for the collections it holds in trust for the people of Leicestershire. Achieving these standards will require an ongoing resource commitment.
16. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the contents of this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

17. None.

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PART B

Background

18. Leicestershire County Council has responsibility for five accredited museums - Bosworth Battlefield, 1620s House and Garden, Melton Museum, Harborough Museum and Charnwood Museum. Charnwood Museum and Harborough Museum are delivered in partnership with the relevant district councils and other organisations.
19. In addition, the Museum Service cares for and houses its collections at the Collections Resources Centre, Barrow upon Soar, the Eastern Annexe of County Hall, Glenfield, designated collections spaces on the Snibston site in Coalville, Unit 1 Stephenson's Court, Coalville and Riverside Court in Measham.
20. Accreditation helps everyone involved with a museum to do the right things, helping people to access and engage with collections, and protect them for future generations.
21. The Accreditation Scheme does this by making sure museums manage their collections properly, engage with visitors, and are governed appropriately by encouraging all museums and galleries to meet an agreed standard in:
 - how they are run;
 - how they manage their collections;
 - how they engage with their users.
22. It helps to build people's confidence in how museums manage collections in trust for society, and how they manage public resources and seeks to reinforce a shared, ethical way of doing things for everyone involved in running a museum.
23. The Museum Service last applied for accreditation in 2015 and the associated policies ran from 2015–2019. These policies would normally have been revised in 2020, but the Accreditation Scheme was unable to operate normally during the pandemic and the service had its accreditation status extended until 2022.

Museum Collections Development Policy (CDP)

24. The CDP is attached at Appendix A. A compliant CDP approved by the organisation's governing body is a requirement of accreditation. The policy must contain:
 - the Museum Service statement of purpose;
 - an overview of current collections;
 - themes and priorities for future collecting;

- themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal;
 - information about the legal and ethical framework for acquiring and disposing of items;
 - the date for the next review of the policy.
25. The CDP should meet the UK Collections Management Standard and Arts Council England provides a template for a compliant CDP. The proposed CDP follows the template and is compliant. It can be noted that the section on archival holding has been omitted as it is not applicable in this instance, as archival collections are managed by the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.
26. Below is a summary of the key elements of policy.
- a) *Section 1: Relationship to Other Relevant Policies/Plans of the Organisation.* This contains the service vision and statement of purpose. These have been reviewed and were shared with the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2021. As they were found to still be relevant, they are unchanged from those contained in the 2015–2019 policy. The vision being: *“We see a Leicestershire with a rich history that values its heritage, engages its communities, welcomes those who visit the county, and works together to ensure a future for the past.”*
- The statement of purpose is: *“In line with our vision, the purpose of Leicestershire Museums is to safeguard the future of the rich and irreplaceable natural and human heritage of Leicestershire and to provide and accessible, engaging, innovative, sustainable and responsive service of the highest quality”.*
- b) *Section 2: History of the Collections* provides detail on how and when the collections were formed.
- c) *Section 3: Overview of current collections.* The collections are grouped into themes: Natural Life; Archaeology; Home and Family Life; Working Life and Cultural Life. The overview provides a brief description for each theme and highlights areas of excellence. For example: Archaeology has the following areas of excellence: Lower Palaeolithic stone tools; The Hallaton Treasure; Coal mining before the Industrial Revolution; The Bosworth Collection.
- d) This section also provides information on the local collections focus of the three Market Town Museums and two heritage sites and ‘The Reserve’: a collection of original historic objects established for use as ‘handling’ and loan material during the 1930s.
- e) *Section 4: The themes and priorities for future collecting.* The priorities are carefully targeted and mindful of available resources and the expertise needed to care for and make accessible any item added to the collection.

Examples of these priorities are:

“Archives from professional and amateur fieldwork in Leicestershire that meet the standards laid down in ‘The Transfer of Archaeological Archives to Leicestershire Museums.’ Leicestershire Museum Service is the approved repository for archaeological archives that result from the planning process. As planning development across the County continues the service will need to respond to this demand.

“To add to the Palitoy collection in particular objects from the early production period.” In 2016 and 2017 the collection celebrated 50 years of Action Man and 80 years since the Palitoy factory in Coalville began manufacturing. This saw a huge surge of local, national, and international interest in this Leicestershire firm and therefore the service wishes to continue to enhance this popular and well used collection.

“The home and family lives of people who are currently underrepresented in our collections, including LGBTQ+ people, people living with disabilities and people of black and minority ethnic heritage.” In line with the Council’s vision and statement of purpose it wishes to ensure its collections are representative of everyone who lives in Leicestershire. Where possible it will seek to enhance these collections via co-curated projects.

“Selected objects which develop the Thomas Cook collection”. In 2020 the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland acquired the nationally significant Thomas Cook company archive. There is an opportunity for the museum collection to support, enhance and add value to this important archive, through the acquisition of appropriate objects.

- f) *Section 5: The themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal.* This section includes an acknowledgement that the County Council’s Museum Service has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public. In addition, the governing body 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.

This section makes the commitment that “Collections will be reviewed periodically, and rationalised where necessary, to ensure they remain relevant to the services offered and reflect the cultures and aspirations of the communities they represent”. It also includes a table which details those collection areas identified for review during the life of this policy. These are: Coalmining and other working life objects; Fashion collection; Archaeology; Natural Life Spirit Collection and Subject Library Collections. They build on the successful work undertaken over the previous period (2015-2019), which was detailed in the report to the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8 March 2021.

- g) Section 6: Legal and Ethical Framework for Acquisition and Disposal of items. This states that the Council will “work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal”.
- h) Section 7: Collecting Policies of Other Museums. This section acknowledges that the Council will take account of the collecting policies of other museums to avoid conflicts of interest, unnecessary duplication, or waste of resources. It also makes specific reference to Rutland County Museum, Leicester City Museum and independent museums in Leicestershire, who the County Council maintains regular contact with.
- i) Section 8: Acquisition. This section sets out how Leicestershire County Council Museum will add items to its collection, including the criteria to be considered before adding items to the collection (8.1.4). The five methods by which items can be acquired and detailed in 8.1.5.

The ability to maintain a robust, consistent, and transparent approach to acquisition relies on the service having access to professional curatorial expertise. For Leicestershire County Council this is provided through Curatorial, Conservation and Collections Management Team and their remit for curatorial selection is set out in Section 8.

- j) Section 9: Human remains contains a statement that acknowledges the Council’s collections include this sensitive material and that it will follow the procedures in the ‘*Guidance for the care of human remains in museums*’, Department of Culture Media and Sport, 2005.
- k) Section 10: Biological and Geological Material. This section includes a statement that the Council will not acquire any such material that is in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty.
- l) Section 11: Archaeological Material. This section states that the Council will not acquire archaeological material where there is any concern over legal title and highlights the responsibility to report any finds as set out in the Treasure Act 1996.
- m) Section 12: Exceptions. There are only two exceptions to the clauses set out in the policy and these are:
- 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.
- n) Section 13: Spoilation. This states that the Council will follow the principals set out in the “*Spoilation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and*

World War II period”, issued in 1999 by the Museum and Galleries Commission.

- o) Section 14 - The Repatriation and Restitution of Objects and Human Remains. This section sets out the Council’s approach to this important and sensitive area, with decisions being taken by the governing body acting on professional advice and in accordance with the legislation and guidance set out in 14.1 and 14.2 and the relevant aspects of Section 15.
- p) Section 15: Disposal. This sets out the Council’s approach to disposal from the collection. All disposals will be made with reference to Spectrum (recognised professional standard), procedures. Once a decision to dispose has been reached priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain (15.7), in the first instance to an Accredited Museum. The Museum Service will not dispose of items by exchange (15.13). On occasion it may not be possible to dispose of an object by transfer and therefore the guidance on disposal by destruction is set out in 15.14–15.18.

Museum Access Policy

- 27. The Access Policy 2021-2025 is attached at Appendix B, which must be approved by the County Council’s Cabinet, as the overall governing body. This Policy sets out the service’s approach to access and ensures that the service works in accordance with The Equality Act (2020).
- 28. The Access Policy covers how people can see, use, and reference the collections, gain access to museum buildings and sites and how the Council shares information about the collection with people. It is required to cover the use of a variety of interpretative methods to exhibit the collections; enabling public access to the collections, buildings and sites, and associated information; the date of the next policy review.
- 29. Below is a summary of the key elements of the Policy.
 - a) Section 1 of the Policy provides a brief introduction to the policy and Section 2 defines the scope of the museum service, which in addition to the five museum and heritage venues, includes collections facilities, website, online activities and other venues which deliver outreach activity.
 - b) Section 3 contains the purpose of the Policy which is to “*state our commitment to increasing access to our services and resources by identifying ways to provide an accessible, engaging, innovative, sustainable, relevant, and responsive service of the highest quality.*”
 - c) Section 4 recognises the six principal barriers to access (listed below) faced by many people in accessing provision as defined in the ‘Access for All’ Toolkit, Museums Libraries and Archives Council 2004 and

provides an example to illustrate how these barriers might be experienced by those wishing to access the Council's services:

- Attitudinal;
 - Intellectual;
 - Cultural;
 - Economic;
 - Geographic;
 - Physical/sensory;
 - Technological.
- d) Section 5 outlines how the Council will ensure our responsibilities for maximising access are managed robustly and transparently and how the service links into wider corporate functions and responsibilities.
- e) Section 6 provides a series of policy statement for each of the barriers to access set out in Section 4. For example, in relation to physical access actions the Council will take action including:
- Providing accessible seating throughout its galleries.
 - Ensuring its sites and facilities are wheelchair accessible.
 - Providing alternative engagement opportunities when access is difficult.
 - Providing high quality online content for those who cannot leave their homes.
- f) Section 7 highlights other relevant policies, legislation or guidance and Section 8 provide the review date of November 2025.

Consultation

- 30 The Adults Overview and Scrutiny Committee was consulted on 8 March 2021 as part of the development of these policies and its comments are included in the draft policies being brought to the Cabinet for approval.
- 31 Officers from Charnwood Borough Council and Harborough District Council were consulted, due to partnership relationships for the delivery of Charnwood Museum and Harborough Museum.
- 32 The Market Harborough Historical Society was consulted on the CDP, due to the County Council's partnership relationship regarding the collection of Harborough Museum.

Conclusion

- 33 The two policies have been reviewed and updated in line with relevant guidance from Arts Council England and in consultation with partners. If adopted these policies will guide key the museum service over the next five

years, or until they are next reviewed. It is intended that the next review will be no later than 2025.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

- 34 An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) Screening has been undertaken. It concluded that the policies do not represent any significant change to current functions or services. Ensuring the Council's Access Policy is regularly reviewed helps ensure it continues to deploy its responsibilities in relation to the Equalities Act 2010 and seek to make its services accessible to everyone.
- 35 The EHRIA has yet to be commented on by the Departmental Equalities Group, however, a verbal update will be provided to the Cabinet at the meeting.

Partnership Working and Associated Issues

- 36 Charnwood Museum is operated in partnership with Charnwood Borough Council through a Service Level Agreement. The County Council owns the collections and provides the professional curatorial expertise in relation to the museum and therefore leads on the development of museum policy and the accreditation process.
- 37 Similarly, Harborough Museum has a partnership with Harborough District Council, which also involves the Market Harborough Historical Society. Again, the County Council has the responsibility for policy development and accreditation.

Background Papers

Accreditation Scheme Standard

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/accreditation-scheme/about-accreditation#section-1>

Report to the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee 8 March 2021 - Museum Accreditation and minutes of that meeting - <https://bit.ly/3w1XfTm>

Delivering Wellbeing and opportunity in Leicestershire - Adults and Communities Department Ambitions and Strategy for 2020-24 - <https://bit.ly/3CBw8kz>

Leicestershire County Council Strategic Plan 2018-22 - <https://bit.ly/3GG9Bpd>

Access for All Toolkit MLA 2004 -

<https://collectionstrust.org.uk/resource/access-for-all-toolkit/>

Appendices

Appendix A: Museums Collections Development Policy, 2021-2025

Appendix B: Museum Access Policy, 2021-2025