

Carmarthenshire Museums

Collections Care and Conservation Policy

(2017-2022)

Governing Body:
Carmarthenshire County Council

Approval date: month 2017
Review dates: month 2018, 2020, 2022



STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This policy supports the Museum Service Strategic Plan (2017-2022), which focuses on improvements to preservation of collections and buildings in the care of Carmarthenshire Museums. Our approach is informed by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and Carmarthenshire County Council Corporate Strategy (2015-2020). This policy guides the way we will maximise the safe use of and access to collections, make cost-effective and sustainable use of resources, and promote opportunities for improving knowledge and expertise in collections care and the ethics of conservation.

PRINCIPLES OF COLLECTIONS CARE AND CONSERVATION

This policy covers all preventative and remedial conservation activities that are designed to preserve the cultural heritage assets of Carmarthenshire Museums, including historic sites, listed buildings and collections. It also applies to objects in the care of the Museums (for example, other County collections or loan exhibitions). This policy relates to all staff and volunteers of Carmarthenshire Museums.

We will manage collections well so that they will be a valued asset for future generations.

We will find innovative and sustainable solutions to promote physical and digital access to collections, while minimising risks to collections and people.

We will increase understanding of conservation, such as the physical nature and needs of objects, and contribute to regional and national programmes and dialogues.

We will aim to present objects/collections in the best possible condition.

COLLECTIONS AND CONSERVATION CARE APPROACH

Preservation of collections and cultural heritage assets will be approached through a process of assessment and risk management, with resources targeted according to agreed priorities. We recognise that standards of care may vary according to significance, such as rarity, value, fragility and/or public access demands.

Carmarthenshire Museums will employ a Conservation Officer with responsibility for coordinating and delivering preventative and remedial conservation activity according to an agreed annual activity plan.

Specialist remedial conservation will be undertaken by or under the supervision of a professionally accredited conservator (ACR).

All collections care and conservation documentation will be to Spectrum standard and recorded on a secure Collections Management System (CMS).

Museum activities will be informed by the Benchmarks in Collections Care framework and will aim to meet appropriate published standards (e.g. BSI PD 5454:2012) and specifications (PAS 198:2012).

Where Carmarthenshire Museums identifies that it is unable to provide acceptable levels of care for an object, or where better care and/or access to the object can be provided by another organisation, rationalisation will be considered using the ethical framework of the Museum Association's *Disposal Toolkit*.

Items considered for acquisition will be assessed to identify cost implications of conservation and long term care.

Items for inclusion in handling collections will be selected under the guidance of the Conservation Officer who will identify and record appropriate access levels and oversee their continued care.

BUILDINGS (PROPERTY) AND ENVIRONMENTS

Carmarthenshire Museums will work closely with internal partners to ensure that collections are kept in buildings that can provide acceptable environmental and security standards for collections preservation.

Continuous monitoring of internal environments of buildings where collections are permanently exhibited and stored will be extended across all sites to aid achieving the conditions that promote the conservation of collections.

New building design will be informed by published standards and designed to favour passive controls for reasons of economy and environmental sustainability.

Improvements to older properties, including listed buildings, will be designed to achieve acceptable parameters for environmental conditions to enable the expected collection lifetime to be achieved.

Carmarthenshire Museums recognise that the maintenance of a building's fabric and services is fundamental to the preservation of both buildings and collections. Working with Carmarthenshire County Council Property Services and other partners, we will seek to secure adequate funding and promote good practice in these areas.

Standards of cleaning, housekeeping and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) will be raised across all areas of museum activity through an ongoing staff and volunteer training and development programme.

Objects that may be infested (either when already on or entering Museum premises) must be appropriately quarantined.

EMERGENCY PLANNING

The Conservation Officer and other key members of the emergency response team will review and test Carmarthenshire Museums Emergency Plans annually.

The Conservation Officer must be notified immediately of any incident involving collections.

In the event of an incident, the response team should include the Conservation Officer (or nominated representative) with the appropriate knowledge and expertise to supervise the handling and care of collections in the aftermath of an emergency.

LOANS AND EXHIBITIONS

A process of ensuring lenders' conservation requirements can be met will be completed before agreeing to borrow objects.

A risk assessment will be made before any agreement to loan objects from Carmarthenshire Museums collections.

A condition report will be made before an object is lent.

Objects borrowed and loaned will be condition checked on arrival and departure.

Records will be kept of loan or exhibition processes in accordance with Spectrum and added to the object's individual record on the CMS.

Conservation implications will be considered at the start of display and exhibition planning.

Specialist trained staff and contractors will be used to handle and transport large, heavy and/or fragile objects.

REMEDIAL CONSERVATION

Only trained conservators will carry out remedial treatment. Some treatments may be carried out in-house by less experienced conservators under supervision of an appropriate ACR. Contracted work will usually only be carried out by conservators accredited by ICON.

Volunteers and interns may be engaged in basic object cleaning under supervision of a suitably qualified conservator.

TRAINING, LEARNING AND DISSEMINATION

All staff and volunteers will be made aware of the issues around housekeeping, security, handling objects and working within a museum environment as part of their induction.

Basic training in object handling will be provided for anyone that has direct contact with collections.

The Conservation Officer will provide training in conservation, collections care and emergency preparedness appropriate to the needs of staff and volunteers, using external providers where appropriate.

Carmarthenshire Museums will engage with regional and national networks and share expertise and information as widely as possible with diverse groups of learners and in response to requests from individuals and institutions.

STAFFING AND BUDGETS

Carmarthenshire Museums Strategic Plan will be reviewed in order to balance available resources against the needs of raising and professionalising standards of collections care and preservation.

When acquiring large collections, a due diligence exercise should be undertaken, such as seeking endowments for their housing, care and conservation.

External funding for specific conservation projects will be sought where appropriate.

REVIEW

The period of Carmarthenshire Museums Strategic Plan 2017-2022 represents a period of service change and development, particularly with regard to collections care practices. For this reason, this policy will be reviewed initially after 12 months following formal approval and thereafter every 24 months.