

Care and Conservation of the Collections Plan 2022 – 2024

1. Purpose

1.1 Statement

Our collections are central to our vision and purpose, and we endeavour to look after them according to the terms of our Care and Conservation of the Collections Policy. This Plan sets out the current situation regarding care and conservation of the collections and our forward plan which is committed to best value.

This Plan should be read in conjunction with our Care and Conservation of Collections Policy.

1.1.2 Service Plan commitments

The Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP – Council Service Plan) sets out a series of commitments relevant to the care and conservation of collections:

- **Foster creative, innovative and future based thinking in our work, our collections, our programmes and our venues (2.2)**
- **Convert data into insights, to ensure better outcomes for the service and the city (2.4)**
- **Maintain excellence in museum and archive practice (3.4)**

2. Review

2.1 Preventative conservation

2.1.1 Environmental Monitoring

We currently have a building management system in Aberdeen Art Gallery which uses Trend software. In addition, we can monitor temperature and humidity levels in the Gallery via a separate system – Energy Perspective (Invisible Systems) – this data is currently provided to lenders. We also have building management systems at Aberdeen Treasure Hub (main collection store) and Provost Skene's House. Aberdeen Maritime Museum, Tollbooth Museum and a remaining collection store are supported by a Hanwell System. The current Hanwell system has reached its end of life and requires investment to up-grade. Given the range of systems, lack of staff familiarity with them and the resources required to maintain all involved we are exploring streamlining all under one fit for purpose integrated building management system. The aspiration is this will have the capacity to be accessed remotely by a suitable number of trained staff to enable monitoring of temperature and RH at all sites.

2.1.2 Environmental Control

Environmental monitoring has enabled us to aid improvement in environmental conditions. For example, adding a humidifier in the temporary exhibition space at Aberdeen Maritime Museum, using Prosorb for cases, moving weeping glass to a better area and flagging potential mechanical issues to our Team Lead Visitor services & Operations.

2.1.3 Handling

2020 Mobile Elevated Work Platform (MEWP) training for two collections team members. This will improve access to collections and safe movement

2021 - fork lift training and refresher courses undertaken by two team members. This will improve access to collections and safe movement

2022 – return to service of our air-ride van to support safe movement of collection objects

2022 - New A-frame trolley purchased. Will be permanently located at Aberdeen Treasure Hub improving safe movement of objects

2.1.4 Health & Safety

Collections staff undertook training to allow the safe handling of asbestos containing materials within the collections and worked with the Council's Asbestos Officer to review management procedures for these items. A comprehensive 'quick-reference' spreadsheet was also created to summarise hazardous materials and appropriate PPE. The spreadsheet contains information collated from a variety of internal and external sources.

2.1.5 Buildings

A water leak in our old collection store (now emptied) resulted in some minor water and mould damage to a small group of objects. These were successfully dried, and mouldy items were treated with IMS by collections staff.

2.1.6 Housekeeping

Exhibition areas are cleaned daily by Front of House (FoH) team. We want to extend this to include basic object cleaning as required and will undertake series of training sessions with FoH team.

FoH complete daily checklists to confirm all objects on display are present and correct. Any concerns relating to condition are reported to relevant curator. Daily checks can be improved and become more meaningful if we provide further training on what to look for and how to monitor change.

Staff are constantly aware of the possibility of pest infestation and regular monitoring of traps takes place at multiple sites. Monitoring of pest traps at Aberdeen Treasure Hub has recently highlighted the unusual presence of museum beetles in the Textile store. We are taking appropriate steps to isolate the source. A checking schedule is also to be established at remaining collection store as the Collections Access Officer position ended in July 2022 and it was previously their responsibility.

Workshop at Aberdeen Treasure Hub to be rationalised to provide fit for purpose location for storage and packing materials.

The re-install of objects into Aberdeen Art Gallery following a major re-development highlighted collection areas in need of specific attention. During this period:

- Silver care guidelines were created
- A schedule for cleaning of weeping glass was established
- A schedule for rotation of textile/ costume on display was established

2.1.7 Storage

Digital

The number of born digital objects in the collections is increasing. These must be safely stored. Likewise digital records, including image files, film and oral histories require similar care and preservation. We are working with colleagues in Archives to map out our needs and gain access to the Preservica to future proof our collections and associated records.

Physical

Focus on improved physical storage of objects at Aberdeen Treasure Hub:

- Mass move of collection objects from Kittybrewster stores completed. Staff now working on un-packing and appropriate locating of objects.
- Staff engaged in reviewing painting racks at Treasure Hub to ensure all appropriately sized works are off the ground and hanging
- We have a wide variety of preservation materials in stock to aid preservation of and access to historic objects e.g. Melinex polyester sleeves. Several items have been rehoused during unpacking and this work will continue.

2.2 Remedial Conservation

2.2.1 Collection Condition Assessments

Part of exhibition process that all objects selected for display must be assessed by curators and current condition accurately recorded onto TMS. Any subsequent treatment and associated report also to be recorded on TMS. Where possible, works are photographed in advance of going on display (unless suitable hi-res versions exist) and are re-photographed post-conservation. The photographs are an integral resource as they aid monitoring of any changes to object condition.

Backlog of condition reports from Art Gallery install are being worked through, data is being added to TMS.

2.2.2 Programmes of Treatment

A rolling programme identifies objects and works of art in need of remedial conservation and funding is sought from the Museums Galleries Scotland small grants scheme. Grant funding is supplemented by the Conservation Budget and occasionally the Friends organisation will contribute. All conservation work is carried out by external professionally accredited conservators.

If an artwork is requested for loan, the borrowing organisation is asked to contribute to the condition assessment, any remedial conservation required and reglazing.

3. Action plan

Action	Outputs/ outcomes	Link to Service Plan	Additional Resource	Lead officer	Target date
Develop a brief around creating sustainable future for current and future digital assets in collections (2.1.7)	Clear and integrated statement on AAGM approach to storage and long-term integrity of digital assets Commitment to storage mechanism - Preservica	Foster creative, innovative and future based thinking in our work, our collections, our programmes and our venues	Supported by council-wide DAM budget	Lead Curator, Collections Management (to be recruited)	On-going work, to be completed by June 2023
Review the way in which we record and analyse environmental data for care of collections (2.1.1 & 2.1.2)	Integrated building management system Data monitoring schedule More staff trained in data collection Object storage & usage in buildings led by data insights	Convert data into insights, to ensure better outcomes for the service and the city	ACC capital project/ HLF application/ MGS application	Team leader, Collections	On-going, to be completed by tbc
Review current Care and Conservation of Collections Plan	Improve future planning and collections resilience	Maintain excellence in museum & archive practice		Collections Care project team	On-going, to be completed by June 2023
Publish revised Care and Conservation of Collection Plan	Improve future planning and collections resilience	Maintain excellence in museum & archive practice		Collections Care project team	June 2023
Establish rolling review schedule for Care and Conservation of Collections Plan	Improve future planning and collections resilience	Foster creative, innovative and future based thinking in our work, our collections, our programmes and our venues		Lead Curator, Collections Management (to be recruited)	June 2023

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Review collection to identify further groups/ themes/ materials requiring specific care guidelines (2.1.6)	<p>Greater awareness of needs of more of the collections</p> <p>Improved care of more of the collections</p> <p>Programme of work to make improvements to storage of more of the collections</p>	Maintain excellence in museums practice		Collections care project team	On-going work, to be completed by June 2023
Establish training schedule for Front of House colleagues (2.1.6)	<p>Improved condition checking of objects on display in venues</p> <p>Improved care of objects on display in venues</p>	Foster creative, innovative and future based thinking in our work, our collections, our programmes and our venues		Collections care project team	On-going work, to be completed by June 2023
Un-packing from KB (2.1.7)	Improved storage of and access to collections	Maintain excellence in museums practice		Lead Curator, Collections Management (to be recruited)	On-going, to be completed Dec 2023
Review painting store racks and ensure paintings are all appropriately and securely located (2.1.7)	Improved storage of and access to collections	Maintain excellence in museums practice		Lead Curator, Collections Management (to be recruited)	Ongoing, to be completed Nov 2022
Investigate presence of museum beetle in Textile store (2.1.6)	Any infestation isolated and treated	Foster creative, innovative and future based thinking in our work, our collections, our programmes and our venues	ACC budget	Lead Curator, Collections Management (to be recruited)	On going

Action	Outputs/ outcomes	Link to Service Plan	Additional Resource	Lead officer	Target date
Improve access to collections care and storage materials (2.1.6)	Ordered and accessible workshop	Maintain excellence in museums practice		Lead Curator, Collections Management (to be recruited)	On-going
Condition report created to support art gallery install reviewed and added to TMS (2.2.1)	More accurate object records Insights to monitor object condition more accessible	Maintain excellence in museums practice		Lead Curator, Collections Management (to be recruited)	On going
Carry out planned conservation to works selected for display 2022/23/24 (2.2.2)	Condition of objects improved Demonstrate care for collections Improve visitor experience of collections	Maintain excellence in museums practice	ACC budget, Friends, external grants and funds	Lead Curators Art & History	March 2024
Review conservation needs spreadsheet (2.2.2)	Establish yearly rolling schedule of treatment	Maintain excellence in museums practice		Collections care team	On-going
Establish conservation framework (2.2.2)	Reduce procurement time, meaning objects are conserved promptly	Maintain excellence in museums practice		Lead Curator, Collections Management (to be recruited)	June 2023

4 Review Date

This action plan will be reviewed by the Lead Curator (Collections Management) in June 2023 and renewed in June 2024.