

Hampshire County Council Arts and Museums Service Care and Conservation Policy 2013-2018

Name of Museum: Hampshire County Council Arts and Museums Service

Name of Governing Body: Hampshire County Council

Date on which this policy was approved:

Date at which policy is due for renewal: 31 March 2018

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to outline the policy for the care and conservation of the collections belonging to Hampshire County Council Arts and Museums Service. The stewardship and care of the collections is central to the aims and priorities of the Arts and Museums Service as identified in the Arts and Museums 2012-15 Service Plan and the commitment to excellence.
- 1.2 It is the intention of the Arts and Museums Service to manage the collections to the highest possible standards as outlined in documents such as the *Benchmarks in Collection Care* published by the Arts Council. This will be achieved by a combination of preventive and remedial conservation and improvements to the quality of our storage facilities ensuring the continuation of the long-term preservation of the collections.

2 Preventive conservation

- 2.1 The preventive conservation of the Arts and Museums Service collections will take into consideration how the objects and specimens react to their environment based on an understanding of how they deteriorate physically and chemically. The Collections Team, which includes a number of trained and ICON accredited conservators, uses its knowledge and understanding of current practice to bring this about.
- 2.2 Preventive conservation will include the provision of an optimum environment in which the collections will be stored and displayed both in the main stores at Chilcomb House and across all Arts and Museums Service sites. This will be achieved within the framework of resources and facilities available to the Arts and Museums Service and to meet the current preservation and conservation standards recommended by the museums profession.
- 2.3 Environmental conditions are regularly monitored in all storage facilities and at all Arts and Museums sites using digital data loggers, and data

- collected is analysed by the Collections Team who ensure optimum conditions are maintained. Regular weekly checks are conducted by the Collections Officers in conjunction with caretaking staff to make sure that the main collections stores at Chilcomb House are well maintained inside and out and that general housekeeping is undertaken.
- 2.4 A programme of pest management forms part of this process including the fumigation of any affected items. All vulnerable objects and specimens such as textiles and natural science collections will be fumigated before being accessioned to prevent possible contamination with existing collections and items that are at particular risk, such as the collection of fur coats and accessories. These are also treated occasionally as a means of further prevention. Insect traps are also installed in all stores at Chilcomb House and in displays and stores across all Arts and Museums Service sites and are monitored by the Collections Officers.
- 2.5 The programme of preventive conservation involves all staff across the Arts and Museums Service. Collections care training, both formal and informal, is provided by the Collections Team and in particular the Collections Officers who have specialist conservation knowledge and can disseminate up-to-date professional information. This training is especially of value in terms of the safe handling and care of local studies and handling collections stored and used at the Arts and Museums Service sites where volunteers and local staff are involved with their ongoing access and use.
- 2.6 An audit of collections in store at Chilcomb and on display in its Arts and Museums Service sites is conducted bi-annually to ensure that standards are maintained and areas for improvement are identified. These audits are conducted by the Collections Team and reports and action plans are formulated as a result. This audit is based on the *Benchmarks in Collection Care* published by the Arts Council and information gathered is disseminated across colleagues in the Arts and Museums Service.
- 2.7 A Disaster Plan for the care of collections in the event of an emergency has been formulated for each Arts and Museums Service site and for the stores at Chilcomb House. The Collections Team are part of the Arts and Museums Emergency Conservation Unit (ECU) that supports sites should a disaster occur. The Disaster Plan is reviewed annually or when staff at sites or circumstances alter. The plan is managed by the Collections Team in conjunction with the Arts and Museums Service Strategic Team Manager for Visitor Services. Training in disaster recovery is provided by the Collections Officers for all staff and museums formally and informally. The ECU meets every six months to review emergency procedures and recovery equipment.

- 3 Interventive conservation
 - 3.1 Remedial conservation of objects and specimens will be undertaken by the team of professional and trained conservators working for the Arts and Museums Service in liaison with the keepers of the collections. Priorities for interventive conservation will be decided in light of their needs and desire for access to them. The system for deciding interventive treatments will be via the Collections Team meetings, exhibition project team meetings and internal work request forms.
 - 3.2 All conservation work will meet professional standards to minimise the risk to the object and to ensure that its integrity is not compromised. All treatments will be discussed in advance and research into the most appropriate treatment undertaken where necessary. All treatments will be thoroughly documented on MODES using photography to illustrate progress.
- 4 Improvements to the quality of storage facilities
 - 4.1 Although environmental conditions in the main Arts and Museums Service collections stores at Chilcomb House are well maintained and monitored regularly, it is recognised that in the longer-term the buildings are not fit-for-purpose.
 - 4.2 The Care and Conservation Policy will work towards improving the quality of the storage facilities in the longer-term by working in partnership with the National Motor Museum Trust Beaulieu, Portsmouth City Council, Southampton City Council and Winchester City Council on a proposed joint collections centre initiative currently entitled *The Engine Room Project*.
- 5 Care and Conservation Plan
 - 5.1 The Care and Conservation Policy will enable Collections Team staff to determine priority areas for improvement in the stewardship of the collections. This process will be supported by the Care and Conservation Plan which will also help to measure levels of improvement over a given period of time and demonstrate how this work supports the delivery of the Arts and Museums Service policies for Collections Development, Digital Preservation and Documentation.