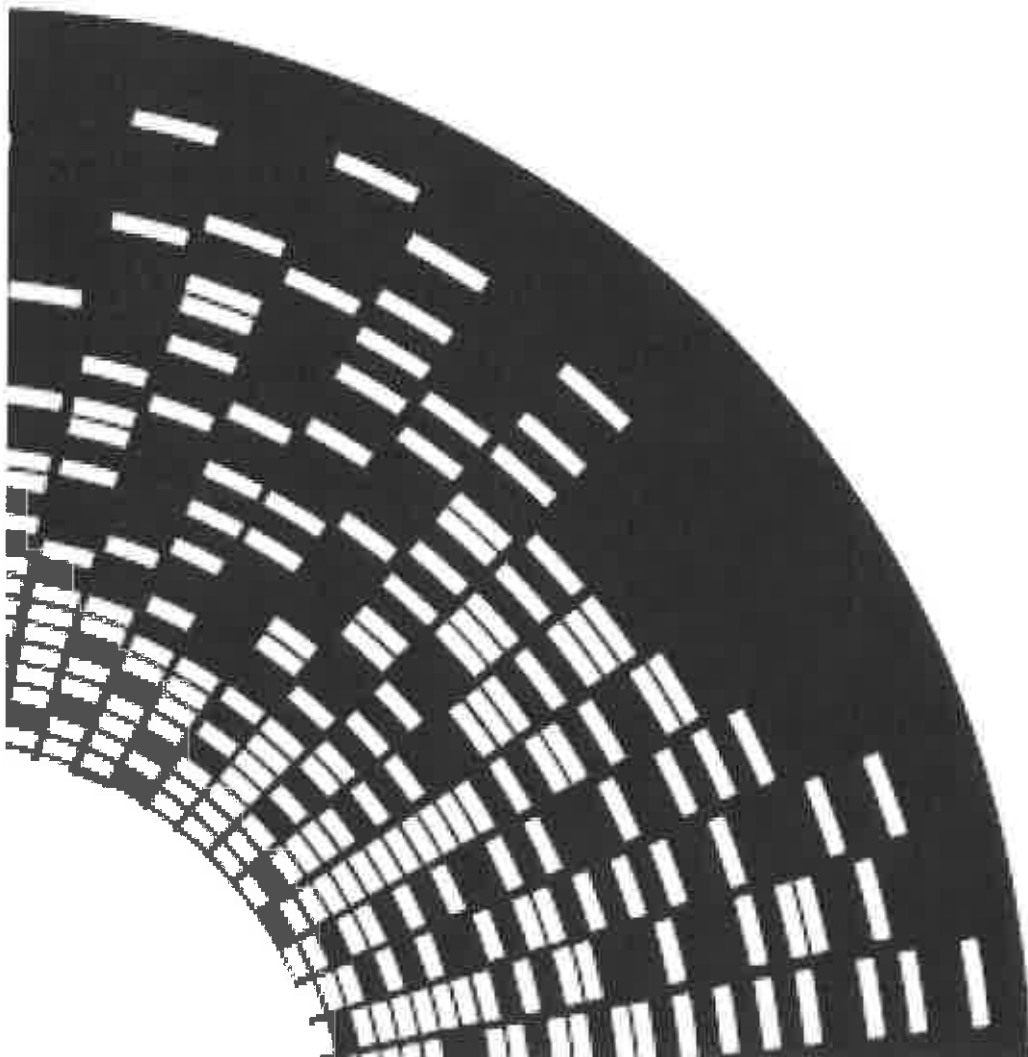




Approved by Board: 11/03/16
Version 1

Hexham Old Gaol Collections Development Policy



2016

Name of museum: *Hexham Old Gaol*

Name of governing body: *The Woodhorn Trust*

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: *11th March 2016*

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: *March 2021*

***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:

The museum's statement of purpose is: Woodhorn is a charity concerned with protecting and preserving the heritage of Northumberland and improving people's lives through heritage, arts and cultural activities. This activity happens at our museums and record offices with many thousands of people and increasingly off-site within communities throughout Northumberland and on-line with people throughout the World.

The purpose of Hexham Old Gaol & Moothall is to promote an awareness and appreciation of the history and culture of Hexham within the context of its position in the county of Northumberland and also the former English and Scottish Marches, particularly the former English Middle March. Particular focus is given to the medieval history of Hexham, including the role of the Archbishop of York as ruler of Hexhamshire, crime and punishment through time, and the history and culture of the Border Reivers.

- 1.1. The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.**
- 1.2. By definition, Hexham Old Gaol 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.**
- 1.3. Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.**
- 1.4. Hexham Old Gaol 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.**

- 1.5. Hexham Old Gaol 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.**
- 1.6 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

The existing collections contain items originating from, used in, or with connection with, the West of Northumberland, and where relevant the Borders area, as defined by the historical boundaries of the six Border Marches.

3. An overview of current collections

The existing collections are made up of two elements:-

- i) The Permanent Collection;**
- ii) The Handling Collection that The Woodhorn Trust accepts is composed of items with a limited life but great local interest and relevance.**

The Reiver-related items displayed in Hexham Old Gaol form part of the Permanent Collection.

The Border Library collection belongs to a private trust (The Butler Trust). It is operated by the Library volunteers and an honorary librarian who acts as volunteer co-ordinator. The collections comprise books, music, records, photographs and tapes collected by the late William Butler, relating to the music, cooking, geography, history, poetry, ballads and buildings of the Borders. These items form part of the Permanent Collection. Negotiations are ongoing to transfer the Border Library collection to the Woodhorn Trust.

The collections in store are Victorian and 20th Century social history items, which relate to local history, and the Handling Collection used mainly for discovery box loans and educational activities. Items currently held include photographs; domestic items; items relating to the work of a local blacksmith; leather-working tools and examples of "Hexham Tans". These items form part of both the Handling Collection and the Permanent Collection.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

Items will be collected and categorised within the following:-

- 1) The Permanent Collection;**
- 2) The Handling Collection, which The Woodhorn Trust accepts will have a limited life.**

Subjects and themes to be collected are:-

- **Items originating from, made in or used in the West of Northumberland, including the area known as Hexhamshire, ruled over in the Medieval period by the Archbishop of York;**
- **Items illustrating the life and times of the Border Reivers originating from, made in, or used in the six Border Marches;**
- **The life and times of the various communities, groups and individuals within the West of Northumberland, including both settlements and rural areas. This will involve, where appropriate and where collections management allows, the active collection of items relating to the West of Northumberland which shall be made available to all – personal visitors, postal, website and telephone enquiries, and through temporary displays in appropriate locations. Information on other sources of information shall be available. The current good working relationships with Northumberland County Council Library staff, and Woodhorn Archive staff, shall continue to ensure there is no duplication of responsibilities, and that the public are clear as to the role of each organisation.**

- **Both genuine and reproduction items from the following subject areas to reflect the range of objects in the Borders from the late 13th Century to the present day to be added to the Permanent Collection:-**
 - **Arms and Armour**
 - **Furniture**
 - **Domestic Life**
 - **Costume**
 - **Crime and Punishment**

- **Objects, documents, etc., relevant to the National Curriculum and off-curriculum subjects regularly studied by educational institutions so that the collections develop in a coherent way around particular themes which can form the basis of displays, loans, reminiscence boxes, etc., shall form part of the Handling Collection.**

- **Oral history recordings reflecting the experiences of representatives of all communities within the West of Northumberland. Considering the nature of the recordings, transcriptions shall be made as resources allow, forming part of the Permanent Collection. The recording themselves shall be regarded as part of the Handling Collection, as the nature of the media used to record means there is a limited life.**

5. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

- 5.1 Hexham Old Gaol 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.

6 Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items

6.1 Hexham Old Gaol 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 Hexham Old Gaol 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):

Other museums and collections within the Woodhorn Trust; Hexham Abbey PCC; The North of England Open Air Museum, Beamish; Corbridge Roman Site Museum; Clayton Collection Museum; Chesters Roman Fort; Housesteads Roman Fort & Museum; Chesterholm Museum; Vindolanda; Wylam Railway Museum; Tullie House Museum & Art Gallery; Stephenson's Birthplace Museum, Wylam; Allenheads Heritage Centre; Thomas Bewick's Birthplace Museum, Cherryburn; The Roman Army Museum, Carvoran; The Heritage Centre, Bellingham; The National Trust; English Heritage (Northern Region); The Great North Museum, Newcastle

8 Acquisition

8.1 The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

The Museums Officer for West Northumberland would advise the Director and Trustees of the Woodhorn trust re the relevance and advisability of possible acquisitions, as specified below.

8.2 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).

8.3 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.

9 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

10.1 Hexham Old Gaol will not acquire any biological or geological material.

11 Archaeological material

12.1 Hexham Old Gaol 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).

12 Exceptions

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

- o acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin**
- o 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.

13 Spoliation

- 14.1 Hexham Old Gaol 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.**

14 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’.**

15 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.**
- 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.**
- 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, eg the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.