

Name of museum: East Lothian Council Museums Service (ELCMS)

Name of governing body: East Lothian Council

Date of previous review: February 2024

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: February 2025

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: February 2030

Museums Galleries Scotland will be notified of any changes to the Collections Development Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.

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1. Relationship to other relevant policies/plans of the organisation:

- 1.1. The museum's statement of purpose is:
"Preserving and presenting East Lothian's cultural heritage."

Preserving includes collecting, documenting and conserving the physical and intellectual evidence of East Lothian's cultural heritage as outlined in the Collections Development Policy.

Presenting covers all aspects of facilitating access to the collections to information about the collections and to the information contained within the collection items as outlined in this policy. It also includes the presentation of aspects of the cultural heritage which East Lothian shares in common with the wider community in Scotland, the UK and across the world, for example in the areas of art, history, science and the natural world.

- 1.2. The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.
- 1.3. By definition, the museum 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.
- 1.4. Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.
- 1.5. The museum 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.
- 1.6. The museum will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift or bequest, 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.
- 1.7. The museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.

2. History of the collections

ELCMS is defined as the following premises and collections:

- Museums Headquarters and Store (Dunbar Road, Haddington)
- Dunbar Town House Museum and Gallery
- Prestongrange Museum (Prestonpans)
- John Muir's Birthplace Museum (Dunbar)
- The John Gray Centre Museum (Haddington)

- Paintings and other works of art, normally held in other Council premises, are generally recognised as being the responsibility of the Museums Service from an audit and advice perspective.

The following community museums are operated by charities and come under the umbrella of ELCMS as formal partners:

- Musselburgh Museum (operated by Musselburgh Museum and Heritage Group)
- The Coastal Communities Museum (operated by the Coastal Communities Museum Trust)
- Museum and Research Room in Dunbar Town House (operated by Dunbar and District History Society)

The term “Museum” is used in a functional sense and may at all times be taken to subsume the terms “Gallery”, “Art Gallery”, “Heritage Centre” or otherwise as appropriate.

Collecting prior to the establishment of ELCMS in 1990 was on a passive basis in all subject areas. This resulted in patchy collections with many gaps to be filled. The existence of a museum at North Berwick since 1957 led to better representation in the Collection of the town and area than other parts of East Lothian. The collection as it stands now includes a reasonable geographic spread across the region (from Musselburgh in the West to Dunbar in the East, the Firth of Forth to the North and the Lammermuir Hills to the South) with a better representation of the larger communities. A description of the collection by subject area follows in section 3. Since March 1997 the majority of the Collection has been housed in a purpose-built store at Library and Museums Headquarters, Dunbar Road, Haddington.

3. An overview of current collections

Social History

This collection comprises the bulk of the collections held by the ELCMS, the material of which shall be considered to encompass four broad subject areas:

- i. Domestic Life
- ii. Working Life
- iii. Community Life
- iv. Seaside Holidays

The collection also includes:

- i. Natural History including Geology and Palaeontology
- ii. Archaeology
- iii. Numismatics
- iv. Visual Art
- v. Applied Art
- vi. Site Specific Collections
- vii. Oral History Collections

3.1 Domestic Life

This represents a substantial proportion of the collection and includes household items pertaining to food, drink, clothing, hobbies, pastimes, and childhood. More recent acquisitions have included toys, everyday clothing and twentieth century kitchen equipment. Attempts to broaden the scope of the collections to reflect the diversity of daily life in East Lothian with regard to culture, geographic location etc., will continue.

3.2 Working Life

The working life collections include objects representing local industries and products - agriculture, mining, fishing, manufacturing, retailing and the service industries. Most of the traditional industries of East Lothian (including agriculture, mining, fishing, and milling) and the associated crafts (including net-making, pottery, salt-panning, textiles, glass making) were under-represented in the collection in the early 1990s. Holdings of this type of material and of agricultural material have improved over recent years.

Material from the full range of industries in the Prestonpans area continues to be a collecting priority, together with material from industries based outwith the Tranent / Prestonpans / Musselburgh area. Examples of occupational costume are also desirable.

3.3 Community Life

Community Life collections include objects relating to all levels of local government, church, education, health, welfare, the military, law enforcement, societies, organisations, and public entertainment. Geographically this aspect of the collection is representative; material evidence of the churches of North Berwick, Haddington and elsewhere is reasonable. Friendly Societies are well represented; a quantity of military uniforms has been collected, however, collections relating to health and education are patchy.

Objects representing the smaller rural communities in East Lothian are a priority area for collecting, as are items that relate to social groups that are currently under-represented in the collections.

3.4 Seaside Holidays

Existing collections include many photographs and postcards, souvenirs, ephemera and documents, camping, picnic and beach equipment and costume. All destinations on East Lothian's coast are represented, but North Berwick and Dunbar dominate.

Work on a digitisation project in the 1990s meant that this part of the collection is particularly well-documented. Building on this foundation, a second phase of the digitisation project extended the scope to seaside holidays in the rest of Scotland. Accordingly, objects of a similar nature to those of an East Lothian provenance already held, but from outwith East Lothian were also collected for the duration of the project.

Future collecting will focus on improving the scope and geographical distribution of the East Lothian holdings and will also include items representing the newer tourist attractions in the region. Material representing seaside holidays outside East Lothian (as noted above) will no longer actively be collected. This area of the collection is closed.

3.5 Natural History including Geology and Palaeontology

A substantial collection of local natural history is held. Some specimens have suffered light damage from long term display, but the majority is in reasonable condition.

Most local birds are represented, particularly seabirds and there is a large collection of birds eggs. Some of the animals are no longer found locally (e.g., Golden Eagle) but examples in the collection could be used to show effects of changes in habitat etc. The collection of mammals is small. Most butterflies and moths in the collection are exotic species and future collecting will only consider local examples. Local species of marine invertebrates are represented; some examples were acquired for the handling collection only and are not part of the collection. Fish are also reasonably represented although some specimens need conservation.

Some of the taxidermy was done by local people and is of high quality as well as local interest. Should the opportunity arise, additional relevant examples of this work will be acquired.

Additions to the collection over recent years have been collected for the purposes of handling/education sessions and have been much used both by the Museums Service and by the Countryside Ranger Service.

Additions will be sought to represent local species of mammal, insects, reptiles, fish, and amphibians where a need arises for display or educational/handling use. The overall collecting objective is to build up a representative collection of local wildlife but there are no plans to develop a collection of animals that are preserved in spirit, i.e., a wet collection, due to lack of appropriate storage facilities. See section 11.

A small miscellaneous collection of local and non-local rocks, minerals, and fossils, mainly of British origin, is held.

Future collecting will aim to represent the rich geological heritage of East Lothian, particularly related to changes in rock formation, and extractive industries, etc. See section 11.

3.6 Archaeology

There is a growing collection of archaeological material generated mostly from the increase in building homes in East Lothian in recent years. The archaeology collection amounts to the second largest collection subject area. There is also a growing amount of human historic material, a small amount of which is unprovenanced and the rest from local sites such as Tantallon Castle and Archerfield medieval village. There are examples of the internationally important tiles from North Berwick Priory. There is some replica material of significant finds in the collection, and it is a useful display resource. A good collection of industrial material has come into the collection relating to the site at Prestongrange following a community archaeology project.

Several objects have been acquired through Treasure Trove, including a Bronze Age beaker, Iron Age horse harnesses, Bronze Age Axeheads, Roman brooches, and a number of stone anchors via the Receiver of Wreck.

Future collecting will be in accordance with all relevant legislation, regulations, and procedures. See sections 10 & 12.

3.7 Numismatics

There is small miscellaneous collection of Scottish and British coins, some trade tokens, and commemorative medals. In addition, there is a significant collection of local communion tokens. There is some material relating to the failed East Lothian Bank.

Development of the numismatic collection will be restricted to coins, notes, medals, and tokens with a particular connection to East Lothian, or such as may be required for display purposes. Coins recovered from archaeological excavations will be accepted alongside other excavated material (see section above and section 12).

3.8 Visual Arts

There is a miscellaneous collection of works of art on paper and canvas. The main strength lies in local history and topography.

Future collecting objectives will be to acquire works of art depicting local views and subjects and to represent the work of significant local artists past and present. Work by an East Lothian artist could be acquired notwithstanding the subject of the work, if considered appropriate.

3.9 Applied Arts

The collection contains a mixture of ceramics, glass, furniture, and textiles of local and non-local origin. Belfield and Makmerry pottery are represented, as well as non-local items. A small collection of glassware from the eighteenth century to the present includes table and decorative items, including glass rolling pins.

A priority will be extending holdings of East Lothian made ceramics, glass, and decorative textiles. Examples of the work of the early Prestonpans potteries and contemporary artists and crafts people are particularly desirable. Furniture should be locally manufactured, or types commonly used in East Lothian. One East Lothian clock is in the collection and attempts to record the work of local craftsmen shall continue. Items provenanced to, but not made in, East Lothian may be collected if considered appropriate for specific purposes of representation.

3.10 Site Specific Collections

Cutting across the themes described above there are significant collections relating to the former uses, users, and occupants of the historic buildings in which the ELCMS museums and partner community museums are housed. Therefore, it remains a priority to continue to collect artefacts relating to the following places, their uses, users, and occupants:

- John Muir's boyhood homes in Dunbar, the Dunbar of his childhood & items that illustrate his legacy and impact,
- the Prestongrange site,
- Dunbar Town House and High Street,
- 65 High Street, Musselburgh and Musselburgh High Street,
- the Old School, School Road, North Berwick,
- the buildings that make up the John Gray Centre.

3.11 Oral History Collections

There is a small collection of oral history recordings, generally undertaken in relation to exhibition or display work. This will continue in discussion with colleagues in the Archives Service.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

Introduction

The general intention of the policy shall be to strengthen the scope of the existing collections by filling gaps to reflect the objectives of the Museums Service, namely, to seek to preserve, safeguard and communicate material evidence of East Lothian's cultural heritage and to encourage the participation of the local community in this process for the purposes of study, education and enjoyment. Specific collecting areas and priorities are articulated under section 3.

It is a priority to collect items suitable for handling and use in educational and community projects. Items collected for the handling collection are owned by ELCMS, but not accessioned into the collections.

Digital material will be collected where relevant (digital artwork for example) with careful consideration given to storage and access requirements.

Collecting Standard Criteria

The following standard criteria will inform decisions on whether to add material to the collections:

- Relevance, importance, and long-term value of the item in the context of existing collections
- Potential use of the object/s for research and/or exhibition
- Condition of the object/s
- The cost of acquisition, including purchase price, VAT, transport costs, immediate conservation costs, documentation, and research costs
- The ability to provide long-term care and access and the cost of providing such care and access
- Existing resources and its long-term sustainability
- The options for preservation in situ
- The interests of other accredited museums, archives, and public institutions
- The quality of supporting documentation particularly contextual information
- The object's provenance, especially confirmation of legal title of the present holder and the right of the holder to transfer title to East Lothian Council.

5. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

5.1 The museum 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.

5.3 Responsible, curatorially-motivated and ethical transfer, disposal, reuse, and deaccessioning are necessary parts of a sustainable collections management approach.

Items considered for disposal should be assessed under the following categories: Significance (to the Collections Policy), Risk (whether hazardous), Condition, Completeness, Display potential, Engagement potential and Resource value. If the item meets none of the categories except risk, it can be considered for disposal.

5.4 Priorities for rationalisation and disposal during the period 2024-2029:

The first step is to undertake a desk-based assessment to decide on priorities for disposal and rationalisation as this will enable ELCMS to develop a well-informed and contextual view of each area of the Collection before decisions on disposals are made. This assessment will include information held in the collections database and in any relevant surveys or studies. The first areas to be assessed will be the social history and archaeology collections and collections related to Prestongrange Museum. Assessments will include legal considerations regarding ownership where unclaimed items (Loans In or enquiries), or items of unknown provenance, are concerned.

Once priorities for rationalisation and disposal have been identified using the categories in 5.3 the procedure described in clause 16 will be followed.

6. Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items

6.1 The museum 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 The museum 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):

- National Mining Museum of Scotland
- National Museums Scotland, including National Museum of Flight
- Scottish Railway Preservation Society
- Myreton Motor Museum
- Scottish Borders Council Museum Service
- City of Edinburgh Council Museums Service
- East Lothian Council Archive and Local History Services

The ELCMS works in partnership with the following organisations:

- i) Musselburgh Museum and Heritage Group who operate Musselburgh Museum under contract to East Lothian Council
- ii) Dunbar and District History Society who operate two rooms in Dunbar Town House under contract to East Lothian Council.
- iii) ELCMS operates John Muir's Birthplace Museum under a Management Agreement with the John Muir's Birthplace Charitable Trust.
- iv) Coastal Communities Museum Trust who operate the Coastal Communities Museum under contract to East Lothian Council.

In all of these relationships ELCMS works closely with trustees and volunteers regarding any objects that are offered to the ELC Museum Collections at any of these venues. In each partnership the relevant committee or Board of Trustees has been given a copy of the Collections Development Policy and work has been done to communicate and raise awareness of it and relevant elements of the Collections Information (Documentation) Policy and Procedures.

8. Archival holdings

As ELCMS holds archives, including photographs and printed ephemera, East Lothian Council will be guided by Archive Accreditation Standards <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/archive-service-accreditation/>

9. Acquisition

The Team Manager - Museums is defined as being the professional officer responsible to the Council through the Head of Communities and Partnerships for the operation of the Museums Service according to proper professional standards. The Team Manager - Museums must have a relevant degree; have achieved the Associateship of the Museums Association and have experience of the principles and practice of museum operation and management as may be determined to be acceptable by Museums Galleries Scotland.

9.1 The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

Items offered to the ELCMS as gifts or bequests will not normally be accepted if they are subject to any restrictive covenant or special conditions, such as that they be displayed in a particular way. In exceptional circumstances, if the Team Manager- Museums considers that the item(s) in question are of over-riding importance, the acquisition of a specific item to which conditions are attached may be approved.

9.2 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).

9.3 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, 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.

10. Human remains

10.1 As the museum holds or intends to acquire human remains from any period, it will follow the guidelines in the 'Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Scottish Museums' issued by Museums Galleries Scotland in 2011.

11. Biological and geological material

11.1 So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the museum will not acquire by any direct or indirect means any specimen that has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of the United Kingdom or any other country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

12. Archaeological material

12.1 The museum 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 Scotland, under the laws of bona vacantia including Treasure Trove, the Crown has title to all ownerless objects including antiquities, although such material as human remains and environmental samples are not covered by the law of bona vacantia. Scottish material of chance finds and excavation assemblages are offered to museums through the treasure trove process and cannot therefore be legally acquired by means other than by allocation to ELCMS by the Crown. However, where the Crown has chosen to forego its title to a portable antiquity or an excavation assemblage, a Curator or other responsible person acting on behalf of the East Lothian Council, can establish that valid title to the item in question has been acquired by ensuring that a certificate of 'No Claim' has been issued on behalf of the Crown.

13. Exceptions

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

- 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

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.

14. Spoliation

14.1 The museum 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.

15. 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 Scottish Museums*' issued by MGS in 2011), 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 Scotland will follow the guidelines in the 'Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Scottish Museums' issued by Museums Galleries Scotland in 2011.

16. Disposal procedures

- 16.1 All disposals will be undertaken transparently and with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures on Disposal and Museum Association guidelines.
- 16.2 The governing body will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item with exceptions see 16.14. Agreements on disposal made with donors will also be considered.
- 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 or transfer, sale 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 (if appropriate).
- 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 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 Museums Galleries Scotland.
- 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 an extremely poor condition, has severely deteriorated and can never be displayed or used for research, and/or 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, e.g., the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.