

Vale & Downland Museum Collections Care and Conservation Policy

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: 6 September 2022

Date at which this policy is due for review: 6 September 2027

Introduction

Caring for the collections is a fundamental duty for all museums. The Vale & Downland Museum's (VDM) collection underpins everything that it does. Our policy for the care of the collections is based on a combination of preventative and remedial conservation, both designed to ensure preservation of the collection for future generations.

Preventative conservation covers the measures necessary to stop or minimise deterioration of museum objects and specimens and structures. The necessary preventative measures are based on a thorough understanding of how objects and specimens react to their environment and deteriorate physically or chemically. Remedial conservation involves treatment to an object or specimen to bring it to a more acceptable condition or state in order to stabilise it or enhance some aspects of its cultural or scientific value.

The Museum's approach to collections care and conservation is guided by:

The Museum Association Code of Ethics
Health and Safety at Work Act etc. 1974
COSHH Regulations 2002

This policy has been informed by the following standards and frameworks:

PAS 197:2009 'Code of practice for cultural collections management'
PAS 198:2012 'Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections'
BS545/PD5454 'Recommendations for storage and exhibition of archival documents'
SPECTRUM 5.0

The Museum is also committed to using Benchmarks 3 as a means of identifying priorities for improvements.

Aims and Objectives

We will commit to care for the collections by aiming to provide the best conditions for the preservation of all objects and specimens through:

- Using a risk management approach by carrying out a self-assessment every 3 years using the Benchmarks 3 check list to assess the condition of collections and using the outcomes to identify priorities.
- Providing an optimum climate of temperature, relative humidity, light levels, by monthly environmental monitoring that achieves a satisfactory compromise between the long-term preservation of the objects and specimens, and accessibility to public and staff.
- Showing a commitment to housekeeping and the importance it plays in the protection of collections and the enjoyment of visitors.
- Providing a pest free environment by regular monitoring.
- Providing storage and display conditions to meet current preservation and conservation standards in order to maintain all collections in a state of high protection and security at all times.
- Considering conservation requirements of the collections prior to acquisition, loan and display, assessing objects on inward loan and annually monitoring the condition of all specimens.
- Prioritising conservation requirements within the framework of resources available.
- Achieving the highest standards of conservation through consulting professionally accredited conservators.
- The use of appropriate materials and methods for storage and display as set out in the conservation plan.
- Documenting all conservation measures undertaken while objects and specimens are in our care.
- Promoting best practice within the workforce in handling and care of objects and ensuring they are aware of the museum's conservation policies thereby minimizing the risks to the objects long-term preservation.

VDM has access to verbal conservation advice from the Oxfordshire County Museum Service. If remedial conservation is recommended then a suitable conservator is sought via the ICON Conservation Register.

General use of the collection is guided by the Museum's Procedural Manual, Access Policy, Collections Development Policy and Documentation Policy and will take into account the conservation requirements of the material concerned.

We will take measures over and above those necessary for the day to day protection of the collection, to provide emergency arrangements and facilities in the event of disastrous damage (as from flood, fire etc.). These measures include:

- Provision of Emergency Response equipment in the building and off site.
- Provision of Emergency Response documentation as part of the Emergency Procedures Handbook, stored in all collection holding areas.
- The Emergency Plan identifies external bodies whose services may be used in specific emergency situations.