

Falkirk Community Trust

Conservation and Collections Care Policy Statement

1. MISSION AND COMMITMENT

- 1.1 Collections are the core of our service and we strive towards the best practical standards of collections care through a combination of preventative and remedial conservation to ensure the long term preservation of our area's material culture.

2. COLLECTIONS CONDITIONS OVERVIEW

- 2.1 Currently the collections are undergoing a full inventory and conditions are being checked as part of this. A repacking exercise will take place following the inventory's completion and a conservation priority list will be developed from this. Concurrently we randomly sample collections items to ensure appropriate care and intervention is sought where collections are in danger of rapid deterioration.
- 2.2 A British Library Preservation Assessment Survey of the Archives collections was undertaken in October 2010. A Museums Libraries Association (MLA) "Benchmarks for Collection Care" self-assessment survey of the archives is undertaken every three years. These surveys inform the archives conservation and preservation priorities and the action plan.

3. PREVENTATIVE CONSERVATION

Preventative conservation "describes research and interventions aimed at reducing deterioration rates and minimizing risks to collections" International Council of Museums (ICOM). The following measures have been implemented to achieve this:

3.1 Provision of Suitable Building Conditions

Building managers, supported by Museum staff, are tasked with ensuring appropriate building conditions for the long term storage of the collections. Buildings are regularly checked internally and externally of signs of problems such as water ingress, pest damage, vandalism or structural problems. Building issues are reported and dealt with in a timely manner. Fire detection and prevention systems are kept up to date with current standards and as with the security systems they are tested, and serviced, regularly. When capital projects are planned the care of the collections is taken into account and collections staff are involved in the planning process.

3.2 Environmental Monitoring

Falkirk Community Trust monitors the environment in storage and display areas, to measure and record relative humidity (RH) and temperature. Spot and wider room readings of LUX levels are taken and UV filters are used to reduce and removed UV light where possible. This information is collected, recorded and used to analyse the collections environments to allow future planning for control upgrades and the better matching of objects to their preferred environment, thereby helping us to use less energy.

3.3 Environmental Control

- 3.3.1 **RH, Light and Temperature Controls:** Falkirk Community Trust aims to pursue 'best practice' in our preservation and conservation procedures as established in such documentation as BSI PD5454: 2012 'Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials', and the MLA Benchmarks in Collection Care.

3.3.2 **Display Case Construction:** where appropriate, objects on display will be in secure cases which are been positioned to avoid vibrations, strong light sources and near sources of heat or cold.

3.3.3 **Storage:** where practicable, stored collections will be housed in acid free boxes, in covered racking or covered pallets to protect against dust. Where this is not possible due to the size of the item, tyvek sheets will be used to protect the items. Items will be labelled and packed in ways that reduce handling and the potential for damage. Photographs are stored in polyester or silversafe enclosures, rolled items are protected with acid-free tissue or unbleached cotton bags and unboxed vulnerable archives are wrapped and stored appropriately.

3.4 Housekeeping

3.4.1 Cleaning

Staff and volunteers are trained to clean storage and display areas in a way that is not detrimental to the collections. Chemical-based commercial cleaning products are avoided and only curatorial staff clean objects.

3.4.2 Quarantine Procedures

New acquisitions and incoming materials are inspected before being allowed into the main storage areas to ensure that the accidental introduction of pests is prevented. If pests are discovered in the collection these items are quarantined until they are treated and all risk of contagion has passed. If this is not possible they are removed from the collection and under the terms of the Collections Agreement may be disposed of.

3.4.3 Pest Monitoring

All areas containing collections are monitored using insect traps, with more traps in areas of vulnerable collections. These are regularly checked and the pests identified to assess if there is a potential problem. If a problem is discovered the trap contents are recorded and the area monitored so that the source of the problem can be located and eradicated.

3.5 Handling, Moving and Transport

3.5.1 Due to the variety of the types of objects potentially being handled the number of staff authorised to move objects is relatively low and all staff are trained in basic handling methods.

3.5.2 When large items are to be moved, it is done by a team of staff under advice from the curator and/or external experts where necessary. Full risk assessment will be done and a full planning exercise will be undertaken to ensure object and staff safety. Archives are handled by members of the public and staff for research and access purposes. The search room is supervised by staff that have been trained in document handling, users are given appropriate guidance, surrogates are used where appropriate and fragile items are identified and withheld from public access.

3.5.3 Objects for transport are packed and wrapped in the most suitable way for the object bearing in mind the unpacking process and avoiding over packing which can lead to damage when items are unpacked.

3.5.4 Only recognised and trusted handlers will be used when items are sent by courier and where possible a member of staff will accompany the courier.

3.6 Disaster Planning

Disaster plans for all venues housing museum collections will be regularly reviewed and updated where necessary.

4. CONSERVATION

- 4.1 Conservation of objects and archives will be undertaken when and where necessary to ensure the long term safety of the object. The decision to allow conservation work to take place will only be authorised by one of the following: the Archivist, Curator, Archaeologist and the Heritage Team Leader. Falkirk Community Trust does not currently have trained specialist conservation staff and therefore all interventionist conservation is undertaken by contractors. To ensure that we are doing the best for the collections only appropriately qualified, accredited and experienced conservators will be employed to carry out conservation work. Before any work takes place a mutual agreement will be reached about the approach and treatment of the items. All conservation work will be documented and added to the object's permanent record.

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