



South Holland District Council

Ayscoughfee Hall Museum
Collections Development Policy

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Community Development

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CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Scope – Policy Aim	4
Legislation or Executive Summary	4
Policy Consultation and Consideration	4
Policy Statement	5
Implementation.....	14

Introduction

Ayscoughfee Hall Museum was set up by South Holland District Council in 1983 to provide a Museum which would collect and display material from within the boundaries of the South Holland district of Lincolnshire. This fenland area has a distinctive character and particular emphasis was laid on collecting material relating to land drainage, agriculture and horticulture. The Museum first opened to the public in 1987 with one gallery displaying objects relating to drainage and agriculture in the district. It closed for refurbishment in October 2003.

Ayscoughfee Hall Museum reopened to the public in June 2006 following a project that saw the building refurbished and the Museum reinterpreted. This scheme was financed largely by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and they requested that the building, along with its history and development, be the main exhibit of the new Museum.

All new objects in the Museum's collections will be documented to SPECTRUM standards, as detailed in the Documentation Procedural Manual.

Statement of Purpose

Ayscoughfee Hall Museum exists to preserve the heritage of South Holland for the benefit of residents, visitors and other members of the community. Ayscoughfee Hall Museum will enable people to explore collections relating to the history of South Holland for inspiration, learning and enjoyment. We will collect, safeguard and make accessible the artefacts, records and specimens that we hold in trust for society.

Scope – Policy Aim

The aim of this policy is to set out the methods by which Ayscoughfee Hall Museum collects objects for the permanent collection, the types of objects to be collected or not, and the ways in which the whole collection is managed and developed.

Legislation or Executive Summary

This policy is required for Ayscoughfee Hall Museum to retain its Accredited status, awarded by Arts Council England.

Policy Consultation and Consideration

This policy has been written with proper regard to Arts Council England's guidelines on Museum collections development, taking into account all legal, moral and ethical guidelines. This policy follows the earlier Ayscoughfee Hall Museum Collections Development Policy, approved by Cllr Howard Johnson, Portfolio Holder in August 2012.

Policy Statement

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

1.1. Ayscoughfee Hall Museum's statement of purpose is:

Ayscoughfee Hall Museum exists to preserve the heritage of South Holland for the benefit of residents, visitors and other members of the community. Ayscoughfee Hall Museum will enable people to explore collections relating to the history of South Holland for inspiration, learning and enjoyment. We will collect, safeguard and make accessible the artefacts, records and specimens that we hold in trust for society.

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 Arts Council England Museum Accreditation Standard. This includes 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, 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.

1.7. In exceptional cases, disposal may be motivated principally by financial reasons. The method of disposal will therefore be by sale and the procedures outlines 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 of 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

2.1 Ayscoughfee Hall Museum was set up by South Holland District Council in 1983 to provide a Museum which would collect and display material from within the boundaries of the South Holland district of Lincolnshire. This fenland area has a distinctive character and particular emphasis was laid on collecting material relating to land drainage, agriculture and horticulture. The Museum first opened to the public in 1987 with one gallery displaying objects relating to drainage and agriculture in the district. It closed for refurbishment in October 2003.

2.2 Ayscoughfee Hall Museum reopened to the public in June 2006 following a project that saw the building refurbished and the Museum reinterpreted. This scheme was financed largely by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and they requested that the building, along with its history and development, be the main exhibit of the new Museum.

2.3 The majority of items in the collection have been donated by local people, from the Museum's inception in 1987.

3. An overview of current collections

3.1 The Museum's collection has strengths in a number of areas, notably agriculture, horticulture, Fen drainage and social history (particularly costume and photographs).

3.2 A number of other collections maintained by the Museum are worthy of specific mention.

3.2.1 Archaeology

The majority of the archaeological objects (Prehistoric, Roman, Saxon and Medieval), on display in Ayscoughfee are on loan from the archaeology department of Lincolnshire County Council's Heritage Services section.

3.2.2 Archives

The Museum has a large archival collection relating to the South Holland district.

3.2.3 Art

In 2019 a significant group of 10 portraits was acquired from a descendant of the Johnson family. The portraits, of various members of the Johnson family, were acquired by private treaty sale with support from Art Fund, The Victoria & Albert/ Arts Council England Purchase Grant Fund and Museums Association Beecroft Bequest, as well as South Holland District Council. The Museum has a small collection of art including works on paper and easel paintings. Most of these relate in

some way to the building or to the families who owned or lived in Ayscoughfee.

3.2.4 Books for display purposes

The large number of books currently on display in the Museum's Victorian Library comes mainly from the collection of Dr. William Strong, chaplain to King William IV. They have been on loan to Ayscoughfee from Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery since 1987 and neither party has any plans to change this arrangement.

3.2.5 Schools loan collection

The Museum maintains a small collection of stuffed, cased British birds and small mammals. This collection is seen as being outside the scope of the permanent Museum collection, and as such is treated as a separate entity. It will continue to be offered to schools on a loan basis.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

4.1 Ayscoughfee Hall Museum has strengths in agriculture, horticulture, Fen drainage and social history (particularly costume and photographs), and it is intended that limited collecting will be undertaken in these areas, due to the representative nature of the existing collections. However, objects particularly relevant to the history of the Hall, Gardens, and the people who lived here will continue to be acquired as practical.

4.2 Although the Hall is now the centrepiece of the Museum, Ayscoughfee's mission statement makes it clear that there is a continuing duty to acquire material that is representative of the district. Some of the Museum's display areas are dedicated to exhibiting this material.

4.3 There are no plans to add archaeological material to the existing collection unless it is material specifically related to Ayscoughfee Hall or Ayscoughfee Gardens. Members of the public offering archival material not required by the Museum will be given the contact details of Lincolnshire County Council.

4.4 The view has been taken that the archival collection will not be added to unless the material offered is of especial interest to the district, or relates in some way to the history of the Hall or Gardens. Members of the public offering archival material not required by the Museum will be given the contact details of Lincolnshire Archives.

4.5 Careful consideration will be given to any potential acquisitions of works of art, due to the storage requirements of different media and associated conservation costs.

4.6 There are no plans to add to Ayscoughfee's display collection of books.

4.7 There are no plans to add to the schools loan collection, nor to begin a collection based on any aspect of the natural sciences.

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 Any disposal will be carried out with reference to the Museums Association 'Disposals Toolkit', after a review of the objects to be disposed of is undertaken by the Museum Manager, or other professional curator.

5.4 Priority for retention will be given to objects particularly relevant to the history of the Hall, Gardens and its inhabitants.

5.5 Disposal is not a priority for this current period, but will be reviewed on an ongoing basis as resources allow.

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):

-
- The Museum of the Spalding Gentlemen's Society } Accredited
- Chain Bridge Forge, Spalding } Museums within
- The Museum of Technology, Gadgets & Gizmos } South Holland
- The Pinchbeck Engine Museum
- Lincolnshire County Council Heritage Services (particularly The Collection, The Museum of Lincolnshire Life and The Usher Art Gallery).

8 Archival holdings

8.1 Ayscoughfee Hall currently holds a range of archival material, including works on paper, documents and photographs.

8.2 While Ayscoughfee Hall Museum may continue to collect photographs and documents, careful consideration will be given to space and curatorial requirements prior to acquisition.

9 Acquisition

9.1 The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

9.1.1 Decision making for objects acquired is taken by the Museum Manager, as the curatorial member of staff employed by South Holland District Council. Due care will be given to space and resource constraints, and all correspondence will be carried out in a timely manner.

9.1.2 As described above, priority for acquisition will be given to objects directly related to the Hall, its inhabitants, and Spalding and South Holland.

9.1.3 Acquisition by purchase is presumed against, unless agreement by Museum senior management is relayed in advance.

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, 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.

10 Human remains

10.1 The Museum does not hold or intend to acquire any human remains.

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 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).

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 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.

16 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, 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 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.
- 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.
- 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, e.g. the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.

Implementation

Implementation of this policy is the responsibility of the Museum Manager, as part of the curatorial roles of this post. In conjunction with other museum professionals, this policy will be implemented and regularly referred to, to inform acquisition and disposal practice.

This policy will be published on Ayscoughfee Hall Museum's website to allow full transparency into the acquisition and disposal process.

Date of policy

September 2020

Date of review

September 2023