



Collections Development Policy

Name of museum	Northern Ireland War Memorial (NIWM)
Name of governing body	The Council of the Northern Ireland War Memorial Incorporated
Date on which this policy was approved by governing body	23 March 2023
Policy review procedure	This policy will be published and reviewed when required, or at least every five years
Policy written and reviewed by	Jenny Haslett (Museum Manager)
Date at which this policy is due for	March 2028

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

1. INTRODUCTION

The policy underpins the development of our collections. It shows how our collections development activities (acquisition, appraisal, deaccessioning, and disposal) link clearly to our statement of purpose and meet ethical commitments and legal requirements.

This policy relates directly to Objective 5 of the *Strategic Plan 2023-27*; Developing and valuing our collection.

The Collections Development Policy should be read in conjunction with the Documentation Policy/Plan/Procedures, Care and Conservation Policy/Plan and Access Policy.

The Collections Development Policy is published on the NIWM website so that it is publicly available to guide and encourage people who are considering donating objects and stories to the NIWM.

The Policy is used by museum staff to enable them to make decisions when developing the collection and is an important documentation for the induction of new staff.

1.1 THE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE OF THE NIWM

The Northern Ireland War Memorial was established to provide an enduring memorial for the men and women of Northern Ireland who died in the two World Wars, and to commemorate the American presence in Northern Ireland during the Second World War.

Now an Accredited Museum, our mission is to tell the story of Northern Ireland's role in the Second World War comprehensively and authentically with accessible and engaging learning programmes. In addition, the NIWM maintains war memorials to the fallen in the First and Second World War and the Belfast Blitz, organises respectful commemorations, provides office accommodation to ex-service charities, and awards small grants to projects which are in line with its charitable objectives.

The mission of the NIWM is in line with its Charitable objectives.

1.2. ACQUISITION AND DISPOSAL

The governing body will ensure that both acquisitions and disposals are carried out openly and with transparency.

1.3 THE DEFINITION OF A MUSEUM

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 NOT COVERED BY THE POLICY

Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

1.5. MEETING THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE MUSEUM ACCREDITATION STANDARD

The NIWM 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 5.1 primary procedures for collections management. The museum will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by factors such as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

1.6. DUE DILIGENCE

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 member of staff is satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.

1.7. DISPOSAL MOTIVATED BY FINANCIAL REASONS

In exceptional cases, the 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 NIWM was first established in Waring Street, Belfast, on a site which was cleared by the air raids on Belfast in 1941. The building which opened in 1963 was intended to provide offices for ex-service organisations and a Hall of Friendship which stood as a symbol of the close ties of friendship which had been formed between the American forces and the people of Northern Ireland during the Second World War.

The principal features of the Hall of Friendship were several large artworks commissioned specifically for the space:

- A hammered copper frieze by James McKendry. One part depicts the American troops moving eastwards through the countryside to Belfast Lough to embark on the troopships to take them to the theatres of war in North Africa and Europe. The other part depicts the Home Front with images of men and women taking part in wartime activities in both rural and industrial settings.
- A large stained-glass window designed by Stanley Murray Scott.
- A memorial wall of black marble which was quarried in Belgium, in front of which stood a specially designed plinth of Ulster granite carved in a hexagonal shape to present the six counties of Northern Ireland.

The building later housed a collection of objects relating to the Home Front in Northern Ireland during the Second World War. A core collection was established from 1989 when a public appeal was made for artefacts to establish a Home Front Heritage Centre in the War Memorial Building, Waring Street, Belfast. Life-size mannequins of representatives of the Ulster Home Guard, Civil Defence, Women's Voluntary Service and United States Army were produced.

In 2006 a decision was taken to sell the War Memorial Building as half the building had become vacant and was proving expensive to maintain. New accommodation was acquired nearby on Talbot Street as the new home for the NIWM collection. The new exhibition opened in 2008. Considerable care was taken to incorporate the large artworks into the new building as well as commissioning new artworks by John Sherlock, Carolyn Mulholland and Diane McCormick.

The NIWM became an accredited museum in 2013 and since then the collection has grown across all themes outlined in this policy with a collection of over 5,000 objects in 2023.

The NIWM has a growing collection which is at the heart of everything it does. Through delivery of the Strategic Plan 2023-27, the NIWM will ensure that the collection develops to reflect the whole of Northern Ireland's experience in the Second World War. The NIWM will review its collection and proactively collect objects and stories which address underrepresented aspects of the Second World War in Northern Ireland. The NIWM will continue to facilitate and commission high quality research and publications.

3. AN OVERVIEW OF CURRENT COLLECTIONS

The accessioned collection consists of over 5,000 social and military history items relating to Northern Ireland during the First and Second World War and the American presence in Northern Ireland from 1941. The majority of the collection relates to the Second World War and comprises of gifts, loans, donations and purchases as below:

Accessioned collection

Permanent exhibition

Collection of artefacts on display illustrating the contributions of the people of Northern Ireland to the war effort in the Second World War, the American Presence and the Belfast Blitz. The permanent collection also features contemporary artworks; two bronze sculptures, a portrait in oils, a copper frieze, a stained glass window and a memorial marble wall.

Foyer

Ceramic installation by Diane McCormick depicting bombs falling on Belfast.

Collections Store

Objects in storage include books, scrapbooks, diaries, magazines, military uniforms, civilian costume, flags, photographs, letters, newspapers, prints, drawings and ephemera relating to Northern Ireland during the First and Second World War. This collection is used to update the permanent exhibition, to produce temporary exhibitions, and is accessible to researchers.

Oral history

Digital audio recordings and transcripts of over 200 oral history interviews with people who lived in Northern Ireland during the Second World War. The project was launched in 2016 and is ongoing.

Non accessioned collection

Handling and props

Non-accessioned material used for learning, loan boxes, window displays and outreach workshops.

Reference library

History books (fiction and non-fiction) relating to the First and Second World War which are catalogued and available to browse on www.niwarmemorial.org before consultation in NIWM study room.

4. THEMES AND PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE COLLECTING

4.1 NEW ACQUISITIONS

Any future acquisitions will relate to Northern Ireland during the Second World War. The NIWM is particularly interested in acquiring objects relating to industry, Civil Defence, the air raids, rationing, evacuation, military service, the Merchant Navy, the Allied presence, the Ulster Home Guard, and the social history of Northern Ireland during the Second World War. All acquisitions must be of significance to Northern Ireland.

In addition the NIWM will acquire objects relating to the history of the organisation, i.e. the Northern Ireland War Memorial Building Fund.

The NIWM will continue to hold and display (limited) collections relating to the First World War but will not actively search for or purchase material.

4.1.2 IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING GAPS IN THE COLLECTION

The NIWM will proactively collect objects and stories which address underrepresented topics and geographical areas to ensure that the collection develops to reflect the whole of Northern Ireland's experience in the Second World War.

A recent audit has identified various gaps in the collection. Effort will be made to acquire objects relating to:

- Second World War experiences outside Belfast, particularly Counties Londonderry, Fermanagh and Tyrone.
- Military service by women (Women's Royal Naval Service, Auxiliary Territorial Service, Women's Auxiliary Air Force).
- Wartime industries in Northern Ireland.
- Excavated material culture such as archaeological finds relating to air raids, air crashes, and industry.

4.2 LIMITATIONS ON COLLECTING

The NIWM recognises its responsibility, in acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that the care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Accreditation Standard and its *Care and Conservation, Documentation and Access Policy*. It will take into account:

- Limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.
- Legal restraints on firearms with relation to safety and security.
- Health and safety and conservation implications when collecting Second World War gas masks.
- The limited size of the gallery and storage facilities. The NIWM is aware of limitations in the size and quantity of items that can be collected at present.

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 usable, well managed collection.

5.2.

The procedures used will meet SPECTRUM 5.1 standards. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.

The criteria and themes stated in section 4 will be followed and adhered to with regard to any priorities in rationalisation and disposal.

Objects from the collection will be considered for disposal on a case by case basis under the following criteria:

- Those that are too badly damaged to be of any further use for the purposes of the museum.
- Duplicates.
- Unrelated material.
- Objects of low intrinsic relevance to the Collections Development Policy.

6. LEGAL AND ETHICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ACQUISITION AND DISPOSAL OF ITEMS

The museum recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association's Code of Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal.

7. COLLECTING POLICIES OF OTHER MUSEUMS

7.1

The NIWM 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 museums:

- The Somme Museum (Newtownards)
- The Royal Irish Fusiliers Museum (Armagh)
- The Royal Ulster Rifles Museum (Belfast)
- The Inniskillings Museum (Enniskillen)
- The Imperial War Museums
- Local authority museums in Northern Ireland
- National Museums Northern Ireland
- US Rangers Museum (Carrickfergus)
- Consolidated Museum telling the story of the Irish Soldier in the British Army (name TBC)

8. ARCHIVAL HOLDINGS

As the museum holds and intends to acquire archives, including photographs and printed ephemera, its governing body will be guided by the *Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (3rd ed., 2002)*.

9. ACQUISITION

9.1.

The museum's authorisation policy for agreeing acquisitions is that the Museum Manager and Collections Officer will authorise acquisitions, ensuring that any future acquisitions satisfy the *Themes and priorities for future collecting* (section 4).

Acquisitions which will incur a cost of more than £500 (purchase cost or conservation/storage

requirements) must be authorised by the Museum Committee.

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 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;
or
- 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. SPOILIATION

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, 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 Northern Ireland and Wales will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums'.

16. DISPOSAL PROCEDURES

- 16.1** All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM 5.1 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 Museum Association'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 Northern Ireland Museums Council.
- 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 5.1 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 Museum Association'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, e.g. the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.