

## **Elgin Museum Care and Conservation Plan 2018**

**Elgin Museum's Statement of Purpose: The Moray Society, a membership organisation owns and manages Elgin Museum. The purpose of the Museum is to conserve and display the objects in its care, to act as a focus for learning and enjoyment for all and to support the appreciation of the natural history, culture and heritage of Moray and to maintain the buildings in its ownership.**

The Museum has access to conservation advice from its Museum Mentor from Moray Council Museum Service or refers concerns to an appropriate ICON conservator or to specialists at National Museums Scotland. Routine advice is followed from recognised sources e.g. Museums Galleries Scotland and Collections Link. (See 14. Contacts, etc.) Where the Plan identifies an individual with responsibility, that person will report to the Convenor of the Elgin Museum Management Committee (EMMC).

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## **1. Monitoring and improving environmental conditions including temperature, relative humidity, light and dust.**

### TEMPERATURE AND RELATIVE HUMIDITY

The museum monitors and records the temperature and relative humidity in display and storage areas. The aim is to maintain conditions which are stable within the range 12-20°C and 45-70% RH. If the results fall outside the required range, the cause is investigated and action taken to resolve.

The current system uses Hanwell monitors in display halls and each storage area. The readings are taken continuously and recorded digitally to be downloaded to file bi-monthly by the Buildings Officer. Any problem is reported to the Museum Assistant.

The environment in the museum is controlled by the central heating system, which covers all areas of the museum. Dehumidifiers are used in the storage areas of the museum.

### LIGHT

No objects in the museum are exposed to direct sunlight and items are protected from unnecessary exposure to light and storage areas are kept dark when not in use. Fluorescent lights are fitted with UV filters. Windows are fitted with UV filter film. Lights are tested for UV emission using a UV meter at regular intervals, by the volunteer Buildings Officer.

Visible light levels are checked continuously using Hanwell monitors. Results are downloaded to file bi-monthly. This is the responsibility of the Buildings Officer. Any problems are reported to the Museum Assistant.

Light sensitive material is not left on permanent display, and limited to one open season (7mths) on temporary display.

The museum aims to keep light exposure for very light sensitive material to below 150,000 lux-hours per year and for less sensitive material to 300,000 lux-hours per year. The museum will remove items from display if light exposure is found to be too high.

### DUST

Items are not exposed to dust if possible. Items are protected by being kept in boxes or display cases or covered with cotton sheets or acid free paper. Items in bubble wrap or polythene are first protected by acid free paper.

Dust levels are controlled by good housekeeping and preventative measures at doors etc. Areas being worked on are kept sealed off.

It is the responsibility of the Buildings Officer to ensure the measures relating to monitoring and improving the environment are in place, communicated and acted upon.

## **2. Managing the Threat from Pests.**

### Quarantine

Any items coming in to the museum (including those which have been out on loan) will be kept separate from the collection until fully examined by the Museum Assistant. Items awaiting examination will be kept away from the collection or isolated in a polythene box or wrapped in polythene sheet or in the deep freeze.

They will be examined as quickly as possible, especially if there is a risk of mould or if they are damp.

### Monitoring

Sticky traps are placed in the storage and display areas, along the floors and occasionally on shelves, to monitor insect activity especially in dark quiet areas. Hanging sticky traps are used if any moths are seen. The traps are checked monthly between February – June and then every two months for the rest of the year. In addition, whenever staff are in stores or in display areas, they are alert to the possibility of pests and take action.

A sketch plan is made of each room showing the location of traps which are numbered. Each trap is examined by the Buildings Officer in good light using a magnifying lens and any problems reported to the Museum Assistant.

If pests are found which are potentially harmful to the collection or building, a conservator is asked for advice which is then acted upon.

### Prevention

No food or drink is allowed in any area where collections are stored or displayed. Good housekeeping keeps the museum clean, reducing the risk of infestation by pests. Windows and doors are kept shut whenever possible. All vents in the walls are protected with mesh screens.

Gloves (or washed and dried hands where appropriate) are used when handling objects to reduce the possibility of mould growth, corrosion and pest attack.

Areas which are full of boxes and objects are deep cleaned annually. All boxes and items are removed from shelving, the shelving and walls wiped clean with microfiber cloths and then the items replaced.

Good ventilation is important for preventing mould and pest infestation. Items are stored in a way to allow air movement around them and boxes are kept at least 75mm away from walls. Items are not stacked against external walls. Any mouldy or infested packing material is disposed of immediately after any information on it has been recorded.

It is the Building Officer's responsibility to ensure that measures relating to pests are in place, communicated and acted upon.

## **3. Housekeeping**

No polishes, cleaning agents or sprays are used in the museum without the advice of a conservator or recognised advice sheet. Bohle spray, as recommended by NMS, is used on glass display cases.

Synthetic, not feather dusters are used on walls, lights and ceilings (not objects)

Microfibre cloths (dry or dampened with clean water), brushes and vacuum cleaners are used for cleaning the building.

Housekeeping does not include cleaning objects on display.

Storage areas:

- Floors are vacuumed by janitor monthly.
- Other cleaning is "as and when" required.
- Dehumidifiers in the Tower are emptied twice weekly.
- Storage areas are deep cleaned by the janitor annually.

Display areas:

- Floors are vacuumed by the janitor / volunteers daily, and weekly in closed season; spot and interim cleaning are carried out “as and when”.
- Cases are wiped with microfiber cloths by the janitor / volunteer weekly
- Shelves, work surfaces and ledges are wiped down with microfibre cloths by the janitor monthly.
- Windows (internally) and glass surfaces are cleaned with microfibre cloths by the janitor or volunteers “as and when” finger marks require and monthly.
- Display areas are deep cleaned by the janitor annually.

Other areas:

- Carpeted and stone floors are vacuumed and lino floors washed by the janitor weekly.
- Windows (internally) and glass surfaces are cleaned with microfibre cloths by the janitor or volunteers “as and when” finger marks require and 3-monthly.
- Lavatories are cleaned daily.
- The garden, path and rear area are maintained “as and when” required according to the season, including recycling of garden waste.
- Rubbish bins are emptied daily by volunteers/janitor.
- All areas are deep cleaned by the janitor annually.

It is the responsibility of the Buildings Officer to ensure the measures relating to housekeeping are in place, communicated and acted upon.

#### **4. Conservation Cleaning of Objects on Open Display or in open storage**

Wherever possible, items are displayed in secure, suitable cases and stored in appropriate (usually acid free, archival) boxes. Where this is not possible, items on open display or in storage are carefully monitored and recorded and appropriate action taken when damage or dirt is observed.

Delicate items should only be cleaned by an appropriate conservator.

More robust surfaces may be cleaned using the vacuum brush or soft bristle brush method, and this would normally be carried out by the Museum Assistant:

- Examine the object carefully and make sure that it is safe to clean.
- Choose a suitable soft brush and make sure the metal ferrule is protected with masking tape.
- Cover the crevice nozzle of a vacuum cleaner with a piece of soft net or tights, held in place with a rubber band.
- Taking care not to touch the object with the vacuum cleaner hose or other apparatus, gently brush the loose dust off the object into the nozzle of the vacuum.
- Examine the object again, record your treatment of it and any observations.

It is the Museum Assistant’s responsibility to ensure the measures relating to conservation cleaning of objects on open display are in place, communicated and acted upon.

## **5. Documentation of the Condition of the Collection and of any Treatments Carried out on Objects**

A periodic review of all areas of the collection is carried out to ensure that collection condition is maintained and, where necessary, improved. This check against the inventory sheet held within any box or on any shelf is recorded and any action necessary is recorded on a condition report for action to be taken on the instruction of the Museum assistant.

The museum retains records of every treatment carried out on objects by in house staff or external conservators. Records are added to an item's MDA card and OHF file entries according to the procedures set out in the Documentation Procedural Manual.

Every object loaned from the collection has its condition checked and recorded when it leaves and returns to the museum.

The condition of the collection is audited by the Museum Assistant on a rolling programme and the results reported to the Convenor of the EMMC who will, annually at the AGM, report on the condition of the collection. Concerns about the condition of any object are notified to the Convenor for the attention of the EMMC and action in line with the museum's Forward Plan.

It is the responsibility of the Museum Assistant to ensure that the measures relating to documentation of the condition of the collection and any treatment carried out are in place, communicated and acted upon.

## **6. Storage Materials and Methods**

The museum is aware that all items should be protected in inert packaging materials in a way which protects the item from chemical or physical damage.

The museum replaces any inappropriate boxes and packing materials with acid free card and tissue paper, polythene, inert styrene or polypropylene boxes and polythene foam as recommended by Collections Link (Signposts Factsheet No 2 Materials for Storage and Display)

Items which are too large to be boxed are covered in acid free paper.

Item are stored on the floor as a last resort, and pending the completion of the storage improvement programme in place. Very large items are stores on a pallet. Smaller items are stored on shelves which are lined with polythene, acid free tissue, in acid free boxes or plastic stacking boxes with lids.

It is the responsibility of the Museum Assistant to ensure that measures relating to storage materials and methods are in place, communicated and acted upon.

## **7. Display Materials and Methods**

The museum uses secure display cases whenever possible.

New cases are chosen in accordance with guidance from Collections Link (Signposts Factsheet No2 Materials for Storage and Display and the Guidance Note Choosing New Display Cases).

Since 2002, cases are lined with acid free board and mounts made with materials as listed in Signpost Factsheet No2. Mounts are constructed to provide support for the object and protect it from physical damage during display and handling. No object is permanently changed by its attachment to a mount.

Items on open display are checked by the Museum Assistant at least every 6 months and any problems reported to the Convenor of the EMMC. Items on open display are secured using the least damaging method possible.

It is the responsibility of the Museum Assistant to ensure the measures relating to display materials and methods are in place, communicated and acted upon.

## **8. Transport Methods**

Items are carried between rooms and buildings in suitably padded containers. Items travel with sufficient documentation and are never left unattended in vehicles. Changes of location for longer than a day are recorded in writing at the end of each day as set out in the Documentation Procedural Manual.

It is the responsibility of the Museum Assistant to ensure that the measures in relation to transport methods are in place, communicated and acted upon.

## **9. Loans in**

The museum treats all incoming loans according to the requirements set out in the loan agreement between it and the lending authority.

The museum will notify the lending authority if there is any change in the circumstances which mean it can no longer meet the requirements set out in the agreement.

If the lending body does not supply a condition check, the museum will supply its own condition check, on receipt and return of the loan.

It is the responsibility of the Museum Assistant to ensure the measures in relation to loans are in place, communicated and acted upon.

## **10. Loans Out**

All requests for loans from the collection will be assessed individually before a decision is taken. The condition of the items, the location, environment and security of the venue, transport and personnel involved will all be reviewed.

Every borrower will be asked to complete a Loans Out form.

For particularly valuable items, additional information regarding display cases and security will be asked for. As part of the loan agreement, security, environmental, handling and conservation conditions will be agreed by the borrower.

If agreed, the condition of the item to be loaned will be recorded using photographs of any existing damage and these photographs will form part of the loan agreement.

Every item will be recorded against the original condition report when it is returned to the museum and the loan and the outcome of the check recorded on the MDA card.

It is the responsibility of the Museum Assistant to ensure the measures relating to loans are in place, communicated and acted upon.

## **11. Buildings Check**

The fabric of the building is checked regularly by the Buildings Officer who reports any faults to the EMMC Convenor. Any urgent work required can be authorised by the Convenor but any problems would normally be reported to the EMMC, who will prioritise and authorise any works. For specialist works, our Conservation Architects are consulted.

## 12. Workforce Training

It is the policy of the Museum that items from the collection will only be handled by persons with appropriate training.

All staff receive a basic training session on induction and with a refresher held annually before the opening season of the museum. Collections training and object handling training are carried out using a mix of in-house training with the Museum Assistant, shadowing of a more experienced member as well as attendance when possible on MGS or other collections care courses.

## 13. Plans for improvement

For 2014-2015, a palaeontologist was employed through the Recognition Fund to catalogue fully the fossil collection of the museum with a view to moving the geology storage area to a new purpose-built area. In order to release space for better general access to storage areas and for research and study, a full assessment is being made of not only the Recognised Collection of fossils but also other natural history, and architectural stone and statues, in order that these can be rationalised and the collections made more relevant to a modern museum. The programme of rationalisation is ongoing during the closed season using the services of an experienced local naturalist.

During the closed season of the last two years, work has been progressed in updating the stores areas and this is ongoing. New racking has been installed in the East Store and the present season will see the finalisation of updating the cataloguing of the collection in the East store as well as to update the art storage area with new shelving.

The closed season deep cleaning programme identifies any items in the collection requiring special attention and not flagged up during routine store and display checks, and this need would be raised through the EMMC as a priority for the Forward Plan.

We have a collection of miscellaneous architectural stone, some of which is in our cellar and some in the North Store. Stone blocking the West Store has been moved into the cellar and Hindu gods have been moved to NMS. We have consulted with Historic Scotland and have transferred stone of Elgin Cathedral origin to their care

## 14. Contacts, etc

### Museum Mentor

Douglas MacBeath, Museum on the Mound, Bank of Scotland, Edinburgh.

### National Museums Scotland

e.g. Archaeology: Dr Fraser Hunter [f.hunter@nms.ac.uk](mailto:f.hunter@nms.ac.uk); Natural History: Dr Nick Fraser [n.fraser@nms.ac.uk](mailto:n.fraser@nms.ac.uk)

### ICON Conservators

Scottish Conservation Studios LLP 0131 331 5875

[info@scottishconservationstudio.co.uk](mailto:info@scottishconservationstudio.co.uk) (Textile: Tuula Pardoe; Paper and photography: Helen Creasey; Metals, leather: Will Murray)

Advice sheets on common collections care and preventive issues:

Museums Galleries Scotland [www.museumsgalleriesscotland](http://www.museumsgalleriesscotland)

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Collections Link <http://www.collectionstrust.org.uk/collections-skills-resources>

Conservation Architect (Buildings)

Pinny Neill, LDN Architects, Forres 01309 673221 [info@ldn.co.uk](mailto:info@ldn.co.uk)

Recording sheets (active sheets are filed in “Collections care”)

See Appendices:

- 1) Artefact Condition Report
- 2) Store Check Report
- 3) Cleaning (Housekeeping) Spreadsheet