

Collections Management Framework

Appendix 1.1 Collections Development Policy 2026-30

This Collections Development Policy was agreed by Birmingham Museums Trust's ('BMT') governing body, its Board of Trustees on 25 March 2026 and was agreed by Birmingham City Council (BCC) as the legal owner of the collections also on 25 March 2026.

This policy replaces any previous versions of the policy and is for the four year period 1 April 2026 – 31 March 2030.

The Collections Development Policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years. A full and comprehensive review of this policy will be conducted by no later than 31 March 2030, to align with the review of BMT's wider Collections Management Framework 2025-30.

Any proposed changes to the policy will be agreed between Birmingham City Council and Birmingham Museums Trust's Board of Trustees before being implemented. Arts Council England will also be notified of any changes to the Collections Development Policy, and the implication of any such changes for the future of collections.

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

Birmingham Museums Trust (BMT) manages Birmingham's museum collection on behalf of Birmingham City Council (BCC) as the owner of the collection. This policy forms part of the Collections Management Framework for BMT, which supports the Trust in achieving its vision, mission and strategic aims.

1.1 The museum's charity objects, vision, and strategic aims are:

Birmingham Museums Trust Charity Objects

To advance education by the operation, maintenance, development and promotion of museums, galleries and libraries in Birmingham together with associated facilities and related programmes of outreach and research, fostering knowledge, understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the arts, history, science and technology by residents and visitors to the City of Birmingham.

Vision

A radical reinvention of the museum as a catalyst of cultural and social change.

Mission

Bring Birmingham out by shining new light on people's stories, collections and creativity.

Strategic Aims

1. **Experience** – to create fun, meaningful, involving experiences for the full diversity of our communities and their uses of our collection and services.
 2. **Infrastructure** – to be at the heart of Birmingham’s communities, providing inclusive access to the peoples’ sites and collections, including digital access
 3. **People** – to be a boldly progressive organisation, increasingly rooted in and porous to Birmingham’s communities, with the skills and culture to engage with its audiences
 4. **Financial** – to be a sustainable, more independent organisation that provides affordable, surplus-generating paid services and experiences that add social and economic value to Birmingham, and will have secured funding to support its priority capital projects
- 1.2 The governing body (BMT’s Board of Trustees) 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 (BMT’s board) and the collection’s owner (BCC) therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or to the disposal of any items in the museum’s collection.
- 1.4 Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will be made only in exceptional circumstances.
- 1.5 The museum recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to its collection, to ensure that the care, documentation arrangements and use of the collection will meet the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Standard. This includes using 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 outlined below will be followed. In cases where disposal is motivated by financial reasons, the governing body (BMT’s board) and the collection’s owner (BCC) 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 collection

The original collection of Birmingham Museums pre-dates all its museum venues. The first items the city collected were the bust of David Cox by Peter Hollins (May 1863), the Sultanganj Buddha (October 1864) and the painting *Dead Game* by Edward Coleman (November 1864). The collection is now one of the three great civic collections of the UK, alongside those of Glasgow and Liverpool. It represents Britain's former imperial and industrial wealth, assembled over a period of nearly 160 years through a combination of generosity, connoisseurship and curatorial knowledge.

Birmingham took some time to decide that it would have a civic museum. Supporters such as George Dawson and John Thackray Bunce argued that it was essential for the success of Birmingham as a city that its citizens should be exposed to good art and design. The Tangye brothers, owners of the famous engineering firm, finally persuaded the city to build a museum by offering £10,000 towards a Purchase Fund. The Purchase Committee collected art and decorative art, including sculpture, paintings, Japanese enamels and gems. Donations included works by the Birmingham artist, David Cox. In 1883 the Committee bought two drawings by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the beginning of Birmingham's Pre-Raphaelite collection.

The Prince of Wales opened the new Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery in 1885, with displays focused on art and decorative art. The first Keeper, Whitworth Wallis, actively collected in these areas, making purchasing trips to Egypt, Italy, Paris and Berlin. He encouraged many important donations and added to the Pre-Raphaelite collection, including Ford Madox Brown's *The Last of England*, perhaps Birmingham's best-known work. By the turn of the century the collection had outgrown the 1885 galleries. The city extended them with a bequest from the newspaper proprietor John Feeney, a long-term benefactor who had already donated his collection of Japanese, Chinese and Near Eastern enamel, porcelain, lacquer and arms and armour.

The Feeney Galleries covered a wider range of subjects, including casts, local history and natural history. Wallis's successor, SC Kaines Smith, had a background in art and classical archaeology, and broadened the scope of the collection, including more decorative arts, local history and archaeology. Additional venues were opened. Birmingham Museums collected actively, primarily through donation, across a wide range of disciplines.

After the Second World War, the eminent Director Trenchard Cox and his successor Mary Woodall formed the outstanding collection of 17th century European Baroque painting. They acquired early English furniture to furnish Aston and Blakesley Halls, and purchased examples of silver, ceramics and sculpture to provide an overview of the development of European and English art forms from the Renaissance to the early 19th century. Mary Woodall's focus on European Art and ancient civilizations, and her disapproval of 'parochial' Birmingham history led to some bold disposal decisions. Several groups of material were disposed of by sale in the 1950s, including most of the Museums' collection of South Asian and Far Eastern metalwork and European furniture, together with a significant group of British, mostly Victorian, paintings.

The decision in 1948 to create a Technical and Science Museum stimulated further collecting of the city/region's industrial history and working life. The Designated collection of science and industry is of international significance, reflecting Birmingham's role as the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution and covering the metal trades, jewellery, numismatics, the automotive industry, arms manufacture, machine tools, computing and many other areas.

In the 1950s the existing Pre-Columbian collection was added to by three major acquisitions in 1951 totalling over 1200 items, further acquisitions in the late 1950s and early 1960s and finally in 1982 by nearly 800 items from the Wellcome Collection. In the 1930s Birmingham had acquired a substantial collection of European, Cypriot and Near Eastern archaeology, including material from important sites

such as Nineveh and Ur, and it continued to collect Near Eastern material from sites including Petra, Jericho, Jerusalem, Nimrud, Ur and Abu Hureyra into the late 1970s, making this collection area comparable to the holdings of the Ashmolean.

Much of the Global Majority collection (formerly titled 'World Cultures') collection was acquired through individual collectors, most notably Arthur Wilkins, Ida Wench and P Amaury Talbot. As the range and quality of the collection increased, Birmingham became the beneficiary of works transferred from smaller, local museums such as Tamworth, Stoke-on-Trent, Gloucester, Warwickshire, Reading and Shrewsbury, whose world cultures or foreign archaeological material was considered to be of greater relevance within a more comprehensive collection.

The acquisition in 1965 of the Pinto collection of treen (wooden objects), the finest such collection in the world, brought the museum an outstanding collection relating to everyday life in Britain and Europe from 1500 to 1950. It is frequently cited by the antiques trade.

Birmingham's works on paper collection now numbers around 30,000 items. It is particularly strong in works by Pre-Raphaelite artists, but includes many eminent British and European artists, Japanese prints and topographical views.

The turn of the 21st century saw a greater focus on proactive collecting of local history, particularly contemporary material reflecting the histories, stories and experiences of people growing up, living and working in a young, superdiverse and multi-faith city. Collecting programmes included the Millennibrum project and a post-war Birmingham history collecting programme to support the development of new Birmingham history galleries at the Museum & Art Gallery in 2012. The discovery and joint acquisition of the internationally significant Anglo-Saxon Staffordshire Hoard, with Stoke-on-Trent, in 2010/13 transformed our understanding of Anglo-Saxon England and has a great resonance for people in the region. Birmingham Museums had a policy of collecting material from excavations in the five counties of the West Midlands and now had a major archaeological archive from the region.

Since the formation of Birmingham Museums Trust in 2012 there has been an even greater focus on collecting Birmingham history, including the Lottery-funded Collecting Birmingham engagement-led collecting project, which focused on four inner city areas of Birmingham. This was awarded the Museums Association's Museums Change Lives Best MCL Project 2018 and the overall Award for Excellence at the Charity Awards in 2019.

In the last two decades there has been a considerable expansion of contemporary fine and applied art holdings thanks to two major acquisition programmes: the Contemporary Art Society's Special Collection Scheme, supported by the Friends of BM&AG; and the Art Fund International programme, which enabled Birmingham Museums to develop an outstanding collection of international contemporary art jointly owned with New Art Gallery Walsall, in partnership with the Ikon gallery. It continues to expand particular in reflecting the ever-changing and diverse city of Birmingham and its people.

The development of Birmingham's nationally important collection would not have been possible without the generosity and support of donors and, in particular, external grant-giving bodies. The contributions of the Victoria & Albert Museum, Science Museum PRISM fund, Art Fund (formerly National Art Collection Fund), the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Contemporary Art Society, Arts Council England and Heritage Lottery Funds have greatly assisted the development of the collection. The Friends of Birmingham Museums and the Public Picture Gallery Fund have been proactive supporters of acquisitions since their foundation, alongside local and national charitable trusts. In 2020 Birmingham Museums Trust set up an endowment fund to support collection acquisitions, following a very generous bequest in the will of Ivan Witton.

3. An overview of the current collection

Birmingham Museums Trust has a vast and diverse range of collections of local, regional, national and international significance. The collection areas of Art, Science and Industry, Birmingham History, Numismatics (coins and medals), and the Pinto collection of wooden objects have all been Designated by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport as collections of national importance. The collections of Archaeology, Ethnography and Natural History are recognised as an important regional resource within the West Midlands but also contain many collection areas of national or international significance.

Historically, museum collections have been divided into categories which reflect the dominant ways of thinking in society at the time they were developed. These systems were often shaped by Eurocentric, colonial and subject-based assumptions about what is art, or history, and what is important in the world. Many museum collections were categorised and catalogued in ways that limited how objects and their makers and users were understood, for example objects collected from outside Europe have often been seen as separate from 'mainstream' art history.

Birmingham's collections, like other museums', have grown over the last 160 years, reflecting different collecting priorities and catalogued according to the systems in use at the time of acquisition. Today we recognise that objects can and should have multiple meanings, and that categorisations can limit how they are accessed, used and understood. We also acknowledge that the way our collections are catalogued should reflect different worldviews and cultural contexts. During the period of this Collections Development Policy, we will be reviewing our categorisations, guided by our Vision and principles of democracy, inclusivity, and intercultural representativeness. We will build on existing work, such as renaming the 'ethnography' collection to the 'global majority' collection and also explore how and when objects should be classified as art or archaeology; industry or history; and other divisions.

The information below gives a summary of each area of the collection, reflecting the current classifications, and is subject to review.

3.1 ART AND DESIGN

Includes historical and contemporary Art from Britain, Europe and the wider world; British and European Decorative Art and Design; and Dress and Textiles. It is Designated as a collection of national significance and includes many works of art of international significance.

Collection Size: 137,660 (this includes bulk accessioned collections)

3.1.1 Fine Art

British Art spans eight centuries, from a 14th-century Gothic ivory to contemporary art. Outstanding holdings include British 18th- and 19th-century watercolours; the largest collection of art by the Pre-Raphaelites and their followers in the world; and works associated with the Birmingham School. The collection of works by Birmingham-born landscape painter David Cox is unparalleled. There are strong representations of late 19th-century bronzes associated with the New Sculpture movement and non-figurative contemporary British 20th-century painting. The collection was built up by gift, bequest and purchase, with notable donors including Charles Fairfax Murray, James Richardson Holliday and J Leslie Wright.

European Art broadly traces the major developments in Western European art from around 1340 to the present day, and features a nationally important collection of 17th-century Baroque painting. It is complemented by earlier paintings by Bellini, Botticelli, Petrus Christus, Pietro Lorenzetti and Simone

Martini, notable 18th-century works including paintings by Canaletto and Guardi, and prints and drawings by Pietro da Cortona, Dürer, Rembrandt, Vuillard and Picasso. Predominantly acquired by purchase in the post-War period, later acquisitions include the contemporary art collection with significant examples of paintings, works on paper and time-based media, including works by 15 international contemporary artists, jointly acquired with New Art Gallery Walsall through the Art Fund International scheme.

3.1.2 Decorative Art

British Decorative Art and Design dates from the medieval period to the present day. Birmingham manufacturing from the 18th century onwards is well represented, especially in the fields of jewellery, metalwork and glass. Jewellery, metalwork, ceramics and stained glass by later 19th- and early 20th-century British Arts and Crafts makers, particularly those associated with Birmingham School of Art, also feature strongly. Representation of ceramics manufacturing in the wider Midlands region includes objects from Wedgwood, Worcester and Ruskin. The collection also includes important archives of designs relating to makers like John Hardman & Co. and George Bullock.

European Decorative Art and Design dates from the late Medieval period to the 21st century. It includes some of Birmingham's earliest acquisitions – Italian metalwork, furniture and ceramics from the 16th and 17th centuries which were purchased as inspiration for local makers. Other strengths of the collection include Northern European metalwork from the 16th to 18th centuries and 19th-century jewellery from Scandinavia, Italy and France. There are many exceptional individual items in the collection, such as the Lomellini ewer and basin from early 17th-century Genoa and an intarsia panel from 1536 by Fra Damiano Zambelli.

Folk Art is dominated by objects gathered during the 20th century by Edward and Eva Pinto. This internationally important collection of treen comprises small wooden objects used in everyday domestic, craft, rural, trade and professional settings, dating over a period of 500 years and highlighting many regional variations of usage and design across the world. This area also incorporates Estella Canziani's collection of early 20th-century Italian folk objects, which she illustrated and published and is therefore unusually well documented and provenanced.

World Art contains objects mainly made in the Middle East, South Asia, and East Asia. Of particular significance are the Japanese arms and armour, Chinese ceramics and paintings, and South Asian metalwork. The collection is dominated by decorative art, particularly ceramics, metalwork, jewellery, arms and armour, glass, lacquer sculpture and ivory, with many objects acquired as inspiration for Birmingham craftspeople (as with European Decorative Art). A small group of modern and contemporary art represents more recent acquisitions.

Dress and Textiles are predominantly British, and mostly date from the 18th century to the present day but also include a small group of international material dating as far back as the 16th century from Europe, South Asia and the Middle East. The collection demonstrates a range of different techniques including printing, embroidery, weaving and lace-making. The collection of Indian and Near Eastern textiles and a range of textiles associated with or made by William and May Morris are of international significance. The Morris textiles include six tapestry panels from the 'Holy Grail' series, which are regarded as one of the greatest achievements of Morris and Burne Jones, and the most significant of all British tapestry schemes. The dress collection follows fashionable tastes, particularly in women's clothing and was formed largely from the 1930s onwards. It is regionally significant owing to its long chronological span and its diversity in relation to British fashion.

3.2 HUMAN HISTORY

This collection area includes material from Birmingham and across the world. It comprises ancient civilisations; British and European archaeology; global majority collections (formerly known as

ethnography and world cultures); numismatics and philately; and collections relating to Birmingham and the West Midlands. The Birmingham history and numismatics collection areas are Designated as being of national significance, with objects and groups of objects across all collection areas that are nationally and internationally significant.

Collection Size: 347,969 (this includes bulk accessioned collections)

3.2.1 Numismatics and Philately

Numismatics incorporates coins, medals and tokens from around the world, with a focus on Birmingham products. The numismatic collection is characterised by its quality, breadth and depth, covering an extremely broad canvas from some of the earliest coinage to the present day. Of international importance are the British Celtic, Anglo-Saxon, and Norman and medieval coins, because of their scope and the rarity of individual pieces. The Greek, Roman and Byzantine collection illustrates the early development of coinage in Europe, North Africa and the Near East. Material made in Birmingham reflects the city's history as a major centre of coin production for international markets. There are many products of this local industry in the collection, from products of the Soho Mint dating from the 18th and 19th centuries to 20th-century material from the Birmingham Mint.

The philately collection of largely British & European postage stamps was built over a period of 50 years by one of Birmingham's earliest philatelists. It is considered to be the best general collection of stamps in public ownership outside the British Museum.

3.2.2 Birmingham History

The collection reflects the globally important history of the people and city of Birmingham from around 1500 to the present and includes material relating to work, trades and industries, domestic and personal life, community life, and personal items associated with political figures such as Joseph Chamberlain. The collection includes a wide-ranging and rich resource of material culture and oral testimonies which contribute to our understanding of how Birmingham became a global city, while also having a strong relevance to Birmingham communities. It continues to develop rapidly through projects including Millennibrum (2000) and Collecting Birmingham (2015-18), allowing it to better reflect and engage the city's super-diverse population.

3.2.3 City Sound Archive

The City Sounds Archive (CSA) consists of 1,500 oral history interviews from Birmingham people between 1971-2021, representing the city's collective memory through individual voices. The collection expanded significantly during the 1980s through West Midlands Oral History Group collaborations on topics including inner-city childhood, the Gun Quarter, and the World Wars, growing from around 1,000 interviews by 1990 to approximately 1,300 by 1999. Notable projects include the Birmingham Black History Oral History Project (1990s), Birmingham History Galleries (2010-2011), Spitfire Gallery (2014), Collecting Birmingham (2015-2018) and Food and Drink (2025).

3.2.4 Birmingham Views and Portraits

The collection was established with the aim of creating a visual resource which documented the changing cityscape of Birmingham, from the earliest known views of the town created in the 18th century up to the present. Every district in Birmingham is represented. The collection comprises prints, drawings, watercolours, postcards, photographs and paintings depicting Birmingham people and places. Portraits of Birmingham people include artists, political and civic figures, manufacturers and business people, scientists and medical professionals as well as families, and working people. The collection also includes material depicting parts of Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Staffordshire and Shropshire, as well as Wales and Scotland, reflecting the wider interests of some of Birmingham's topographical artists.

3.2.5 West Midlands History and Archaeology

Birmingham has extensive holdings of provenanced archaeological material from across the West Midlands region, including Birmingham, Solihull, Coventry, Walsall, Sandwell, Dudley, Wolverhampton, Herefordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Shropshire and Staffordshire. The objects range in date from the Upper Palaeolithic to the post-medieval period, but most are of prehistoric, Romano-British, Anglo-Saxon or medieval date. Material includes worked flint and other stone, pottery, metalwork, glass, organic material, building materials and documentary archives. The holdings represent both important individual sites, such as Wall, and groups of sites, such as medieval moated sites or prehistoric flint assemblages. There is also a significant collection of architectural fragments and building records, primarily formed in the 1970s-80s. In 2010 Stoke and Birmingham jointly acquired the Anglo-Saxon Staffordshire Hoard, the largest hoard of Anglo-Saxon treasure ever discovered. It consists of over 3,500 artefacts and fragments dating from the 7th century, made from gold, silver and copper alloy, decorated with garnet and fine filigree.

3.2.6 European Archaeology

Objects in this collection date from the Palaeolithic to the European Iron Age, with particular strengths in Neolithic material from the Swiss Lakes and Denmark, Spinnes in Belgium and the Eastern European site of Vinca. Palaeolithic sites in the Dordogne valley also feature. Much of the material derives from the collections of individuals who subsequently donated them to Birmingham. Birmingham newspaper proprietor Sir Charles Hyde funded the excavations at Vinca, and also donated material from excavation in Cyprus and Nineveh.

3.2.7 Ancient Civilisations

Sir Charles Hyde also funded excavations in Cyprus and at the Mesopotamian city of Nineveh, and donated material to Birmingham. In the 1930s Birmingham contributed to Sir Leonard Woolley's excavations at Ur, and acquired material from the British Museum. Sir Leonard donated additional material in the 1950s, including the watercolours produced by M Louise Baker to illustrate the excavation report on the Royal Tombs of Ur. Birmingham continued to collect Near Eastern material from sites including Petra, Jericho, Jerusalem, Nimrud, Ur and Abu Hureyra into the late 1970s. This is, alongside the Ashmolean, one of the two largest collections of Near Eastern archaeology outside the British Museum.

Ceramics, textiles and gold work dating between 1000BC and 1500AD, from the South American civilisations of the Incas, Aztecs and their precursor civilizations, also feature strongly in this collection. Birmingham began to collect Pre-Columbian material before the Second World War. In the 1950s this was added to by three major acquisitions in 1951 totalling over 1200 items, further acquisitions in the late 1950s and early 1960s and finally in 1982 by nearly 800 items from the Wellcome Collection.

Other collection areas include Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome. A small group of sculptures from the South Asian religions of Buddhism and Hinduism date from the 2nd-3rd century AD to the 10th-11th centuries AD.

3.2.8 Global Majority Collections

The Global Majority Collections consist of over 9000 objects with collections from North and sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, Oceania, North and South America. The particular geographical strengths of this collection are Oceania (with a heavy emphasis on the Solomon Islands) and Africa, with smaller groups from Asia and the Americas. The collection spans the 16th to 21st centuries, with greater emphasis on the mid-late 19th and early 20th centuries. It features functional items of daily use such as basketry, tools and utensils, objects of adornment, textiles and weaponry. Most of the material represents the private collections of individuals with a personal connection with Birmingham or the

wider Midlands, who travelled overseas for trade, military or colonial service, missionary work and occasionally ethnographic fieldwork. In 2025, the physical collection of the South Asian Diaspora Arts Archive (SADAA) was acquired. This significant national and international collection charts and celebrates the work of first generation British Asian artists who arrived in the UK post-partition. The SADAA collection largely consists of material relating to the visual and performing arts including theatre, dance, literature and music.

3.3 SCIENCE & INDUSTRY

The collection illustrates Birmingham's role as the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution and its claim to be the Second City of the British Empire. For 250 years Birmingham traded globally in raw materials and finished products, and it remains a centre of manufacturing and innovation today. As well as documenting the city and region's development from a centre of craft production through industrial dominance, post-industrial decline and reinvention, the collection enables Birmingham Museums to challenge accepted histories of industrialisation, empire and innovation. The collection covers five collection areas: manufacturing, engineering, science and medicine, technology and transport.

Collection Size: 38,914

3.3.1 Manufacturing

This collection represents over 250 years of manufacturing history from early wooden lathes and hand tools to self-acting machinery and an important firearms collection, including one of the first fully-automatic machines. The Birmingham workshop collections are unique in their provenance and completeness, documenting a history of everyday industrial labour, including a complete silversmith's workshop, a pearl-button workshop, an optician's workshop, a file-maker's workshop, and collection of machinery and tools used by pen makers, gunsmiths, wire drawers, metal workers, watch makers, carpenters, coopers, and coach makers. Examples include Bernard Cuzner's silver workshop containing all of his tools, fittings, and furniture, an important material archive of his trade.

3.3.2 Engineering

This collection represents over 200 years of engine development, with many unique items of local, national and international importance. The Smethwick engine, designed by James Watt in 1778, is the oldest working steam engine in the world and one of the most important and best known objects in Birmingham's collection. Matthew Murray's hypercycloidal straight-line motion steam engine was designed in 1802 and is the oldest working steam engine of compact design. The 1844 Woolrich electrical dynamo was the first commercial generator, while Heaton's 1794 button shank making machine is one of the earliest examples of self-acting production, capable of performing a series of consecutive operations without resetting.

3.3.3 Science and Medicine

This collection reflects the history of instrumentation and scientific research and their applications. The collection includes early plastics, the first pacemaker, a revolutionary prosthetic hip, and an important collection of weights and scales, timekeeping devices and calculating machines.

3.3.4 Technology

This collection contains mechanical, optical, and electronic machines in the everyday world from early telecommunications devices to entertainment technologies such as mechanical musical instruments and computers. Unique components such as LEO 1, the world's first business computer, and Harwell Dekatron, the oldest digital computer form part of the collection alongside one of the country's first industrial robots. The collection also tells the story of Birmingham's continued scientific importance,

represented in the collection by Birmingham-made components for the first trans-Atlantic telegraph cable to the Large Hadron Collider at CERN.

3.4.5 Transport

This collection reflects the complete history of British transport covering road, rail, air, and canal. The collection includes Britain's first self-propelled vehicle, Second World War fighter aircrafts and a comprehensive collection of locally made bicycles, cars, and motorcycles.

There are numerous unique objects of national and often international significance including William Murdoch's prototype locomotive, the country's first self-propelled vehicle, and the Napier Railton Mobil Special which held the land speed record from 1939 to 1964. The City of Birmingham locomotive is one of only three surviving LMS Princess Coronation class locomotives. It has been preserved exactly as when it left service. The Peacock is a nationally significant narrowboat made for Fellows, Morton & Clayton of Saltley. It is the only boat of its type never to be altered from its original state.

3.4 NATURAL SCIENCE

The collection includes entomology, invertebrates, zoology, ornithology, botany and earth science specimens. It is the largest resource of its type in the West Midlands and parts of the collection are nationally and internationally significant.

Collection Size: 248,562 (this includes bulk accessioned collections)

3.4.1 Entomology

This collection is focused on British specimens, incorporating a locally significant record of the region's biodiversity, alongside a smaller number of specimens from Madagascar, Australia, Africa and New Guinea. Specimens of Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) and Coleoptera (beetles) dominate forming one of the best collections in the UK. They include the nationally significant The Rev Gorham British beetle collection, which is comprehensive and includes many extremely rare species that are the first records of their type in Britain. While the butterflies from New Guinea are internationally significant as specimens from the collection localities are extremely rare.

3.4.2 Invertebrates

Mollusc shells form the largest part of this collection which also includes corals, sponges, crustaceans and echinoderms. These are mostly dried, but some are preserved in fluid. The British land and freshwater molluscs collection contains many valuable records of historical snail distribution, which makes it scientifically important. The marine shells are much more international with specimens from most of the world's seas and oceans.

3.4.3 Zoology

This primarily consists of taxidermy and skeletal material of animals. It is dominated by the ornithology collection, which is one of the best in Britain representing all stages of life, incorporating taxidermy and clutches of eggs. There are many rare examples of extinct and endangered species from across the World in the collection, which are of great scientific value. These include the Great Auk, Huia, Passenger Pigeons, Norfolk Kākā Parrot, Ivory-billed Woodpecker and Kakapo. The collection was developed mainly through donations of specimens from individuals including R W Chase, J L Auden, W R Lysaght and the taxidermist J Betteridge and organisations such as local zoos and the incorporation of collection such as that from Tamworth Castle Museum. Mammals include the Aston Hall Tiger, Polar Bear, Brown Bear, Muskox and Leopard.

3.4.4 Herbarium

This collection is comprised of specimens of flowering plants on herbarium sheets and also includes mosses, liverworts, lichens, fungi and wood samples. It is the largest in the region and contains a unique record of the local flora that is nationally significant. Two significant elements of the herbarium are the Bagnall collection, which is locally significant as it was the basis for the first 'Flora of Warwickshire'; while the Ick collection is a significant early record of the environment of Birmingham. The Herbarium of J B Stone contains more international specimens including from notable collectors such as C G Pringle and J Bornmüller.

3.4.5 Earth Science

The earth sciences collection contains a regionally significant collection of local fossils and minerals that tell the story of the Midlands stretching back hundreds of millions of years. The most significant individual fossils are those purchased for display including the Triceratops, a rare example of an American dinosaur skull in a British museum, the 3-dimensionally preserved skeleton of the ichthyosaur *Protoichthyosaurus* and the almost complete fossil crocodile, *Metriorhynchus*.

The collection of gemstones is very comprehensive and is the finest outside of the Natural History Museum, London, affirming the importance of the jewellery trade to the history of Birmingham. The Matthew Boulton minerals are a rare example of an intact 18th century mineral collection and are made more significant by his importance in the history of Birmingham.

3.5 Total Collection Size

In addition to the collection totals listed above by area, there are further objects documented in BMT's paper records. For a part of the organisation's collecting history, Accession Registers were created without being divided into the separate collection areas. For this reason, complete collection type estimates cannot yet be attributed; this will be possible once the paper records have been updated onto the database.

The overall collection size is just under 900,000 objects as of 9th January 2026.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

4.1 Collections Development Objectives

Over the period of our last Collections Development Policy, Birmingham Museums Trust has developed a new Vision, Theory of Change and Five-Year Strategy. These were informed by extensive audience research and by our Citizens' Jury (2024-25), the first in a UK museum, which asked Birmingham citizens to shape the direction of the Trust. Through this work, and particularly through the recommendations of our Citizens' Jury, we have identified priorities for collecting over the next five years. Over the course of this Policy, these will be subject to further consultation with our audiences.

Birmingham Museums Trust's new Vision is 'a radical reinvention of the museum as a catalyst of cultural and social change.' To deliver this Vision, our curatorial practice must change. Importantly we will prioritise impact over growth. Collecting will be active, audience-shaped and purposeful. While acquisition numbers may be lower, their impact, relevance and representation will be the focus. There are five key objectives in our collecting which cut across collection areas.

Aim 1:
Driven by audiences

Collecting decisions will be audience-led. Building on past consultation, including the Citizens' Jury, we will develop new collecting methods which

move away from passive collecting to active collecting working with audiences. All decisions will consider social impact and use.

<u>Aim 2:</u> Connected to future plans	The redisplays of Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery and Thinktank are key priorities for the next five years. Active collecting to help us with this work will be a focus. Decisions will consider enhancing knowledge and use for learning and display.
<u>Aim 3:</u> Increasing representation	BMT aims to make our visitors/users fully representative of Birmingham; to foster belonging, celebrate Birmingham and its global connections; and build understanding between people. Acquisition decisions will consider equality, diversity and inclusion goals, and Birmingham's demographics, and be culturally sensitive.
<u>Aim 4:</u> Deeper, not broader	We will not focus on building an encyclopaedic or complete collection, but on better use of our current collection for public benefit. Priority will be given to building knowledge with audiences. Acquisitions will therefore be fewer to reflect this shift in focus and resource. We acknowledge that perceived "gaps in the collection" reflects our own bias and our own gaps in knowledge; and are not a justification in themselves for more acquisitions.
<u>Aim 5:</u> Quality and significance	All acquisitions will be of significance and relevance to our audiences, and within our priority themes. In exceptional circumstances however, we may acquire items outside these priorities that are of unique, cultural significance to the city and nation in other ways. Acquisition decisions will consider the importance of any object for the Midlands' story.

4.1 Collections Development Priority Themes

This policy has a regional emphasis but incorporates not only artworks, objects and specimens that are made, used, or sourced in the West Midlands, but also those from elsewhere in the world that are relevant to Birmingham people and will meet our broader objectives. These collecting themes cut across collection areas and include digital collecting.

Our collecting priorities are:

1. People and Communities: Diversity and Migration
2. Producers for the World
3. Changing Perspectives

Priority 1: People and Communities: Diversity and Migration

Birmingham has been shaped by the movement of people over time, and its diversity has always been one of its strengths. Today, the city has one of the most diverse populations in the country. It was one of the first cities to have a 'minority majority' population, has the highest proportion of residents identifying with a religion of any core city, and almost a quarter of the population was born outside the UK. Birmingham is also one of the youngest cities in the UK, and over ¾ of these young people come from global majority backgrounds. A higher proportion of Birmingham's people have a disability than on average for the UK, and there is a significant LGBTQ+ community.

Over the next five years, we will focus on capturing stories and experiences that are currently under-represented in our collection. With a particular focus on 19th – 21st century life, acquisitions will explore how Birmingham came to be the city it is today, and the people who live here now.

Priority collecting areas under this theme include:

- a) Artworks, objects and oral histories that represent sections of Birmingham's population not well represented in our collection, with a focus on young people's experiences across time, working class stories, women's histories, stories of migration and second/third generation experience, LGBTQ+ stories, and stories of faith.
- b) Work by artists and makers who identify as being from communities of identity, origin or interest that are not well represented in our collection.
- c) Rapid Response collecting to capture the moments of celebration, activism and communal experience that matter to people in the city.

This collecting theme will have a particular focus and impact on the Fine and Decorative Art, and Birmingham History collections.

Priority 2: Producers for the World

Birmingham has a long history as the City of 1000 Trades, a city of makers, creators and manufacturers. People of the city have invented and made products that impact the world but also created literature, music, sport and culture. Over the next five years our priority will be to better represent the tangible and intangible creativity and creation that has come from the city, past and present, and for the future. As the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, this theme will also look at the environmental impact of Birmingham's production over time, and the work being done to counteract this.

Birmingham's creativity and production is also shaped by its global connections, from the movement of materials, products and people, and its influence on politics and culture. We will actively explore with communities what we should tell about these global links in stories about Birmingham's creativity and production.

Priority collecting areas under this theme include:

- a) Objects, artworks and oral histories which reflect Birmingham's diverse creative and cultural production, with a focus on particular focus on collecting around popular culture, music, sport and other cultural activities.
- b) Objects, artworks and oral histories capturing Birmingham's role in major infrastructural changes, including the ongoing work on HS2 and Midlands Metro, the Smithfield Market developments, and development of the Creative Quarter.
- c) Objects, artworks, oral histories and specimens that reflect Birmingham's role in environmental challenge and solutions
- d) Objects (including manufactured products) artworks and stories which capture a global perspective on Birmingham's role

This collecting theme will have a particular focus on the Science & Industry, Birmingham History, Decorative and Fine Art and Natural Science collections.

Priority 3: Changing Perspectives

Birmingham's collection is of national and international significance and represents a wealth of stories. As part of Birmingham Museum Trust's Vision for a radical reinvention of a museum, we will focus on unlocking our collection and the stories it contains, fostering relevance, belonging, hope and social trust. New acquisitions have the power to help us see and use our existing collections in different ways and through new lenses.

Collecting over the next five years could include (but is not limited to) new commissions which interpret or respond to our existing collections and/or the experiences of Birmingham people, as well as acquiring international objects where these speak to the experiences of Birmingham people and unlock the interpretations and relevance of other collections.

Priority collecting areas under this theme include:

- a) Contemporary commissions which respond to the objects or themes of Birmingham's collections and stories through a new lens.
- b) Contemporary responses to historic stories by artists and makers.
- c) Oral histories which reinterpret and capture different responses to the city.
- d) International objects of relevance to Birmingham's people.

This collecting theme will have a particular focus on Fine and Decorative Art, Birmingham History, and the City Sound Archives.

4.3 Non-Priority Collecting Areas

While Birmingham Museums Trust cares for the city's museum collections, we also recognise that there are further collections held in and by the people and communities of the city, which all form part of the city's story. Our ambition is not to be the sole caretaker of Birmingham's stories, but to also support collections held by others. As such, where collections are better held by others, we will not seek to acquire these but work in partnership with others to care for their collections.

We have identified areas where we will also not be actively collecting, except in exceptional circumstances, including areas where we lack in-house curatorial expertise. Work with external experts in these areas will focus on expanding knowledge of existing collections, not adding more objects. In all collecting areas, the focus will be on impact and relevance, not growth or completeness.

Areas where we will not be collecting include:

- 4.3.1 Numismatics. Our current collection is Designated by Arts Council England as being of national significance. We will not be adding to this collection except in exceptional circumstances.
- 4.3.2 Ancient Civilisations. Any work with this collection will involve external experts working to add knowledge to our current understanding and will not include new acquisitions.
- 4.3.3 Historic Global Majority collections. We are currently undertaking a research project involving this collection, bringing in lived and learned experience. While we will not be adding to this collection area, work which represents the life, experience and artistic practice of Global Majority communities today may be acquired as part of other collection areas.
- 4.3.4 Archaeology. We will not be actively acquiring archaeological material but will continue to act as the repository for archaeological archives relating to excavations in the city.
- 4.3.5 Natural Science. While we may acquire objects and specimens which help tell the story of nature and environmental change in the city today, we are not seeking to create a fully representative or encyclopaedic collection and so will not collect further examples of zoology or botany except in exceptional circumstances.

4.4.1 Collecting Methodology

All acquisitions will take into account the potential impact of an object to the people of Birmingham. This will be done through active engagement, or where not possible, through reference to past consultation including the Citizens' Jury recommendations.

We will move away from passive or internally-driven collecting focusing on growth and relying on donations. Instead, we will identify key areas for development and actively seek opportunities to work with communities to collect or commission.

This approach builds on work begun with the Lottery-funded Collecting Birmingham project and will embed an audience/impact assessment in our Acquisition Proposals. A new methodology for active acquisitions will be developed over the first year of this Policy and may include:

- 4.4.2 Ensuring all acquisitions refer to the recommendations of the Citizens' Jury and our target audiences.
- 4.4.3 Active collecting projects, approved in advance through the Collections Circle, working with communities of interest/identity/geography to identify objects to acquire.
- 4.4.4 The creation of a community collecting panel or other body which will inform decisions.
- 4.4.5 Building on the work of Dynamic Collections, actively recording community knowledge within the cataloguing and interpretation of newly acquired objects.
- 4.4.6 Piloting new Rapid Response Collecting, allowing us to quickly respond to events in the city which we could not have foreseen, and capture stories of, and with, people in Birmingham.

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. In the context of this policy the term 'disposal' is used to refer to the transfer, reuse, deaccessioning or disposal of an object(s) in the 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 Principal reasons for disposal may include, but are not limited to:
 - 5.3.1 Intellectual justification: it may be necessary to remove from the collection any object that demonstrably has no or a low potential for public access, engagement, learning or research, measured against the criteria of BMT's Surveys of Significance.
 - 5.3.2 Damage and deterioration: it may be necessary to remove from the collection any object which is too badly damaged or has deteriorated too far to be of any further use for the service.
 - 5.3.3 Hazard: it may be necessary to remove from the collection any object which - as a result of its material substance - poses a severe threat of contamination or risk to the collection or serious health hazard to staff and public, beyond that protection afforded by reasonable Health and Safety measures.
 - 5.3.4 Improved access: it may be desirable to transfer to the ownership of another organisation within the public domain any accessioned object which, by reasons of changes in public demand, social or educational need, administrative responsibility, or development priorities would be more appropriately placed elsewhere. The Co-CEOs of BMT will seek prior written agreement for such transfer from the Council. Organisations will be available for the public to view or use on a regular basis whether that be through open access or by request.
 - 5.3.5 Improvement of care: it may be necessary to rationalise collection areas that are demonstrably of lesser significance in terms of this policy and the Survey of Significance in order to achieve the most cost-effective allocation of resources for the long-term care of the collection.
 - 5.3.6 Ethical considerations: it may be necessary to deaccession items where there is evidence that an object(s) was wrongfully taken, illicitly traded or exported, or acquired during periods of

conflict, or where due diligence and appropriate research fails to identify evidence or documentation to prove legitimate acquisition.

- 5.4 Rationalisation and disposal of the collection is a core part of BMT's annual collection management and development programme. Current priorities are driven by the above principles as well as the need to create more storage capacity for new acquisitions, therefore focusing primarily on larger rather than smaller scale items for disposal.
- 5.5 The following collection areas will be a priority for review, rationalisation and potential disposal over the next four years:
- 5.5.1 Collections relating to potential repatriation: priority will be given to the review of collections that may be subject to repatriation or restitution. This work will support the implementation of BMT's Restitution and Repatriation Policy. These areas will include collections from Africa, North America and Oceania where BMT is already in dialogue with source communities or their respective representatives or agencies.
- 5.5.2 Unprovenanced Collections and Material of Unclear Status: BMT will prioritise the review of objects and material with incomplete, missing, or unclear provenance. This includes material identified through the review of documentation backlogs, and historic long-term loans. Without the original context significance, interpretive value and research potential is limited.
- As part of this theme, BMT will develop a clear policy framework for managing unprovenanced material, supporting consistent decision-making around formal acquisition, transfer, or disposal where appropriate.
- 5.5.3 Science and Industry Collection: Building on the previous collections review 2019-2022, the Science and Industry collection will remain a priority area for rationalisation and disposal where an object meets one of the criteria in 5.3 or has no relation to Birmingham and the region's industrial heritage. Collection Reviews will be informed by a review of significance, condition, and the presence of hazardous materials.
- This work supports BMT's ongoing commitment to sustainable collections management and reflects the need to create additional storage capacity, with a particular focus on larger-scale objects where appropriate.
- While this theme primarily relates to the Science and Industry collection, the principles may also be applied to other large-scale objects in the collection, where justified.
- 5.5.4 Hazardous and Unstable Materials: BMT will prioritise the identification and review of objects that present an unacceptable risk to health and safety or to the wider collection, including unstable or hazardous materials. Where risks cannot be reasonably mitigated, disposal may be considered in accordance with professional guidance, legal requirements, and environmental best practice.
- 5.5.5 Furniture collection: BMT will prioritise the review of furniture collections stored within the main warehouse racking at the Museum Collections Centre, building on a previous furniture review activity undertaken in the extension areas. This will continue to review the significant collection of furniture, much of which is understood to have been purchased as 'set dressing' for historic properties but was subsequently accessioned and now has little prospect of being displayed.
- 5.6 The review and resolution of long-term loans (incoming and outgoing) will form a key priority during the period of this policy. Material on long-term loan that no longer supports BMT's Collections Development Policy will be reviewed and, where appropriate, returned to lenders.

Although long-term loans do not form part of the permanent collection, addressing them will be prioritised over new collection reviews due to their wider impact on storage capacity, risk management, and documentation standards.

- 5.7 We will not undertake disposal of collections where we do not have in-house expertise and are unable to secure resources to engage the relevant collection expertise elsewhere.

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 museums:

Art

National Gallery
National Portrait Gallery
V&A
Tate
National Museums Liverpool
The Ashmolean
Bristol Museums & Art Gallery
Cambridge University Museums
Culture Coventry
New Art Gallery Walsall
Wolverhampton Arts & Museums
Sandwell Museums
Barber Institute of Fine Arts

Human History

British Museum
Royal Armouries Museum
National Museums Liverpool
Oxford University Museums
Manchester Museum
Potteries Museum & Art Gallery
Bristol Museums
Warwickshire County Museums Service
Museums Worcestershire
Shropshire County Museums
Library of Birmingham Archives and Heritage Services
University of Birmingham's University Collection

Natural Science

Natural History Museum
National Museums Liverpool

Manchester Museum
Leeds City Museum
University of Birmingham's Lapworth Museum

Science and Industry

The Science Museums Group
Imperial War Museum
Discovery Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne
Centre for Life, Newcastle upon Tyne
Bristol Museums
Culture Coventry

This list is not exhaustive and other institutions to be consulted where relevant.

- 7.3 BMT currently manages a number of collections or individual objects that are jointly owned between Birmingham City Council and other museums or their respective governing institutions. BMT will consider joint acquisitions in exceptional circumstances and only where a joint collection management agreement is in place and agreed by all parties.

8. Archival holdings

- 8.1 BMT holds and intends to acquire on behalf of the Council archival material, including photographs and printed ephemera, where it relates to or enhances understanding of the object collection.
- 8.2 BMT will be guided by the latest Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom when considering any archive acquisitions.

9. Acquisition

- 9.1 The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

9.1.1 Approval process for acquisitions

The Council shall notify BMT's Co-CEOs in writing within 10 working days of receiving notice of any bequest, donation or gift including details of any condition attached to such gift (copy to the Director of Collections & Estate). If the decision is taken to acquire, BMT will make the necessary arrangements for delivery to BMT.

The Co-CEOs of BMT will also have the authority to solicit gifts of material for the Collection within the terms of this policy, the BMT Scheme of Delegations, and for making any recommendations, or for taking action on the purchase of material on behalf of the Council in accordance with this policy.

9.1.2 Delegation levels

Under the terms of its Agreement, BMT is responsible for additions to Birmingham City Council's museum collection by bequest, donation, gift and purchase subject to approvals from the Council as outlined below. The purchase of objects can include from artists, gallerists or collectors, private vendors, through auction houses or online sales websites as well as art commissions.

The Co-CEOs of BMT has responsibility for:

- the acceptance or rejection of potential bequests, donations and gifts to the Council subject to the terms and conditions specified in this policy.
- the purchase of items on behalf of the Council up to the value of £200,000, and where there is no ongoing liability or condition for the Council associated with owning the asset (above the cost of day-to-day collection management, care and storage).
- making recommendations to the Board of BMT concerning the purchase of objects over the value of £200,000 on behalf of the Council.

For any acquisition recommendation approved by the Board of BMT, for which the purchase price exceeds £200,000 and/or there is an ongoing liability or condition for the Council associated with owning the asset (above the cost of day to day collection management, care and storage), including but not limited to a commitment to keep the object on permanent display, BMT will seek approval in writing from the relevant Cabinet Member of Birmingham City Council in advance of acquisition, giving details of the proposed acquisition, cost, liability and condition.

If BMT proposes to acquire any object which could, in all reasonableness, be considered damaging to the Council's reputation it will firstly seek written approval from the Council.

For all new acquisitions BMT will be required to include a description of the item, date of acquisition and its value in the first quarterly Collection Report to BMT's Board of Trustees and the Council after each said acquisition.

9.1.3 Implications for Birmingham Museums

The Collections Circle (BMT's democratic equivalent of a committee) - of which BMT's Director of Collections & Estate is a member - meets monthly to formally scrutinise and document all proposals relating to loans, donations, bequests, purchases, disposals, destructive testing, and return/repatriation on behalf of the Co-CEOs of BMT. The Director of Collections & Estate submits the recommendations of the Collections Circle to BMT's Co-CEOs and Senior Leadership Team for decision subject to procedures outlined in 9.1.2

The following checks are carried out on proposed acquisitions and documented on an Acquisitions Proposal Form:

- Budget

Price (if purchased)

Source(s) of funding: Ivan Witton Legacy fund, National Lottery Heritage Fund, V&A Purchase Fund, Art Fund, Friends of Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery, Public Picture Gallery Fund, Tessa Sidey Bequest, or other grant-giving bodies

Cost to acquire (e.g. packing and transport, mounting / framing, conservation, storage, documentation)

- Curatorial

Relevance to the Collections Development Policy's aims and objectives, with paragraph reference

Consideration of whether BMT acting on behalf of the Council is the most appropriate institution to collect

Assessment of available resources to accession

- Research

Assessment of research potential

Assessment of significance

- Engagement

Potential for learning, access and engagement

Potential for future public display

Marketing, press coverage, display requirements

- Legal and professional issues

Entitlement of the individual, group or agency to transfer ownership to the Council

Provenance, Customs notices (for imports), documentation for objects received in lieu of tax, firearms licence, explosives licence, birds' egg licence, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), Wildlife and Countryside Act, Treasure Act, guidelines on human remains, repatriation, restitution, spoliation of works of art, Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries, Copyright ownership and transfer arrangements

- Conservation

Stability and condition checking before decision to acquire, infestations

Packaging for transport and storage

Environmental recommendations

- Collection Management

Documentation check for duplicates etc, inventory, data entry, object marking, contractor required

Loans, transport

Storage implications: space, storage furniture, staff resources

Internal movement and transport

Photography on acquisition

- Health & Safety issues

Toxins, radioactivity, special lifting and handling

9.1.4 Reasons and Terms for Acquiring an Object

The reasons and purpose for acquiring or accepting an object will be clearly established prior to its transfer to the Council. This will be made clear to the person/s or organisations from which the object is procured. The terms governing the procurement of an object - its status, the Council's and BMT's rights, the donor's or seller's rights, the issue of disposal and any other conditions must be made clear to all parties, in writing, at the time of procurement.

9.1.5 Concept or Intellectual Artwork and Interactive Exhibits

In the case of artworks where the physical materials are not the essence of the artwork, BMT undertakes to preserve or maintain those aspects of the artwork necessary for its continued existence or display. BMT retains the right to replace or restore, rather than conserve, the original piece in the event of the deterioration of the artwork, or redundancy of its technological components. This will be agreed in writing with the artist or owner at the time of procurement.

9.1.6 Oral History

The purpose for the Collection of any oral history material will be made clear in writing to all individuals whose recollection form an oral history record. A written agreement between BMT as agent of the Council and the individual will be entered into prior to any oral history being recorded and stored as part of the museum collection's sound archive.

9.1.7 Digital Collection Objects (DCOs)

BMT manage digital collection objects (including time-based media) through structured procedures that ensure careful consideration of the documentation, storage, display, and long-term preservation requirements at acquisition stage. This ensures that the consideration of future needs and decisions relating to this are taken at the earliest stage. See BMT's Time Based Media guidelines for more information and Collections Trust's Toolkit for Managing Digital Collections.

9.1.7 Methods of Acquisition

Procurement of Acquisitions

Any proposals for purchasing acquisitions will include details of the proposed funding or fundraising required, in the respective Acquisitions Proposal which shall be submitted to the Collections Circle convened by the Director of Collections & Estate, for assessing.

BMT will seek to raise funding for all purchased acquisitions, whether from relevant restricted legacy funding it manages (e.g. Ivan Witton Legacy fund, Tessa Sidey Bequest) or from other acquisition funders (see 9.1.3).

Acquisitions requiring purchase that are of a lower value (typically under £30,000) may be procured by BMT on behalf of Birmingham City Council, on receipt of the relevant signed Acquisitions Proposal Form and having obtained a signed Transfer of Title form in the process confirming the Council as the new owner.

Acquisitions requiring purchase that are of a higher value (typically over £30,000) or where BMT is unable to procure lower value items, will be procured directly by Birmingham City Council, on receipt of the relevant signed Acquisitions Proposal Form from BMT. It is BMT's responsibility to issue the Council with all relevant vendor and funders' details to enable the Council to procure the acquisition as well as claim funding secured in support of that acquisition. Where BMT is committing its own funds or restricted legacy funding that it manages (Ivan Witton Legacy Fund, Tessa Sidey Bequest) towards the purchase of an acquisition, then the council will invoice BMT directly for that funding contribution.

Procurement via an Auction Sale

If an object (for potential acquisition) is being sold at auction at a sales price expected to exceed £200,000, or there is otherwise relatively short notice regarding a potential acquisition over £200,000, the Co-CEOs of BMT will seek approval from the Chair of the Trustees within a 24-hour period and any approval shall be notified to the next meeting of the Board of Trustees of BMT. On receipt of the appropriate approval the Co-CEOs of BMT will then seek written approval from the Council before pursuing the acquisition.

Art Commissions

All proposed commissions will be subject to a contractual agreement between BMT on behalf of the Council and the person/s producing the commission and must make full reference to the relevant Collections Development Policy objectives contained herein. Delegation levels and approval procedures are the same as specified in the first section above of section 2.9.1

Bequests and Donations

Acquisitions by Bequest and Donation will be referred to the Collection Circle and recommendations submitted to the Co-CEOs of BMT.

Anonymous donations will be actively discouraged. Where there is no opportunity to engage with the Donor nor to work through a third party such as the Donor's legal representative,

failure by BMT to secure the Donor's name and address will not prevent BMT from legally acquiring the object on behalf of the Council, if appropriate, where it can be shown that every possible attempt has been made by BMT to locate, contact and secure agreement from the Donor. Nor will this prevent BMT from exercising the disposal of the object under the terms of the Disposal Policy should that be deemed appropriate.

Should there be any concern about the origin of the material i.e. theft or contravention of other legal statutes, the appropriate authority will be immediately notified. As with all acquisitions, how the object is acquired or disposed of will be fully documented and be completely transparent.

9.1.8 Transfer of Ownership

BMT will ensure that the person or organisation from which BMT is procuring the object on behalf of the Council has the legal authority to transfer ownership to the Council. BMT will also undertake to explain to the person or organisation from which the object is procured the full meaning of transfer of ownership. The following circumstances will be agreed:

- The Council becomes the legal owner of the object and the Donor/seller, their families or representatives will have no further rights of claim upon the object
- Although the Council is the legal owner of the object, it will be managed on the Council's behalf by BMT
- The object may be stored for long periods, and if not on display will be accessible by appointment
- The object is procured for the Collection to benefit the museum service as a whole and objects may be stored or displayed in any venue
- The object may be used for many purposes, including display, research, education, handling, and outreach
- BMT has the right to dispose of the object on behalf of the Council following the guidelines specified in the Disposal Policy
- Individuals or parties, having had the above explained to them, should seek independent legal advice before transferring the object to the Collection.

Where possible, BMT on behalf of the Council will issue every Donor with a Transfer of Title Agreement and a Donation Certificate.

BMT will issue the Donor, or the Donor's legal representative, with the Transfer of Title Agreement. This agreement will be signed by both parties and on receipt of the agreement by BMT, BMT will issue the Donor with a Donation Certificate signed by the Co-CEOs of BMT on behalf of the Council. The Transfer of Title Agreement should be signed in advance of receipt of the object by BMT where possible. Copies of this documentation and of documentation relating to the transaction will be held in an appropriate secure object file.

Failure by BMT to secure the Donor's signature, either as a result of an anonymous donation or failure of the Donor to respond to the posted documentation within a fixed time period, will not prevent BMT from legally acquiring the object on behalf of the Council where it can be shown that every possible attempt has been made by BMT to locate, contact and secure agreement from the Donor.

9.1.9 Copyright

The ownership of the copyright of an object, where applicable, will be established in advance of, and formally agreed at, the time of procurement. Any assignment of copyright shall be in the name of the Council.

9.1.10 Purchase Records

BMT will retain copies of all financial and contractual transactions relevant to the purchase of the object and archive this information in the relevant object file as part of the object documentation.

9.1.11 Restrictive Covenants or Special Conditions

Objects offered to BMT on behalf of the Council as donations or bequests will not normally be accepted if they are subject to any restrictive covenant or special conditions, for example relating to display, access or lending.

However, in exceptional circumstances, if the Director of Collections & Estate can demonstrate that the object/s in question are of over-riding importance, the Co-CEOs of BMT may be asked to approve the acquisition of a specific object to which conditions are attached.

9.1.12 Accessioning

Each object acquired will be fully accessioned in the Accession Register and given and labelled with a unique identifiable Registration Number. The object's legal status will be verified and its provenance and any other social and historical contextual information recorded. Each object will be photographed for record purposes. A copy of the entire Accession Register will be maintained in a stable, paper format and housed in fireproof storage. The accession register will note material bequeathed or donated to the Council.

9.1.13 Electronic and digital information

Information that is collected or accepted in a digital format for accessioning into the Collection will be registered and given a unique number. Edited or compiled versions of the original data may be separately accessioned as deemed appropriate. In the case of new audio and video footage accepted into the Collection, the consent of all parties represented or featured will be sought. All copyright, legal, and other contextual information will also be recorded.

The accessioned object will be the digital information and the way it is presented, in audio and/or video form. The medium on which the information is recorded is not considered to be the accessioned object and can be changed as required for the safe preservation or interpretation of the information. BMT will make use of secure storage on magnetic, optical or other mass storage media suitable for archive storage and retrieval of digital information. Back-up copies, periodic checking, bulk copying and the use of new storage media will be used to manage the long-term access to and preservation of the digital information.

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 1 November 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 intend to acquire human remains, except where they are deposited as part of Archaeological Archives for which BMT acts as the central repository for the City of Birmingham.
- 10.2 As the museum holds human remains from over 100 years old, it will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005.
- 10.2 The management and care of human remains are guided by ethical responsibility, professional standards, and sensitivity to the beliefs and values of individuals, communities, and cultures connected to them.
- 10.3 Human remains will not be used for public display without consent, regardless of their age. BMT will develop and maintain guidelines for the access, care, management and review of Human Remains. These guidelines will formalise existing procedures and ensure compliance with DCMS 2005 guidance with regards to access, research, retention and disposal or repatriation where appropriate (see section 15).

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 act as the repository for archaeological archives created within the City of Birmingham. The deposition process will follow BMT's Archaeological Archive Standards (Appendix 1.2 of its Collections Management Framework).
- 12.2 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.
- 12.3 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. Spoliation in this context refers to objects and works of art which may have been looted (‘spoliated’) or subject to forced sale under the Nazis during the period 1933 – 1945.
- 14.2 BMT is a member of the National Museums Directors’ Council (NMDC) Spoliation Working Group.
- 14.3 BMT’s Spoliation Action Plan was developed in response to the need for museums to determine whether they hold any objects in their collections for which there is a gap in provenance during the period 1933-1945 and for which there could be evidence that the object may have been looted from its original owners during the Holocaust or World War II.
- 14.4 The museum’s spoliation report and the accompanying object records for items with incomplete provenance for the period 1933-45 can be found on the Collections Trust website <https://records.collectionstrust.org.uk/>
- 14.5 Over the period of this Collections Development Policy BMT will update its current Spoliation Action Plan and re-publish it online by 31 Dec 2027.

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 BMT, on behalf of the Council, welcomes requests for information and dialogue from UK and international source communities around the repatriation of objects currently in the collection. BMT is committed to transparency about the collections it holds, and the information about the origins of these collections. Provenance research of the collections is ongoing, allowing BMT to be more proactive in identifying objects that can be better valued and cared for in places and communities of origin than in Birmingham.
- 15.3 BMT will undertake consultation with stakeholders and source communities to identify objects that could be considered for repatriation. Over the period of this Policy, BMT will actively research its collections with communities, including its global majority collections, ancient civilisations collections and others, to better understand their relevance to the collection, and significance to local and source communities.
- 15.4 BMT will work with stakeholders and representatives from communities/countries of origin for objects in our collection, to create a full Restitution and Repatriation Policy as an appendix to this Collections Development Policy by January 2027. This stand-alone, publicly accessible policy will clearly outline how to access collections of interest, our values, pathways to making a claim, institutional responsibilities, expected timeframes for action, and appeal mechanisms.

- 15.5 BMT will continue to work in partnership with the University of Birmingham to create a Restitution Statement of Intent for all Birmingham's collections, that partners can sign up to. This will reflect our respective Restitution and Repatriation Policies and priorities and will be subject to periodic review. We aim to create a city-wide statement subject to the support of the Council and partners.
- 15.6 The disposal of human remains from museums in England, Northern Ireland and Wales will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums.'
- 15.7 Processing claims for cultural restitution, spoliation, the return of human remains and related issues
- 15.7.1 On receipt of a written claim for spoliation, return or repatriation the Co-CEOs of BMT will write to the claimant acknowledging receipt and explain the procedure and potential duration of the process. The Co-CEOs of BMT will notify the Director of Collections & Estate, the Cabinet Member of Birmingham City Council and (where relevant) the Leader of Birmingham City Council.
- 15.7.2 In cases of Spoliation, the Director of Collections & Estate will advise the DCMS Spoliation Advisory Panel.
- 15.7.3 The Director of Collections & Estate will table the claim at the first subsequent Collections Circle as a record of receipt.
- 15.7.4 The Director of Collections & Estate will convene a preliminary meeting of the internal panel. Attendees will include:
- Head of Collections
 - Conservation Manager
 - Curator
 - Council representative (ideally the relevant Cabinet Member)
- 15.7.5 In subsequent meetings the internal panel will consider:
- The identity of the object or remains under claim (i.e. is the object or remains referred to present in Birmingham City Council's collection).
 - The status of those making the claim, including the identity of the claimant(s) and any intermediary/representative, the connection between the claimant(s) and the objects or remains, and the basis for the claim.
 - Any information regarding other potential claimants.
 - The continuity between the community or individual whence the object or remains derive and the current community or individual on whose behalf the request is being made.
 - The cultural, religious or personal significance of the object or remains to the community or individual.
 - How the object or remains have been acquired by the museum and their subsequent use.
 - The future of the object or remains if returned.
 - The claimant's wishes for the future of the object or remains.
 - Any legal issues affecting the claim as advised by Legal Services.
 - Any further information or consultation required.
 - Any requirement to inform other agencies.
 - Any requirement to manage Press interest.
 - Any transportation and customs requirements.
 - Any requirements requiring a farewell event or ritual.
 - Any budget requirements.

- 15.7.6 Once the Director of Collections & Estate deems the information and consultation to be complete, a nominated member of the internal panel will compile a final report on the evidence regarding the request and a provisional recommendation. The Co-CEOs of BMT will forward the report for discussion to:
- Board of Trustees of BMT
 - The relevant Cabinet Member of Birmingham City Council

- 15.7.7 The Co-CEOs of BMT, advised by Legal Services, will notify the claimant in writing of the outcome. In the case of Spoliation, a final report will be sent to DCMS. If the decision is to return the object, appropriate arrangements will be made.

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.

Objects given or bequeathed will not normally be disposed of without consultation with the original donors or their heirs within the first generation, where donor details are known and contact is readily possible. This is, however, a matter of courtesy, not a legal requirement. The Co-CEOs of BMT will be able to waive this requirement where donor information is unavailable or where reasonable efforts to trace a Donor have not been successful. Any such considerations will be documented in the Disposal Proposal.

- 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 collection will be taken by the governing body on the recommendation of the Co-CEOs of BMT only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including public benefit, the implications for the museum's collection and collection 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 or sale will be the responsibility of the governing body of the museum acting on the advice of the Co-CEOs and Director of Collections & Estate for BMT and 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 or other organisations within the public domain.

- 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 collection. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collection to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collection 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 collection will be sought from 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.

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 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.

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

17 CHANGE CONTROL

Issue	Date	Author	Comments
v1.1			
v1.2			
v1.3			