

ALFORD & DONSIDE HERITAGE ASSOCIATION COLLECTIONS POLICY

Name of museum: Alford Heritage Museum

Name of governing body: Alford & Donside Heritage Association (SCIO SC050799)

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: April 2022

Policy review procedure: The collections development policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years.

Date at which this policy is due for review: January 2027.

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1. The organisation:

1.1 Alford and Donside Heritage Association (SCIO) has been formed to benefit the communities of Alford and Donside, which comprise all of the geographical area covered by the Alford Academy school zone (the “**Community**”) with the following purposes:

1.1.1 To promote and maintain the Old Mart Building at Alford and the collections held within it

1.1.2 To advance the Arts, Heritage and Culture

1.1.3 To advance citizenship or community development, including rural regeneration

But such that the charity shall do so following principles of sustainable development.

1.2 The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.

1.3 By definition, the museum has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts

the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in the museum's collection.

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

1.5 The museum recognises it has responsibility, when acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure the care and use of collections and documentation arrangements.

It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as funding, 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. In cases where disposal is motivated by financial reasons, the governing body will not undertake disposal unless it can be demonstrated that all the following exceptional circumstances are met in full:

- the disposal will improve the long-term public benefit derived from the remaining collection
- the disposal will not be undertaken to generate short-term revenue (e.g. to meet a budget deficit)
- the disposal will be undertaken as a last resort
- the item under consideration lies outside the museum's established core collection

2. History of the collections

The museum collection was begun around 1990 by loan, donation and purchase. The original focus of the collections can be broadly described as items pertaining to "Rural Life", agricultural, social and domestic.

Although situated in North East Scotland, many of the items are of wider national interest, and displays such as the Royal Observer Corps room and model railway are not specific to the local area. Dating from 1906, the museum building itself is a key part of the collection, having been the local agricultural market where animals and other goods were sold. This structure was awarded A Listing status in October 2021 by Historic Environment Scotland.

The front section of the building houses displays in small rooms, previously offices of the auction house and agricultural suppliers. This area focuses on social and domestic history, with examples of local trades, education and domestic settings. The auction ring houses some moveable items so that it can be used as a concert venue. The rear animal lairage area houses larger agricultural equipment and tools (e.g. tractors and other farm machinery) and recreations of trade workshops such as a blacksmith.

3. An overview of current collections

Many of the original items were loaned to the museum on a long-term basis. Record keeping has been sporadic and current records are inaccurate as to ownership of many items. As 30 years have passed, many of the original donors and lenders have passed away, and it is now not feasible to recreate an accurate retrospective inventory with complete loan / donation details. In 2020 an Excel spreadsheet was created, combining all the available information sources

concerning objects and their origin. From 2022 all donations will be vetted by Trustee representatives prior to entering the collection.

In 2021 a retrospective inventory project was started which will provide a more accurate representation of the collection. This will be accessible online.

There are currently too many items in the building to allow them all to be displayed. Storage conditions are variable, with no purpose built stores or cabinets. Many older items are stored outside the building in metal containers, some of which leak. This has resulted in the degradation of many metal and wood items.

Items on display are almost all on open access. This is a feature of the museum which is appreciated by visitors, but some items could be considered hazardous and their method of display needs to be reviewed. There is consequently high potential for theft or accidental damage to objects.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

As the museum is currently full to capacity, future collecting must be focussed and relevant. The core collections are now, in order of priority due to local relevance,

- The Alford Mart building and related items
- Social and cultural life of Alford and Donside area
- Agriculture, with specific focus on NE Scotland and the Alford area in particular

The decision making criteria are outlined in appendix 1. There is a recognition that the museum also needs to continue to collect contemporary items which will, in time, become the heritage of the local area.

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. The outcome of review and any subsequent rationalisation will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well managed collection.

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

It is recognised that there are many duplicated items and many items of poor or damaged quality, particularly in storage. Few of these will have any financial or cultural value. It is unlikely that these would be wanted by any other local museum and the cost of redistribution should be considered. Items in good condition, but surplus to requirements will be advertised by email to other local museums via the NE Museums network.

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:

Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums
Aberdeenshire Museum Service
Aberdeenshire Archives
Aberdeen University Museums and Special Collections
Garioch Heritage Centre
Grampian Transport Museum
NE Museums Network

7.3 With regard to the above we will not actively collect in the areas of motor transport or railways as these are covered by Grampian Transport Museum and Alford Valley Community Railway.

8. Archival holdings

The Museum holds substantial archive holdings including photographs and newspaper cuttings. A library of donated books is also maintained. All items are listed on Excel spreadsheets but, as with the rest of the collection, the origin and ownership of most items is not known. Attempts have been made over the past few years to improve the archival storage in appropriate boxes and protective sleeves. However, not everything is properly protected. Some archive material not specific to the local area might be better relocated to another museum or archive collection. Public access to the collection is problematic.

9. Acquisition

9.1 The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

- Items offered to the museum will normally only be accepted as donations, not loans.
- Items offered with restrictions or special conditions will not normally be accepted.
- Items offered to the museum will be subject to scrutiny by at least two Trustees before acceptance, with the Board of Trustees having the final say.
- Items accepted should relate to life in NE Scotland, specifically the Alford and Donside area.
- Items should be in good condition with little damage and suitable for display.
- Items hazardous to health will not be accepted.
- Only in exceptional circumstances should acquisitions duplicate objects already in the collection.

9.2 The museum will not acquire any object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the object or specimen has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom).

9.3 In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1 2002, the museum will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The Board will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.

10. Human remains

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

11. Biological and geological material

11.1 The museum does not hold or intent to acquire any biological or geological material.

12. Archaeological material

12.1 The museum does not hold or intend to acquire any archaeological material.

13. Spoliation

The museum will use the statement of principles 'Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World WarII period', issued for non-national museums in 1999 by the Museums and Galleries Commission.

14. Disposal

14.1 All disposals will be overseen by at least two Trustees.

14.2 The Board will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Agreements on disposal made with donors will also be taken into account.

14.3 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.

14.4 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.

14.5 The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the Board only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including public benefit, the implications for the museum's collections and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. Expert advice may be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the museum may also be sought.

14.6 A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the

Board acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the curator or manager of the collection acting alone. External advice may be sought where appropriate.

14.7 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 local museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.

14.8 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. 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.

14.9 Any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied solely and directly for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way.

14.10 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.

14.11 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

14.12 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.

14.12.1 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 14.1-5 will apply.

14.13.2 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.

14.13.3 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).

14.13.4 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

14.14 If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.

14.15 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.

14.16 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.

14.17 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.

14.18 The destruction of objects should be witnessed by two trustees. 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.

Appendix 1

Decision making criteria for assessment of new acquisitions

Using the table below, potential donations will be allocated points to reflect their relevance to the core collections. The target is 10 points to be considered for acquisition.

Museum Item selection points sheet		Points
Origin of Manufacture	Alford/Donside	5
	Aberdeenshire	3
	Scotland	1
	Elsewhere	0
Local history/ usage recorded	Alford/Donside	5
	Aberdeenshire	3
	Scotland	1
	Elsewhere	0
Condition	Excellent	3
	Good	2
Rarity	Unique	5
	Rare	3
	Uncommon	1
	Mass produced	0

Appendix 2 Documentation Plan

1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Alford Heritage Museum has been run mainly by volunteer staff for the past 30 years. Attempts to document the collection, locations of objects and object entry and exit has been sporadic and not to recognised standards. The organisation is not clear as to what it holds and what is owned by the museum and what is on loan. A business plan for a large scale project to renovate the buildings and redisplay the collections is currently being prepared. There are hundreds of items in sub-standard storage facilities and these are not documented.

This documentation plan identifies the priorities for working towards compliance with Spectrum procedures:

- Improve the Museum’s documentation procedures.
- Reduce the documentation backlog for the Museum’s collection.
- Create an accurate record of the Museum collection to allow informed rationalisation of the collection.
- Establish realistic timescales and estimates for creation of collection inventory.
- Implement the Collections Policy.

2. THE SPECTRUM MINIMUM STANDARDS

Alford Heritage Museum has not, historically, implemented any of the Spectrum primary procedures as listed in the table below. The requirement for this to happen for Accreditation is recognised, and the Plan works towards that goal.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF SPECTRUM PRIMARY PROCEDURES

SPECTRUM PRIMARY PROCEDURE	ALFORD HERITAGE MUSEUM POSITION 2021
Object entry	Objects have been accepted on an ad hoc basis by volunteers as there has been no-one on-site specifically responsible for this. Frequently there has been no written documentation to accompany objects. Historic information is patchy as to what is on loan and what is donated. Some paper records exist.
Acquisition and accessioning	No objects have been accessioned or numbered.
Location and movement control	None
Inventory	An Excel spreadsheet compiled from details on object entry forms as above (paper records) and also from old Excel spreadsheets and other electronic sources. The list represents a very small part of the total collection.
Cataloguing	None
Object exit	None
Loans in	As for Object Entry
Loans out	Few items are loaned out, but documentation has been poor.
Documentation planning	None prior to 2022

2. ACTION PLAN TO RESOLVE DOCUMENTATION ISSUES IDENTIFIED ABOVE

As the Museum has no paid staff or financial resources to implement improvements, the expectations and timescales in the action plan may appear modest. Trustees have recognised that it is essential to make a start with the minimal resources available and have committed to the purchase of appropriate database software using EHive which is Spectrum compliant. Work began in late 2021 to implement this and it is anticipated that volunteers will populate this database throughout the coming years with appropriate training and support.

As we do not know how many objects are in the collection, it is difficult at this point to estimate timescales for documentation.

The Action Plan has not detailed every aspect of the Spectrum Primary Procedures at this point and has used broad headings for each Procedure. The Plan should be reviewed at the end of 2022, or at registration for Accreditation, when a more detailed plan will be required.

SPECTRUM PROCEDURE	ACTION	BY WHEN
Object entry	Collections Policy clarifies what type of objects the museum is accepting and who is responsible for decision making.	Feb 2022
	The use of Spectrum compliant Object Entry and Transfer of Title forms will be introduced. <i>[Funding required]</i>	July 2022
	All volunteers will be trained in how to deal with offers of donations and how to complete paperwork.	July 2022
Acquisition and accessioning	Museum will register with MDA for a unique code.	Dec 2021
	All new objects entering the collection will meet the criteria in the Collections Policy.	Feb 2022
	All new objects entering the collection will be added to the new online inventory on EHive and allocated an accession number at that point.	Feb 2022
	Volunteer staff will receive training on marking / labelling of objects. Backlog of accessioning will be tackled along with inventory backlog.	Mar 2022
Location and Movement Control	All objects already accessioned on EHive will have their movement recorded on the database. Objects not accessioned or on inventory cannot have movement recorded at present.	Feb 2022
Inventory	All objects in the collection will be listed on EHive to Spectrum minimum requirements. Listing will be carried out systematically room by room. Each location has been numbered. A target of 30-40 objects per week would result in 1400-1600 objects by the end of 2022.	Say 1500 objects by Dec 2022

	The target will be to complete areas 1-12 in 2022.	
Cataloguing	Some cataloguing will take place as inventory proceeds but will not be comprehensive as this would slow down the inventory process. Some images will be added for key items. Items new to the collection will be catalogued on entry to ensure full details are captured.	No target date
Object exit	The use of Spectrum compliant Object Exit forms will be introduced. <i>[Funding required]</i>	July 2022
Loans in	The Museum now discourages loans however, the use of Spectrum compliant Object Entry forms will be introduced. <i>[Funding required]</i>	July 2022
Loans out	The use of Spectrum compliant Object Exit forms will be introduced. <i>[Funding required]</i>	July 2022
Documentation planning	Collections Management and Procedure manuals will be written for volunteers and training provided.	Sept 2022

Appendix 3

Recording of collections

In November 2021 a retrospective inventory project commenced using volunteers. Objects are being recorded systematically by location on paper, meeting basic Spectrum standards, and this data is being transcribed into EHive collections management software. At the same time, some photography of key objects will take place for upload to the database and labelling of objects will follow after documentation.

The museum has registered an MDA code of AFDHM.

Accession numbers will take the format AFDHM00001

A diagram of the location codes is shown below.

As the inventory progresses, duplicate items will be assessed for disposal in line with this policy.

