

Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Area Museums Committee

8 January 2020

Review of the Collection at Kings Lynn Museum

Report by the Collections Development Manager

Summary

This report sets out the background to the ongoing review of collections at Lynn Museum and recommends deaccessioning a group of social history (ordnance) items in accordance with the NMS Collections Management Strategy 2018-22, which incorporates the NMS Collections Development Policy (Appendix 1).

1. Background

- 1.1 Collecting and rationalisation within the NMS is undertaken in accordance with the Collections Development Policy approved by the Joint Museums Committee (Appendix 1). This policy is reviewed every five years and sets out the strengths of the collections, areas for future collecting and constraints on collecting, such as resources, space and expertise. As part of a responsible collections management strategy the NMS undertakes regular reviews of its collections to ensure that material is properly classified and adequately housed and meets legislative requirements. Objects that are deemed unsuitable for retention as part of the core collection are identified and alternative homes found where appropriate.
- 1.2 To summarise the collections review process, material is proposed for rationalisation which:
 - Does not fall within the current collecting policy.
 - Is loan material no longer required for display
 - Is of good quality but would fit better into another organisation's collections (including those of Norfolk Record Office and Norfolk Library & Information Service).
 - Does not provide important information about Norfolk and its history.
 - Has no reasonable expectation of being useful for display or research.
 - Has been unethically acquired.
 - Is unprovenanced (i.e. has no background information to provide a context).
 - Is of poor quality compared with other examples in the collection.
 - Has deteriorated beyond any useful purpose (e.g. through decay or infestation. This might be a natural history specimen that has suffered pest infestation).

- **Poses a threat to other objects or people (e.g. by contamination. This might be WW2 gas masks with degraded asbestos filters or radioactive geological specimens).**
- Is an unnecessary duplicate.
- Offers no reasonable expectation that NMS will be able to provide suitable levels of curation or collections care.

Meeting one of the above criteria does not automatically condemn any object. Each will be considered on its merits. There may well be good reasons why objects that fall into one or more of the above categories should be kept, but they will be critically examined and justified in line with the NMS Collections Development Policy and the Museums Association Code of Ethics.

1.3. Options for disposal:

There are several ways in which material that is not suitable for the NMS core collections might continue to fulfil a useful purpose including:

- Transfer to another Accredited museum by gift
- Transfer to another public institution by gift
- Return to donor or lender
- Repatriation to country of origin
- Charitable donation
- Set dressing or adapted to repair working objects
- Sale on the open market, or
- Destruction (as a last resort)

Any income generated by sales of objects is allocated to a ring-fenced fund for the purchase of new collections or the care of existing collections.

1.4 Once Committee has agreed the list of proposed disposals the following steps will be taken:

- As required by the conditions of the Museum Accreditation Scheme, and the Museums Association Code of Ethics a notice will be placed in the Museums Journal or on-line equivalent, and any other appropriate specialist publication, advertising the availability of significant material to other Accredited museums.
- Direct contact will be made with any Accredited museums or other public institutions that would have a particular interest in any of the objects.
- If no Accredited museum is interested and the material was donated within the last 20 years, attempts will be made to contact the donor to return the item.
- Non Accredited museums will be considered for potential rehoming of objects, this will be reviewed on a case by case basis by the NMS Rationalisation Committee

- Material in which no interest is expressed will be either returned to the core collections, sold at auction or destroyed; these options are reviewed on a case by case basis by the Rationalisation Committee.
- Complete records of all transactions and processes will be kept.

2 **Review of social history (ordnance) collections at Lynn Museum**

The collections at Lynn Museum are regularly reviewed as part of the NMS collections management programme, this includes ensuring that all legislative requirements are met in regard to hazardous materials. As part of a county programme of ordnance audit, Sgt Heydon of Merville Barracks Colchester visited Lynn Museum Stores to assess the relevant collections to issue a Certified Free From Explosives Certificate (CCFE). At the time of the visit, some items were found to contain explosives and as such, it was not possible to be issued with a CCFE certificate for these items. Due to the nature of this audit, and small scale of these objects they were removed immediately by Sgt Heydon and taken to Army Melville Barracks Colchester for immediate safe disposal.

MOD Explosive Regulations, DSA03.OME Part 2 (JSP 482) Chapter 27 Annex C states that the CCFE regime is applicable to munitions held in museums. There are a number of museums within the Inspector of Explosives (Army) (IE(A)) area of responsibility, therefore to ensure that all artefacts are safe for exhibition they must be subject to the CCFE procedure.

2.1 A review of these collections has been undertaken in order to:

- Remove threats posed by hazardous material
- Remove threats posed by inappropriate storage conditions
- Ensure that NMS are fully compliant with appropriate legislation

2.2 Following the agreed process, the attached list of objects (Appendix 2) has been identified for retrospective deaccessioning and subsequent destruction.

The objects listed in Appendix 2 have been identified by the Collections Manager as candidates for retrospective deaccessioning and agreed disposal. The list has been scrutinised by the NMS' internal Rationalisation Committee, which comprised the Collections Development Manager, the Senior Conservation Officer, Registrar, Collections Development Officer.

3 **Resource Implications**

3.1 **Finance:** a budget of £1000 may be required to pay for removal firm's charges and possible destruction or rubbish disposal. NMS staff based

in Norwich or other sites may be required to visit King's Lynn for advice and their transport costs paid for.

4 Equality Impact Assessment

- 4.1 NMS puts diversity, equality and community cohesion at the heart of service development and service delivery. It aims to ensure that activities included in the service plan are accessible to diverse groups in Norfolk and that all policies, practices and procedures undergo equality impact assessment. These impact assessments help the service focus on meeting the needs of customers in relation to age, disability, gender, race, religion & belief and sexual orientation.

This report has no equality implications.

5 Section 17 – Crime and Disorder Act

There are no Section 17 implications.

6 Risk Implications/Assessment

There is a risk that signification collections will be inadvertently be deaccessioned, or that material acquired with external funds will be disposed of without permission. These risks have been managed in the following ways:

- The collections review has been undertaken following good practice guidelines set out by the Museums Association and Arts Council England. This ensures that any legal considerations and the public interest, such as past donors or funders, have been considered.
- The Curator and Collections Manager has used their knowledge to identify objects appropriate to this review, using the NMS Collections Development Policy for reference. The list has been scrutinised by the NMS's Internal Rationalisation Committee, which comprises the Collections Development Manager, the Senior Conservation Officer, Registrar, Collections Development Officer. The status quo involves risk as retaining material of hazardous material, poor quality and in poor storage conditions increases risk to other valuable collections and to the staff and public.

7 Conclusion

This collections review is proposing to remove items that are not compliant with said legislation and meeting our responsibility for ensuring the safety of all staff, visitors and collections.

8 Recommendation

Members are asked to agree that the objects listed in Appendix 2 are deaccessioned.

Officer Contact

Samantha Johns
Collections Development Manager
Norfolk Museums Service
Shirehall
Norwich

e-mail: samantha.johns@norfolk.gov.uk