

BOLTON STEAM MUSEUM

Collections Development Policy



Reviewed and updated May 2019
To be reviewed 2024

Background to the policy

This policy sets out the principles that will provide the governing body and the workforce of the museum with a framework for responsible and ethical acquisition and disposal of collections. It provides clear procedures and decision-making processes common to Accredited museums.

Implementing the policy will enable the museum to demonstrate the public benefit in their approach to collections development. It provides a basis for open and transparent decision-making and an informed dialogue between governing bodies, donors, funding bodies and other stakeholders.

This policy applies to material which the museum owns and has accessioned into the collection or intends to own and accession into the collection.

The acquisition, management and disposal of collections will be guided by:

- a museum's constitution and statement of purpose
- the legal basis on which the collections are held
- the public benefit derived from the effective use and management of the collections
- an assessment of the needs of the museum's collections
- the collections held by other museums and organisations collecting in the same or related geographic areas or subject fields

Collections Development Policy

Name of museum: BOLTON STEAM MUSEUM

Name of governing body : THE NORTHERN MILL ENGINE SOCIETY Ltd

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: July 2019

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: 2024

Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the collections development policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.

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

1.1. The museum's statement of purpose is:

To collect and conserve examples of the stationary steam engine, particularly as used in the textile and engineering industries of the north and north-west England, and to interpret the history, technical development and application of this important prime mover. To share collections and knowledge with visitors, steam enthusiasts nationwide and with our local community

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 its responsibility, when acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Standard. This includes using SPECTRUM 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. The museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons

2. History of the collections

The collection was initially brought together by private individuals who were concerned that the history and heritage of the stationary steam engines that once powered the textile mills of Lancashire and Yorkshire was disappearing as the industry declined. A Society was established in 1966 and this was subsequently formally re-constituted as a company and charity in 1973, to whom all the assets were transferred. A museum was established in Bolton to display the collection of engines and other material as they were removed from mills when they were demolished or closed. This museum was itself demolished in 1991 as part of a wider site redevelopment but re-established in new premises in 1993

3. An overview of current collections

The main collection consists of 27 steam and two internal-combustion engines manufactured between approximately 1840 and 1960. The collection demonstrates the development of the steam engine during the relevant period and includes examples of beam, horizontal, vertical, inverted vertical and diagonal engine types. All engines can be demonstrated working in steam from a boiler.

A “non-dead-centre” inverted vertical engine built by John Musgrave and Sons of Bolton is believed to be a unique example of this type of engine anywhere in the world. A twin rotative beam engine is similarly considered to be rare, possibly unique, and a “McNaughted” compound beam engine is the only working example in England.

The collection also includes approximately 2000 photographs, prints, negatives and slides; approximately 1000 engineering drawings; approximately 1800 books, catalogues, reports and other printed ephemera and 400 other items of plant and equipment (eg makers plates, instrumentation, models, tools and accessories).

Virtually all items have been either used or manufactured in the textile districts in the north of England, particularly Lancashire and Yorkshire.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

The museum may acquire items of mechanical and electrical plant especially that associated with the British textile and engineering industries over the approximate period of 1790 to 1960. The collection will specialise in the stationary steam engine, in all its forms, which provided the power for the mills and factories throughout the north of England.

The museum may also acquire other material and equipment associated with items in the main collection including, but not limited to : books, documents, photographs, drawings, catalogues, models, tools and instrumentation.

The museum will not collect textile machinery.

5. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

There are no current plans for rationalisation or disposal of any accessioned items in the collection within the period covered by this policy

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 organisation(s):

- Bolton Museums and Archives
- Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester
- The Anson Engine Museum, Poynton

8. Archival holdings

The museum may collect archival material that is directly connected to the use or manufacture of steam engines or engineering technology in the 19th and 20th centuries.

There are no current plans to actively expand the archive but consideration will be given to ad hoc donations if and when they are offered.

Material will only be accepted if suitable environmental storage conditions are available

Where necessary, the governing body will be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the UK (3rd edition 2002)

9. Acquisition

9.1. The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in very exceptional circumstances, and then only after proper consideration by the governing body of the museum itself, having regard to the interests of other museums.

All potential acquisitions will be referred to the museum's governing body for approval.

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

9.3. In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1 2002, and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003, the museum will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The governing body will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.

10. Human remains

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

11. Biological and geological material

11.1. The museum will not acquire any biological or geological material.

12. Archaeological material

12.1. The museum will not acquire any archaeological material.

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.

15. The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains

The museum does not hold any material relevant to this section

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.

16.3 When disposal of a museum object is being considered, the museum will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.

16.4 When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale, exchange or as a last resort - destruction.

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

16.6 A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the governing body of the museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the curator or manager of the collection acting alone.

16.7 Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.

16.8 If the material is not acquired by any Accredited museum to which it was offered as a gift or for sale, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material normally through a notice on the 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 collections.

This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from the 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 museum will not dispose of items by exchange.

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.