

## **Collections Development Policy**

**Name of Museum:** JORVIK Viking Centre, DIG, Barley Hall and Henry VII Experience at Micklegate Bar

**Name of governing body:** York Archaeological Trust

**Date on which this policy was approved by governing body:** 2nd August 2013

**Date at which this policy is due for review:** 1st August 2018

### **1. York Archaeological Trust's statement of purpose**

York Archaeological Trust is a registered charity with the following Statement of Purpose:

*The Trust's objects are to advance the education of the public in archaeology, history and related disciplines associated with the City of York and elsewhere and to promote the preservation and display of collections of archaeological material and carry out research and disseminate the results.*

#### **Mission Statement:**

*York Archaeological Trust, recognising the exceptional importance of York's historic environment, will provide and promote archaeology of the highest possible standards in York, its region and beyond.*

*By excellence in archaeological discovery, research, conservation, curation, academic dissemination and through training, education and widely accessible public presentation, the Trust, an educational charity, will maximise the public benefits of archaeology.*

### **2. An overview of current collections**

#### ***The York Collection***

The City of York is designated an Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI) under Act of Parliament. The Trust collects archaeological finds which would otherwise be

destroyed by development in the City and its hinterland. It works within the City of York Development Framework and to briefs issued by the City Archaeologist.

The collection is made up of finds assemblages recovered through controlled excavation by York Archaeological Trust in response to a threat to the buried environment from development. The collection reflects both York's importance in an historic context but also the rare and excellent preservation found in the City, especially of organic materials which often do not survive well in the buried environment.

The collection represents human endeavour over two thousand years from the prehistoric to the early modern periods of York's history. It provides evidence for manufacturing and technology, international trade and commerce, diet, health, disease, death, burial and belief, and environmental and climate change. The collection is of local, national and international interest and of special note is the Early Medieval material, human osteological, zoo-archaeological and environmental assemblages. The York collection attracts scholarly interest and visitors from all over the world.

As an excavated archaeological collection which has been developed over a period from 1972, it reflects developing standards in the care of retrieval, detail of recording and research and scientific analysis over the last four decades, and is important in this respect. The collection is one of the largest collections outside London. In curatorial terms it has:

- Artefacts (small finds) of metal (iron, copper alloy, lead alloy, silver and gold), vertebrate hard tissue (including animal bone, antler, ivory and horn), textile, wood, leather and other organic materials
- Pottery
- Zooarchaeological material of animal and fish bone
- Human osteological material
- Building materials (ceramic building materials, architectural stone and structural timbers)
- Archaeobotanical material (plants, seeds) from environmental residues
- An associated archaeological record archive.

This collection forms part of the York Collection cared for jointly by York Archaeological Trust and York Museums Trust. Each item in the collection excavated and held by York Archaeological Trust is conserved, researched, published and cared for as part of its charitable objects.

### ***JORVIK Viking Centre***

A small number of finds from the York collection described above is the subject of an agreement between the City of York and York Archaeological Trust. These are Anglo-Scandinavian objects from the Coppergate area of the city excavated, conserved, researched and published by York Archaeological Trust safeguarded for permanent display in Jorvik.

***The Barley Hall Collection*** consists of archaeological material excavated at Barley Hall, York. This includes artefacts, animal bone, pottery and building materials reflecting the chequered history of the site from high-status medieval town house to 19th-century tenements and 20th-century plumber's yard.

### **3. Themes and priorities for future collecting**

The Trust will continue to collect for the future by rescuing York's threatened buried past. It will do this through structured excavation as part of the planning process and within a framework of priorities set out in the City's and HM Government's policies and guidance within a legal, professional and ethical framework.

In addition the Trust will target particular areas, research periods or display topics which it wishes to enhance, e.g. the 17th century, the story of Micklegate Bar, the story of Barley Hall and the story of Victorian York.

The Trust will also continue to seek to undertake research excavations to examine areas of York's past which may be poorly understood or under-represented areas of York's history; caring for and researching the finds recovered. Previously this policy unveiled a significant part of the Anglo-Scandinavian kingdom through excavations at Coppergate, and more recently it has revised the understanding of the founding of the Roman fortress through excavation at St Leonard's Hospital, and of industrial York at Hungate.

From time to time the Trust may add "friendless" non-York archaeological archives to the collection if they are thought to be of significant archaeological importance.

All collecting will be subject to assessment, with due consideration to the Trust's charitable status, its ability to care for and manage the resource, and the collecting areas of other institutions.

### **4. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal**

The Trust will seek to ensure that the management of the collection reflects the Trust's charitable objectives, its ability to care for the collection well, the collection's

significance for the history of the City of York, its archaeological relevance, its research potential and the opportunities it presents for public benefit.

The Trust will do this by a programme of informed selection, retention and disposal as part of the post-excavation and post-research and publication processes, with due reference to specialist advice and good practice, including that outlined in The Museums Association Code of Ethics and the Museums Association Disposal Toolkit. In practical terms this will concentrate on areas of material culture which can be thinned without damaging the veracity of the archaeological record. Prime amongst these categories are building materials, animal bone, undecorated wall plaster and pottery which can be reduced, once assessed, researched and published, as long as they meet all criteria for disposal. Artefacts which have disintegrated post-excavation may also be discarded as long as the object has no uses for scientific analysis. Unstratified material or that which has lost its provenance and does not have an intrinsic archaeological value in itself will be used for handling and education purposes.

All material which is identified for discard or reallocation will be fully recorded on the collections database as described in the procedural manuals with detailed description, reasons for removal, the decision process and the named individual making the decision. Where appropriate a photographic image will be retained.

The Trust's approach to rationalisation is set out in its Selection, Retention and Disposal Policy (Collections Management Framework, Section 16. 2012)

## **5. Limitations on collecting**

The Trust recognises its responsibility, in acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Accreditation Standard. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection.

All collecting will be subject to assessment, with due consideration to the Trust's charitable status, its ability to care for and manage the resource, and the collecting areas of other institutions.

The Trust will not take on collections amassed by staff or associates simply on the basis of an individual's personal interest. Any material offered in this manner will be subject to rigorous review against the criteria of significance outlined above.

## **6. Collecting policies of other Trusts**

The Trust 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. Specific reference is made to the following Museums:

*Yorkshire Museum*

*York Minster*

### ***Future Survival of the Archaeological Record***

York Archaeological Trust will continue to work closely with the City of York, York Museums Trust, English Heritage and other bodies to seek and put in place an integrated solution to the long-term management of the collections and archives resultant from York archaeology. This should aim to give maximum benefit for the public and complete security for the holdings. The Trust recognises that such a solution may take some time and it will also seek to ensure its ability to respond correctly to the needs of the collection and the public benefit derived from it by developing a new store to provide for the needs of the collections and the associated curatorial, conservation and public functions.

## **7. Policy review procedure**

The collections development policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years. The date when the policy is next due for review is noted above.

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 existing collections.

## **8. Acquisitions not covered by the policy**

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 Trust itself, having regard to the interests of other Museums.

## **9. Acquisition procedures**

- a) The Trust will exercise 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 Trust can acquire a valid title to the item in question.

- b) In particular, the Trust 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).
- c) 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 Trust 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.
- d) So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the Trust 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.
- e) 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 as defined by the Treasure Act 1996.

Any exceptions to the above clauses 9a, 9b, 9c, or 9e will only be because the Trust is:

- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin
- acquiring an item of minor importance that lacks secure ownership history but in the best judgement of experts in the field concerned has not been illicitly traded
- acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin
- in possession of reliable documentary evidence that the item was exported from its country of origin before 1970

In these cases the Trust will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

- f) The Trust does not intend to acquire human remains under 100 years old.
- g) As the Trust holds and intends to acquire human remains from any period, it will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in Trusts' issued by DCMS in 2005.

## **10. Spoilation**

The Trust will use the statement of principles 'Spoilation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period', issued for non-national Trusts in 1999 by the Trusts and Galleries Commission.

## **11. The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains**

The Trust's governing body, acting on the advice of the Trust's professional staff, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in Trusts' issued by DCMS in 2005) , objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The Trust 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 13a-13d, 13g and 13o/s below will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.

The disposal of human remains from Trusts in England, Northern Ireland and Wales will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in Trusts'.

## **12. Management of archives**

As the Trust holds/ intends to acquire archives, including photographs and printed ephemera, its governing body will be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Trusts and Galleries in the United Kingdom (third edition, 2002).

## **13. Disposal procedures**

### *Disposal preliminaries*

- a) The governing body will ensure that the disposal process is carried out openly and with transparency.
- b) By definition, the Trust has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for society in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons for disposal must be established before consideration is given to the disposal of any items in the Trust's collection.
- c) The Trust will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item and agreements on disposal made with donors will be taken into account.
- d) When disposal of a Trust object is being considered, the Trust 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.

### ***Motivation for disposal and method of disposal***

- e) When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined in paragraphs 13g-13s will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale or exchange.
- f) The Trust will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.

### ***The disposal decision-making process***

- g) Whether the disposal is motivated either by curatorial or financial reasons, 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 the public benefit, the implications for the Trust's collections and collections held by Museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. External expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the Trust will also be sought.

### ***Responsibility for disposal decision-making***

- h) 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 Trust acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the curator of the collection acting alone.

### ***Use of proceeds of sale***

- i) Any monies received by the Trust governing body from the disposal of items will be applied 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.
- j) The proceeds of a sale will be ring-fenced so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard.

### ***Disposal by gift or sale***

- k) Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain, unless it is to

be destroyed. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Trusts likely to be interested in its acquisition.

- l) If the material is not acquired by any Accredited Museum to which it was offered directly 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 an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal, and in other specialist journals where appropriate.
- m) 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 Trust may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.

### ***Disposal by exchange***

*Please include the following statement if appropriate:*

- n) The Trust will not dispose of items by exchange.

### ***Documenting disposal***

o/s. 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.