



Collection Development Policy 2025 - 2030

Approved by the Board of Trustees 19 November 2025

Review date 18 November 2030

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

Museums Galleries Scotland will be notified of any changes to the collections development policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.

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Groam House Museum is an accredited independent museum incorporated as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) No SC231145
Registered office as above

Chairman of the Board: Richard Hotchkis
Mentor Curator: Helen Avenell

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

1.1 The museum's statement of purpose is:

Groam House Museum cares for collections of local history, Pictish stones and the George Bain Collection of Celtic art. We aim to work with people of all backgrounds and ages in our communities of place and interest to realise the potential of our collections and heritage and to act as a resource for both the present and future development of individuals and our communities.

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 or bequest, 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

Groam House Museum is situated in the Black Isle village of Rosemarkie, occupying an 18th-century building gifted to the community by Mario Pagliari in 1974. The Museum has been in existence since 1980 and was the first independent museum to be formally recognised by Ross & mCromarty District Council when the Council prepared a Trust Deed in its favour in 1989. On 3rd May 2002, GHM was incorporated as a private company Limited by Guarantee and has maintained its charitable status. The museum gained Registered status in the 1990s and was confirmed as an Accredited Museum in 2008. Groam House Museum operates as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO SC004435), governed by an independent Board of Trustees. The George Bain Collection, recognised by Museums Galleries Scotland as a Recognised Collection of National Significance, forms a central part of the Museum's remit and identity. The Collection represents the life and work of artist and educator George

Bain (1881–1968), known by some as the “father of modern Celtic design,” and is actively used to promote education and creativity in line with the Museum’s charitable objectives.

In 2024 the Groam House Museum collections were moved from a remote storage area in Rosehaugh Estate near Avoch to a building within the High Street, Rosemarkie. The collections both on display and in storage are now at the heart of the community and available for use by researchers and the community alike.

3 An overview of current collections

The collection consists of items falling into three major categories:

- Pictish stones – Significant collection of carved stones from the Pictish period from the Black Isle, supplemented by items which add to our understanding of this period and area, such as a photographic archive of Pictish stones across Scotland and Treasure Trove allocated Pictish finds from the local area.
- Local History and Archaeology – Artefacts and documents, including maps and photographs, relating to the prehistory of the Black Isle and to its military, ecclesiastical, social and economic history, with a primary focus on the parishes of Rosemarkie and Avoch, and the part of Knockbain parish that includes Munlochy. This area definition is used normally, recognising that on rare occasions the museum may collect items from elsewhere on the Black Isle when no other local museum or heritage centre is able to take responsibility. The museum does not normally collect material from the north side or eastern end of the Black Isle. Finds from field-walking projects and those allocated to the museum through the Treasure Trove system have formed the nucleus of the local archaeology collection.
- George Bain Collection – Original artwork by George Bain and works directly influenced by him, as well as his archive which includes correspondence, notes and publications. This is supported by a wider group of Celtic Revival artworks that represent the broader use of Celtic design in the 19th century to the present day, including work by silversmiths on Iona and others elsewhere. This is a Recognised Collection.

4 Themes and priorities for future collecting

The Museum will actively collect material significant to our understanding of local history from the prehistoric period onwards within our defined collecting area. All of the archaeological material now enters the collection through the Treasure Trove allocation system.

The Museum recognises that its local history holdings reflect the varied and sometimes opportunistic nature of past collecting. We also acknowledge that there may be areas of local history—such as aspects of working life, community traditions, and more recent social history—that could be strengthened over time as opportunities arise. The Museum will therefore remain alert to significant material that can enhance the breadth and representativeness of the collection.

Where appropriate, collecting activity will be carried out with awareness of, and where possible coordination with, other heritage organisations on the Black Isle to avoid unnecessary duplication and to ensure that items are preserved in the most suitable local context.

The museum holds the George Bain Collection for the Scottish Nation. To develop this significant collection the Museum will actively collect material by and relating to George Bain and his family, as well as appropriate associated items, working alongside the Advisory Board for the George Bain Collection, based on the Board approved April 2020 report written by the Dr Jo Clements on behalf of Groam House Museum (GB Collection Development Summary Oct2019 approved Apr2020; and GB Collection Development Oct2019 approved Apr2020 - these reports are in Groam shared>Collections>1 GeorgeBainCollection>[GB Collection Development Review 2019](#)).

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.

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.

During the museum's 2024 Bringing Our Collections Home project a small number of items were rationalised, including art works created during outreach projects and items more relevant to the collections of Dingwall and Ullapool Museums.

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 museum(s)/organisation(s):

- Dingwall Museum, which collects items that cover the area to the west of the Black Isle.
- Cromarty Courthouse Museum, which collects within the parishes of Cromarty and Resolis to the east of the Black Isle.
- Inverness Museum, which holds a collection of Pictish Stones and archaeology from across the Highland area.
- National Museums of Scotland.

8 Archival holdings

8.1 Within the local history collection the museum holds documents relating to people, shops and businesses, local organisations and events, which may be considered as archival. The local history collection also includes local maps and plans as well as a photographic archive relating to the museum's collecting area.

The Highland Archive Centre is the regional archive centre. Groam House is committed to completing a catalogue of the documents in the local history collection along with scans and transcriptions where necessary for the HAC, to enable use and sharing more widely. They are also being shared gradually on-line via the museum's eHive catalogue.

8.2 The George Bain Collection includes correspondence, notes and other documents which may be considered archival. These are in the process of being scanned and linked to the eHive catalogue which is gradually being shared publicly on-line.

9 Acquisition

9.1 The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

Triplicate Object Entry Forms are available at the front desk of the Museum, and within the Activity Room of Arndene. Front Desk volunteers and Collections Team volunteers ensure these are filled in as fully as possible. They must tell the potential donor / vendor that any final decision is made by the Board.

Items are then assessed by at least two Collections volunteers as to whether they fall within the museum's collections policy. A written recommendation is made to the Board for discussion and decision within 4 months of the item(s) being offered.

If an item has particular concerns such as size, purchase cost, conservation costs or uncertainty over relevance to the local area or George Bain, then the object must be raised at the next board meeting. These are held at least every quarter. All decisions will normally be made within 4 months of the Object Entry Form being signed.

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. Museums in Scotland should omit the wording 'and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003'.

10 Human remains

10.1 As the museum holds and intends to continue to accept human remains from any period via the Treasure Trove process, it will follow the guidelines in the 'Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Scottish Museums' issued by Museums Galleries Scotland in 2011.

See Groam House Museum's Human Remains Policy, updated 2025.

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 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.

12.2 In Scotland, under the laws of bona vacantia including Treasure Trove, the Crown has title to all ownerless objects including antiquities, although such material as human remains and environmental samples are not covered by the law of bona vacantia. Scottish material of chance finds and excavation assemblages are offered to museums through the treasure trove process and cannot therefore be legally acquired by means other than by allocation to Groam House Museum by the Crown. However where the Crown has chosen to forego its title to a portable antiquity or excavation assemblage, a Curator or other responsible person acting on behalf of the Groam House Museum Board of Trustees, can establish that valid title to the item in question has been acquired by ensuring that a certificate of 'No Claim' has been issued on behalf of the Crown.

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

15.1 The museum's governing body, acting on the advice of the museum's professional staff, if any, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by MGS in 2011), 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 The disposal of human remains from museums in Scotland will follow the guidelines in the 'Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Scottish Museums' issued by Museums Galleries Scotland in 2011.

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 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, 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 Museums Galleries Scotland.
- 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, e.g. the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.

Approved by the Board of Trustees: November 2025

Signed 

Richard Hotchkis, Chairman of the Board of Trustees

Date 25.11.25