

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL MUSEUMS SERVICE LOSS POLICY

Purpose

1. Loss is defined as the management and documentation of items accessioned by Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service, or on loan to it, suffering loss or damage while in the responsibility and care of the Museums Service.
2. The term "loss" is used throughout this Policy with this meaning and no other.
3. Loss refers solely to Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service's accessioned items and items on loan to it, which have suffered loss or damage while in the responsibility and care of the Museums Service and is not intended to mirror Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service's ***Exit Policy***.
4. The purpose of the Policy is to enable Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service to respond to the discovery of damage or loss, documenting all decisions and actions.

Scope

5. This Policy applies to:
 - All sites and branches of Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service.
 - Accessioned items or significant parts of accessioned items which currently form part of the permanent collections.
 - Items on loan to Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service.
 - Items being moved by a contractor from one site or branch to another, or from one branch to a non-Aberdeenshire Council Museums Service destination.
6. Loss or damage can be caused by environmental factors, accidental damage, wilful damage, theft or temporary loss.

7. The period of time which should elapse before an object is considered to be formally lost or stolen, rather than mislaid, will depend on circumstances. An object on display is unlikely to be mislaid and will normally be reported as stolen immediately. An object missing from one of the stores is more likely to have been mislaid; in this case, initial enquiries will be made within the museum service before formal notification is made of loss.

Liability, Insurance and Indemnity

8. In all circumstances, the liability for loss or damage falls upon Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service. This is particularly so in the case of material on loan to the Museums Service from any external individual or organisation.
9. Objects and other material may have rights associated with them (e.g. copyright).

Authorisation

10. Only authorised staff may verify the Loss of an item from Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service and/or the permanent collections or on loan to the Museums Service.
11. Authorised staff must ensure that all necessary steps have been taken to inform the relevant external bodies regarding the Loss, including ensuring that all documentation has been prepared.
12. In the case of Damage to items on loan to the Museums Service, authorised staff must ensure that the lender is informed of the circumstances and that any remedial conservation work to be carried out by Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service has been agreed with the lender.
13. Authorised staff are:
 - Museums Development Co-ordinator
 - Museum Curator
 - Museum Conservator

Response to Damage

14. Where appropriate, the steps outlined in the Emergency Plan for immediate action, evacuation of collections and first aid to damaged objects will be followed.
15. For objects on loan to Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service, inform the owner immediately.
16. The movement of damaged objects will be under the supervision of a Conservator, where practicable.
17. As per Spectrum 5.1, record for each object or group of objects which have suffered damage the following:

- Date(s) of the discovery and reporting of the damage
- Names and details of those involved in the discovery and reporting of the damage
- Details of the circumstances of the damage
- Details of the objects including images of damage
- Details of the damage and references to any condition report

Response to Loss

18. Loss occurs when, as a result of audit or otherwise, an object(s) cannot be located or identified (but see section 7 above).
19. On the discovery of a loss by theft or other incident, all necessary authorities will be informed. This normally includes the following:
 - Person responsible for the object(s)
 - Site museum staff
 - Police (where appropriate)
 - External agencies or specialists
20. Although the initial report may be verbal, a written report will be made as soon as is possible. Copies of all correspondence and records of all telephone calls associated with the theft will be retained. References to these will be recorded.
21. The exact number and nature of the missing object(s) will be confirmed and all relevant documentation relating to the object(s) will be retrieved.
22. For objects on loan to Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service, inform the owner immediately.
23. In the case of theft, the police will be provided with photographs and other descriptive material required to identify the object.
24. As per Spectrum 5.1, the following will be recorded:
 - Date(s) of the discovery and reporting of the loss
 - Names and details of those involved in the discovery and reporting of the loss
 - Details of the circumstances of the loss
 - Details of the objects

Follow-up Action

25. Inform the relevant insurance company, insurance advisor or indemnity provider of the loss as appropriate.
26. For thefts, inform appropriate authorities including:
 - Museums Galleries Scotland
 - Appropriate stolen property publications (e.g. *Trace*)

27. Internal review of the situation surrounding the loss with a view to lessons learnt.

Recovery of Thefts

28. Thefts may be recovered after months, or even years. All documentation relating to the object and its loss will be retained, even if it is never found.
29. If an object is recovered, record the new location and update the details on the loss.

How long, and in what form, Loss Information is held

30. Loss information will be retained in perpetuity by Aberdeenshire Council's Museums Service, in electronic or manual form.

Exceptions

31. There are no exceptions to this Policy, other than those explicitly defined in the Scope section.

Review

32. This Policy is subject to review every five years. The next date for review is 31 March 2030. The Policy may be reviewed at an earlier date if necessary.

Amy Miller
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