

National Records of Scotland (NRS) Collection Care and Preservation Policy

1. NRS Purpose

The National Records of Scotland's mission statement is to 'Collect, preserve, and produce information about Scotland's people and history, and make it available to inform present and future generations'.

2. Introduction

The National Records of Scotland (NRS) is a non-ministerial department of the Scottish Government and was established on 1 April 2011, following the merger of General Register Office for Scotland (GROS) and the National Archives of Scotland (NAS). It sits within the Scottish Government's Culture and External Affairs portfolio. The Chief Executive fulfils the roles of two non-ministerial office holders, the Registrar General for Scotland and the Keeper of the Records of Scotland.

NRS has a wide and diverse community of stakeholders and plays a central role in the cultural, social and economic life of Scotland, supporting several of the Scottish Government's key National Outcomes and measuring its Population Purpose Target.

The archival functions of the Keeper include maintaining the archives as one of Scotland's five National Collections charged with researching, collecting, preserving and exhibiting historical material of the Scottish nation. NRS has a leadership role for Scottish archive and record professionals.

NRS holdings are stored across six sites in Edinburgh and Dumfries. Conservation Services Branch, Records and Archives Services and Public Services teams work in close collaboration on the care, preservation and management of the record collections.

This policy provides the framework for the work of caring for and preserving the record collections in storage, in transit, when undergoing conservation treatment, during digital imaging or surrogacy programmes, on display including exhibition loan, and the environmental conditions within the historic buildings holding these collections.

Conservation and preservation are concerned with the careful management of change to cultural material. The professional conservators look after, conserve and preserve the national archival collections held by NRS, including collections deposited under Charge and Superintendence agreements with other Scottish archives. Over 70 kilometres stored over six sites, and elsewhere under Charge and Superintendence agreements, range in age from the 12th century up to the present day.

Core responsibilities extend to all aspects of the conservation and preservation of the national collections and include support to and preparation for external exhibitions and loans; monitoring of the environment of NRS stores; guidance and instruction on handling, ordering and specifying specialist packaging materials for NRS staff across the 6 sites; and provision of unbiased professional conservation and preservation advice and information to the public, the archive profession in Scotland, public record creators, and

owners of privately held records surveyed by the National Register of Archives for Scotland.

3. Scope

This policy will apply to all traditional format records in the care of NRS regardless of the terms of deposit status and includes those records held elsewhere under Charge and Superintendence agreements.

Digital and electronic preservation is not part of this policy and is dealt with separately

4. Description

This policy outlines the high-level principles and guidelines that the NRS follows to achieve its aim of caring for and protecting the collections under its stewardship and preserving the historic, cultural, aesthetic and other significant characteristics of the records. It was developed with reference to, and is consistent with, the NRS risk management framework. It covers all activities across all areas of NRS that involve the record collections.

5. Purpose

This policy sets out how NRS seeks to preserve the national collections and aims to support the institution in achieving these core objectives :

- To develop the collections whilst improving care and conservation
- To ensure collection storage to the highest standards
- To develop staff as an essential resource through encouraging staff diversity, training, development and learning programmes to ensure that they understand their roles in caring for the collections.

6. Principles and guidelines

This policy sets out high-level principles and guidelines for the care and preservation of the NRS collections.

The functions of the archive are: to select, preserve and make available the national collection of historical records; to exhibit, or enable exhibition by others, of historical material from the collections or historical material that is otherwise in the possession of the National Records of Scotland; and to assist research into matters pertaining to Scottish history. NRS endeavours to make the most advantageous use of the national collection in the national interest.

Collection care, preservation and conservation programmes support and contribute to the functions of the archive and facilitate access to collections for exhibitions and education, for enhancing the public understanding of our history, and for research.

7. General principles

Whether through direct work with the collections and/or their environments, or by ongoing vigilance, the care of the record collections is the responsibility of most staff and contractors employed by NRS. Roles will vary across the NRS Divisions and the broad scope of these roles is defined in this policy.

The collections should be appropriately protected wherever they are and whatever the use to which they are put.

Risk management is integrated into conservation and preservation decision-making to ensure that:

- risks to the collections are accurately identified
- conservation and preservation actions are targeted appropriately
- the controls put in place are effective in the medium to long term
- conservation and preservation actions provide benefits in proportion to the costs involved
- there is an ongoing review to ensure risks are identified and assessed, and that mitigation strategies continue to be effective
- work health and safety is effectively managed in all activity associated with caring for collections.

Collection care and, more specifically, conservation decision-making must not only involve the consideration of the record and the materials it is made from, but also take account of the Collection Care and Preservation Policy as approved by the Deputy Keeper of the Records of Scotland, including:

- significance (e.g. the tangible and intangible heritage values attached to the record, such as scientific, cultural and historical value)
- the functionality of the record
- the uses to which the record might be put
- the record's potential life cycle.

Collection care and conservation work must be transparent and staff are accountable for:

- recording decisions about conservation and preservation actions, to ensure that this information is available for use in the future
- taking a minimally interventive approach wherever possible and/or appropriate
- responsible use of resources – both financial and staff.

NRS will provide appropriate equipment and training for staff and volunteers to work safely with the collections. Staff, volunteers and NRS will comply with their responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act, 1974.

Sustainability principles will be considered and applied as appropriate in the storage, display and transport of collection items.

Conservation work is based on sound ethical principles and, when appropriate, is in keeping with international best practice. In order to achieve this:

- staff are responsible for maintaining the currency of their conservation knowledge and skills base
- NRS will support professional development within the parameters of the annual budget cycle and based on the identified needs of the Conservation Services Branch staff, including paraprofessionals.

8. Categorisation of collections and objects

The collections contain a wide range of organic materials such as paper, animal skins, wax etc., which undergo a continual and inevitable natural ageing process. Handling directly affects the life expectancy of such material and hastens this ageing process. Many records in the collections are vulnerable, rare or fragile e.g. parchments, seals and photographic collections. In the interests of preservation, where these can be copied onto more resilient and accessible media, a surrogate copy of the record will become the principal access medium. In some cases at point of production, or when copies are requested, records may be considered to be unfit or at risk and will be subject to restriction and possible temporary withdrawal from public access. This is set out in the Fragile Records Policy published on the NRS website: www.nrscotland.gov.uk.

In practice, the records requested within the public search room take priority. The NRS operates under a principle of 'conservation for access'; all requests are logged but priority is given to records frequently requested by the public and those records which support the digital programmes enhancing public access.

Conservation and preservation activities should, as far as is practicable, accommodate cultural sensitivities and practices.

9. Preventive conservation

NRS recognises that preventive conservation is the most effective means of preserving the large number and diverse range of materials and object types in the collection. It takes a 'whole collection' approach to ensuring collections are protected in the present and for the future.

The aim of preventive conservation is to minimise deterioration and damage to collections by managing risks to the collection.

Preventive conservation potentially draws on knowledge from materials science, building science, chemistry, physics, biology, engineering, systems science and management and requires involvement of almost all staff at some level. Its success depends on collaboration between staff and disciplines in all Divisions.

Preventive conservation occurs at all stages of the record's life and encompasses:

- provision of stable environments in storage, while on display, in transit and while in use
- protection from physical damage through appropriate support, housing and handling
- integrated pest management
- readiness to respond appropriately to events that put collections at risk, by identification and management of risk, including disaster response planning
- ensuring that all staff and collection users are trained to appropriate levels for their interaction with and/or management of the collections or individual items.

10. Risk management

Management of risk is vital in ensuring that collections are given the appropriate levels of care at all times.

The assessment and management of risk is a key part of planning and prioritising conservation and preservation activities undertaken by professionally trained and accredited staff.

Alignment with the NRS risk management policy and procedures is critical; collection protection risk is a part of the NRS overall risk profile.

Collection-based risk management definitions are provided and will be reviewed in association with reviews of the NRS Risk Management Policy.

11. Storing collections

All collections benefit from storage in environmental conditions that:

- limit the onset or speed of chemical reactions that cause deterioration or damage
- limit physical damage from fluctuations that cause physical changes in materials
- limit exposure of sensitive materials to chemical and particulate materials that will react with them chemically or physically.

The most appropriate environmental conditions will vary depending on the composition of the individual collection or object.

The maintenance and management of storage environments are shared responsibilities and include: advice on appropriate storage conditions; maintenance of plant and equipment to meet requirements; integrated pest management; appropriate housekeeping regimes; selection and provision of appropriate storage support systems; training in handling and collection movement for staff working in storage areas; provision of appropriate security for storage environments; disaster and business continuity planning.

Storage of collections will be in keeping with professional storage principles and guidance as set out in this policy.

12. Displaying and exhibiting collections

When objects are on display, they are vulnerable to the same risks as when stored and may be exposed to additional risks due to: removal from their normal storage environments; necessary exposure to light; increased handling during exhibition preparation, installation and de-installation; local micro-environments within display furniture; possible exposure to volatile organic compounds from off-gassing if exhibition furniture manufacture lead-ins are insufficient; possible increased environmental fluctuations and increased dust levels due to human presence.

The development, maintenance and management of display environments are shared responsibilities that include all those noted for storage as well as: exhibition project management; advice on appropriate support for objects on display; micro-fade testing for items on display and advice on lighting based on the results of this testing; managed movement of collections between storage environments, conservation and exhibition preparation areas and exhibition spaces, and return to store; briefing of borrowers as to

appropriate or inappropriate interaction with exhibits; and advice for, and contribution to, public programmes.

13. Moving collections

Movement of collections or collection records, for whatever reason, introduces additional uncertainty and thus increases risk. This is especially the case if the records are travelling out of their usual environment. NRS has trained paraprofessional staff, and appropriate equipment and vehicles to mitigate these risks.

When records are in transit they are vulnerable to the same risks as when they are stored and they are potentially exposed to greater risks due to: increased handling during packing and preparation, in transit, and unpacking; movement and freight/cargo handling; local micro-environments within packing; possible environmental fluctuations.

NRS is committed to planned and documented record collection moves carried out by trained and experienced staff and/or inducted contractors with appropriate training in moving and packing collections, and in the use of moving equipment and lifts as required. Planning is vital in any move. The level of planning and the documentation of planning processes and decisions will range in complexity. Sound risk identification, assessment and treatment is required as part of the planning phase of any move and is documented. Removing record collections from their normal environments may involve compromise on some of the environmental and care standards. Planning should include an understanding of the implications of such compromises and the preparation of options to minimise any risks flowing from them. This may result in a statement outlining 'non-negotiables' and areas where compromise might be achieved if necessary. Decision-making should be based on risk management.

When items are on loan to other organisations, the shared responsibility for the care of the NRS collections is covered by a loan agreement.

NRS is committed to meeting the terms of loan agreements to care for items on loan to the NRS from other organisations or individuals.

14. Access to collections

While the principal mode of access is through public search room and digital access, NRS also promotes research, provides outreach and public programmes, and exhibitions and displays, all of which involve varying degrees of access to the collections.

When records are available for access they are vulnerable to the same risks as when stored and may be exposed to additional risks due to: removal from their normal environment; exposure to light; poor handling; vandalism; misplacement. NRS is committed to reducing these risks by staff training programmes and by the use of surrogacy.

Access to collections must be planned, taking potential risks into account and implementing appropriate mitigation strategies which, depending on the circumstances, include: supervised access; handling training; provision of handling aids e.g. gloves,

book supports, object cradles etc.; barriers to restrict or prevent handling; security provision.

Access other than via exhibitions is controlled by NRS Public Services and is managed according to protocols and procedures, which are aimed at protecting collections and supported by Records and Archives Services.

15. Collections in disasters or emergencies

Events that can have detrimental effects on collection items can have serious impacts on business continuity for collections-based organisations. NRS is committed to minimising these impacts through readiness and pre-planning.

The protection of collections against the threat or occurrence of a disaster is dealt with in the NRS Incident Control plan and is supported by the NRS Business Continuity Management System.

For effective responses to emergencies and to ensure appropriate action to salvage collection records from a disaster situation, the NRS Incident Control Response Plan and the Business Continuity Management System need to be complementary and updated regularly, especially staff contact details to ensure the documents remain relevant and that the roles and responsibilities are appropriately assigned and understood. Salvage training exercises and/or emergency scenario planning events are to be carried out at least annually.

Response to emergencies is a shared responsibility. The primary salvage roles will normally be undertaken by Conservation Services, and Records and Archives Services staff. Depending on the scale of the event and its impact, however, assistance and support will be required from: Senior Management; Public Services staff; Estates; Communications; Security; Finance; and the Online Resource Team.

In the event of an emergency, care of the collections may require people to act outside their normal roles with guidance from Conservation Services.

In the event of an emergency, assistance may be required from outside NRS and provision for this is managed by Senior Management Team and NRS Communications. It also includes reciprocal agreements with the four other national collections and other local disaster networks.

16. Treatment

NRS is committed to the care of its collections. In support of the preventive conservation programmes, conservation staff also undertake: collection maintenance and surveys, including rehousing projects; treatment of individual records and groups of records.

Except in a few cases, conservators will prepare options and recommendations for proposed treatments or maintenance work. Justifications for the preferred option/s, the implications of the treatments on the physical and chemical integrity of the record/s, and the impact of the treatment on significance, will all be articulated to assist in

informed decision-making. The treatment approach will be based on minimal intervention. Decision-making will be recorded as part of the conservation treatment. Record treatments will be required to preserve significance, be cost effective, and be carried out to high professional standards, however basic the treatment might be.

The effectiveness of conservation actions is a shared responsibility between Conservation Services and the cataloguing branch responsible, or the project for which the work is being done. Conservators may not be able to provide optimum treatments for the collection items or the proposed use of the object, if planning does not allow for sufficient lead-times or if an adequate budget is not available.

17. Research

Conservation and preservation research is important for the development of NRS's approach to caring for collections and for the professional development of its staff.

Before conservation and preservation research projects are approved utilising Management of Portfolio guidance, they will be assessed against agreed research criteria and must have defined scope, known duration and resource commitments, and must produce results that can be disseminated within and outside the NRS.

18. Outreach

As a national collecting institution, NRS has a role to play in providing information on care of collections to the public, owners and stakeholders and to other organisations. Outreach can take a variety of forms, including answering enquiries and providing advice, workshops, presentations and training programmes.

19. Definition of terms

The following definitions represent the common use of the relevant terms in the conservation profession.

Conservator

A conservator is a professional who has the training, knowledge, skills, experience and understanding to act with the aim of preserving cultural heritage for the future. Conservators contribute to the perception, appreciation and understanding of cultural heritage in respect of its environmental context and its significance and physical properties. Conservators undertake responsibility for, and carry out strategic planning; diagnostic examination; development of conservation plans and treatment proposals; preventive conservation; conservation-restoration treatments and documentation of observations and interventions.

Conservation

Conservation activities are aimed at preserving objects and their significance and may include preservation, conservation treatments, examination, documentation, research, treatment, preventive conservation, and education.

Conservation ethics

Conservation practice is guided by conservation ethics which outline conservators' obligations to maintain the integrity of the objects being cared for in the long term; to

take into account the interests of stakeholders, including cultural and religious considerations; to preserve the values that contribute to the significance of the object; to record all actions taken to preserve/conservate the object; and to ensure that appropriate skills and knowledge are employed in all conservation activities.

Conservation treatment

Conservation treatments consist mainly of direct, or interventive, action carried out on cultural heritage material with the aim of stabilising condition, repairing damage and retarding further deterioration.

Disaster

A disaster is any unplanned incident threatening the structure or contents of an archive, with the potential to have a detrimental effect on collections, and which is beyond the immediate ability of the archive's staff and normal management structure to control. A disaster can be a large or small event.

Preventive conservation

Preventive conservation consists of the actions taken to retard or prevent deterioration of, or damage to, cultural material by control of its environment. This is done through the formulation and implementation of policies and procedures for the following: appropriate environmental conditions; handling and maintenance procedures for storage, exhibition, packing, transport and use; integrated pest management; emergency preparedness and response; and reformatting/duplication and surrogacy.

Preservation

The preservation of cultural property through activities that minimise chemical and physical deterioration and damage, and that prevent loss of information. The primary goal of preservation is to prolong the existence of cultural property.

Significance

'Significance' refers to the values and meanings that items and collections have for people and communities. Significance helps unlock the potential of collections, creating opportunities for communities to access and enjoy collections, and to understand the history, cultures and environments of Scotland.

Condition

The condition of collections and objects is framed in terms of risk in *normal* use, i.e. the usual or most common use for those collections or records in their life at NRS. This provides a standardised set of condition definitions that can be applied across the NRS and which relate to the proposed use of the collection or the record. The definitions are set out in Appendix B of this document.

Risk management criteria

NRS Risk management policy outlines the organisational approach to risk management and defines the criteria for assigning different levels of consequence to collection-associated risks.

All conservation work is referred to using this criteria on the electronic catalogue system and the treatments logged below for future reference.

20. Staff roles and responsibilities

Conservation Services Branch

Manages the preservation of the collections, incorporating preventive conservation, treatment and maintenance of collection items, exhibition support and preparation, research and outreach.

Provides specialist advice to NRS staff, and stakeholders on the preservation of the collections, on acquisitions and their conservation implications and authenticity, and on materials analysis.

Works collaboratively with other areas of NRS to ensure that optimum care of the collections is achieved in treatment and preventive conservation, and assists other areas to contribute to the care of collections.

Works with NRS Procurement to supply everything to do with the storage and packaging of records, to meet professional standards, promoting good practice and preservation.

Provides advice and works collaboratively with other areas of NRS to ensure documentation, storage and movement of the collections is achieved, and assists and contributes to the care of collections.

Conservation Branch includes the paraprofessional Archive Attendant service.

Archive Attendant Service

Public and staff access to the records is supported by the paraprofessional archive attendant service, a team of trained staff who operate from the storage buildings. They undertake a range of supervised preservation tasks: they provide record transport across sites; undertake specialist record migrations both internally and externally; maintain the electronic records location system; provide box-making and packaging across the sites, utilising spare capacity to income generate and so raise revenue to support collections preservation.

All staff

In the course of their daily duties, all NRS staff should be vigilant in being aware of risks to the collections and to changes in condition of collection and report risks and changes to Conservation Services.

Staff training is undertaken annually and as required, staff should seek advice and training from the Conservation Services in order to better understand risks to collections and to more accurately interpret changes to collections on display.

NRS encourages Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers (PACR), the professional practice assessment for conservation professionals, and the achievement and maintenance of accredited status.

NRS aims to support the Conservation & Collections Care Technicians Diploma

21. Implementation

This policy will be implemented through liaison and agreement between relevant Branches, discreet business areas and across Divisions within NRS and is to include induction and training and development and review of procedures specific to conservation and preservation projects.

22. Coverage

This policy applies to all activities associated with the care and preservation of the NRS collections.

23. Related policies

NRS Business Continuity Management System. NRS Incident Response and Recovery Plan; NRS Public Access Policy; NRS Collections Management Policy; NRS collections policies; NRS Exhibition procedures; NRS Risk management policy; NRS Digital Preservation Policy.

24. Monitoring

This policy will be monitored through the reporting mechanisms for Conservation Services Branch, Records and Archives Services, and Public Services against their business plans and through the agreements reached about shared responsibilities across the NRS for collection care.

Statistics are collected for preventive conservation work on records, including: pest treatments; records assessed and stabilised for storage; environmental data for storage areas; for exhibitions-related work, including records installed and de-installed; record condition reports; environmental data for exhibition and transport of collections. Much of this is available on the electronic catalogue for verification and audit purposes.

Qualitative information collected on an annual basis and reviews of procedures, exhibition debriefs, collection risk registers and lessons learned from projects will all contribute to monitoring the application of the policy and its effectiveness.

Linda Ramsay
Head of Conservation Services
April 2017

Appendix A

References

PD 5454:2012; 'Recommendations for the Storage and Exhibition of Archival Documents' (2012: ISBN 13: 9780580716003)

PAS 197:2009 Code of practice for cultural collections management ISBN 9780 613524;
PAS198:2012 Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections ISBN 978 0 580 71315

'Standard for Record Repositories' (The National Archives, 2004), supplemented by TNA's 'Framework of Standards (2004)
<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives/standards-framework.html>

Reference Public authorities Section 61 Code of Practice issued in support of FOISA, <http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/legislation/legislation.htm>. The Code is voluntary but an authority that does not comply with it may be unable to meet its obligations under FOISA

Reference BS EN 16095: 2012 Conservation of cultural property- Condition recording for moveable cultural heritage

European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations, *ECCO Professional Guidelines*, 2002, <http://www.ecco-eu.org/about-e.c.c.o./professional-guidelines.html>

Russell, Roslyn and Kylie Winkworth, *Significance 2.0: A guide to assessing the significance of collections*, Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, 2010, www.environment.gov.au/heritage/publications/significance2-0/

Security

External Intruder alarm to conform to BS4737-4.3

Appendix B

Rating	Consequence or Impact on Collections
HIGH	<p>Documents in a weak and unstable condition; there is a risk of information loss, e.g. loose pages; cannot be accessed or copied - may be marked 'unfit for production'; evidence of mould/mycological growth as a potential health and safety risk; require conservation treatment to prevent further loss; records with a specific access deadline.</p> <p>The record/s will be damaged beyond salvaging and replacement is not possible. The damage and/or the required conservation treatment will permanently and irreversibly, negatively affect the record/collection's overall significance.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>The number of records that will be affected is high and cost to replace and or/ treat and preserve will exceed the annual operating budget.</p>
MEDIUM	<p>Disfigured or damaged; usable for study; signs of deterioration and so continued use would cause further damage; images of this record in this condition would harm the reputation of NRS.</p> <p>Some permanent impact on one or more of the following would result but may be reduced through treatment: the significance, any of the values that contribute to the significance, accessibility of the records, availability for access and/or exhibition.</p> <p>The cost of remedial treatments may be considerable or have an impact on other programmed work; additional resources may have to be sought if the conservation treatment cannot be undertaken within operating budgets and has the potential for impact on other in-house work programmes.</p>
LOW	<p>Disfigured or damaged but stable, e.g. heavily soiled; usable for study but may require further treatment to prevent eventual deterioration; packaging to be evaluated and upgraded; images of this record in this condition may harm the reputation of NRS. Non-standard archival formats that require special storage or transfer to archival medium.</p> <p>Minor damage could occur but could be relatively easily remedied or treated with no permanent impact on the significance, any of the values that contribute to the significance, the functionality or accessibility of a record and/or the record's availability for access and or exhibition.</p> <p>Conservation treatment times are estimated as small and can be accomplished utilising triage efficiently by specialist staff.</p>