

# ISLE OF WIGHT HERITAGE SERVICE

## Acquisition and Disposal Policy: **GEOLOGY**

**MUSEUM:** **DINOSAUR ISLE**

**Governing body:** **Isle of Wight Council**

**Date approved by governing body:** **22.05.2008**

**Date at which this policy is due for review:** **April 2013**

### 1. Museum's statement of purpose

The mission of Dinosaur Isle is "***To be a national centre of excellence in the conservation, display and interpretation of the Island's dinosaurs and diverse geological heritage***", and its aims are:

- To collect, document and preserve geological material found on the Isle of Wight for the benefit of present and future generations.
- To display and interpret the Island's geological past with special reference to dinosaurs for the education, enlightenment and enjoyment of local people and Island visitors.
- To deliver a programme of educational opportunities to the widest audience which promotes a better understanding of dinosaurs and geology.
- To help foster an appreciation and interest in the Island's geological heritage so as to help conserve and protect it for future generations.
- To be responsive to public needs in making the geological heritage accessible to all.

### 2. Existing collections, including the subjects or themes and the periods of time and /or geographic areas to which the collections relate

The Geological Collection has evolved from collections made by mid-19th century naturalists, which came together under the Society of the Natural History & Antiquities of the Isle of Wight, founded c1813, and were displayed from 1819 in a small museum set up in the Isle of Wight Institution in Newport. The geological collections of this museum were transferred to the museum of the Newport Literary & Scientific Institute in 1852, and in 1876 to the museum of the Newport Literary Society. In 1913 the geological specimens were finally transferred into public ownership, and located as the Museum of Isle of Wight Geology in rooms above Sandown Free Library. Although the collection became the property of the Sandown and Shanklin Urban District Council, it was curated by the Isle of Wight Natural History Society up to 1942. From the

late 1940's until 1974 the local Council employed a succession of honorary custodians, and the collection was augmented by the transference of material from redundant museums at Ventnor and Ryde.

Under local government re-organisation in 1974 the collection and museum became the responsibility of the newly formed Isle of Wight County Council, and in 1995, the responsibility of the new Isle of Wight Council unitary authority. The Museum of Isle of Wight Geology relocated in 2001 to the newly built Dinosaur Isle museum, vacating the premises above Sandown Library. Dinosaur Isle now displays and interprets the finest parts of the collection, and the stored component of the collection is kept at Cothey Bottom, Ryde.

The collection currently comprises circa 30,000 geological specimens . It reflects the breadth of the Island's geological history, ranging from Early Cretaceous to Early Oligocene and Pleistocene age. Particular strengths include Wealden (Early Cretaceous) dinosaurs, Cretaceous ammonites, Palaeogene molluscs, vertebrates, plants and insects.

The collection contains over 220 type, figured and cited specimens, notably the holotype specimens of three dinosaurs, *Neovenator*, *Eotyrannus* and *Yaverlandia*. Housed in the collection are thesis collections of two PhD's and two MPhil's along with material studied for other higher and first degrees.

The collection also contains representative rock and mineral specimens from the Island, and historic archival material relating to collections and collectors.

The museum will primarily collect geological materials of Mesozoic, Palaeogene and Neogene age from the topographical county of the Isle of Wight, its inter-tidal zone and the inundated channel of the ancient River Solent.

To support interpretation, the museum will occasionally collect geological and biological specimens from other areas and periods, which place the Island's geological heritage into a wider regional, international and evolutionary context. This will in particular apply to providing a broader interpretational context to the dinosaurs and associated fauna and flora of the Lower Cretaceous.

### **3. Criteria governing future acquisition policy including the subjects or themes, periods of time and/or geographic areas and any collections which will not be subject to further acquisition.**

Collecting is governed by resource constraints, but will be led by the following imperatives:

Threats to the geological heritage: these are identified as coastal erosion and pressures created by private and commercial collecting. They apply in particular to vertebrate fossils from the Cretaceous, Palaeogene and Pleistocene deposits.

Gaps in the collection: recognised gaps in the collection are found in the following areas, in particular specimens with good stratigraphical and geographical provenance:

*Cretaceous insects in amber*  
*Upper Greensand vertebrates and invertebrates*  
*Lower Chalk vertebrates and invertebrates*  
*Palaeogene mollusca*  
Pleistocene vertebrates and invertebrates

Display and interpretation: the creation of Dinosaur Isle museum in 2001, Britain's first purpose built dinosaur museum, lends obvious weight to maintaining a robust collecting policy towards acquiring dinosaur material and the contemporary indigenous fauna and flora, and building upon this strength which is of recognized national and international importance.

#### **4. Limitations on collecting**

The museum 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 arrangements.

#### **5. Collecting policies of other museums**

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 specialisms, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

**Specific reference is made to the following museum(s):** Natural History Museum, London, and the Hampshire Museum Service.

#### **6. Policy review procedure**

The Acquisition and Disposal 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.

The Regional MLA / Museum Galleries Scotland / NIMC / CyMAL will be notified of any changes to the Acquisition and Disposal Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of existing collections.

#### **7. 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 museum itself, having regard to the interests of other museums.

## 8. Acquisition procedures

- a. The museum 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 museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.
- b. In particular, 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).
- 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 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.
- d. 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.
- e. The museum will not acquire any archaeological material.
- f. Any exceptions to the above clauses 8a, 8b, 8c, or 8e will only be because the museum is either:
  - 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; or
  - acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin; or
  - in possession of reliable documentary evidence that the item was exported from its country of origin before 1970.

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.

g. As the museum holds or intends to acquire human remains from any period, it will follow the procedures in the “Guidance for the care of human remains in museums” issued by DCMS in 2005.

## **9. Spoliation**

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.

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

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 DCMS in 2005) , 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 12a-12d, 12g and 12s below will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.

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

## **11. Management of archives**

As the museum holds archives, including photographs and printed ephemera, its governing body will be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (3rd ed., 2002).

## **12. 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 museum 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 museum’s collection.
- c. The museum 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 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.

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

e. When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined in paragraphs 12g-12s will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale or exchange.

### **f. The museum 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 museum'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 museum 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 museum 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 museum 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 MLA.

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 Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.

l. If the material is not acquired by any Accredited Museums 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 museum may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.

### **Disposal by exchange**

n. The nature of disposal by exchange means that the museum will not necessarily be in a position to exchange the material with another Accredited museum. The governing body will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.

o. In cases where the governing body wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or unaccredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 12a-12d and 12g-12h will be followed as will the procedures in paragraphs 12p-12s.

p. If the exchange is proposed to be made with a specific Accredited museum, other Accredited museums which collect in the same or related areas will be directly notified of the proposal and their comments will be requested.

q. If the exchange is proposed with a non-accredited museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, the museum will make an announcement in the Museums Journal and in other specialist journals where appropriate.

r. Both the notification and announcement must provide information on the number and nature of the specimens or objects involved both in the museum's collection and those intended to be acquired in exchange. A period of at least two months must be allowed for comments to be received. At the end of this period, the governing body must consider the comments before a final decision on the exchange is made.

### **Documenting disposal**

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.