



**Report to: Joint Museums Committee, 19<sup>th</sup> November 2021**

**Report of: Museums Manager**

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**Subject: MUSEUM ACCREDITATION**

**1. Recommendation**

**That the Joint Committee:**

- 1.1 note the national position on Museum Accreditation and Museums Worcestershire's preparation plans,**
- 1.2 approve the extension of the current museum policies until March 2023, and that**
- 1.3 approve the deaccession proposal.**

**2. Background**

- 2.1 Museum Accreditation is a national standard that has been in place since the 1970s. It sets out professional standards in collections care and management, visitor engagement, forward planning and governance and requires museums to regularly evidence their activity against these standards.
- 2.2 The standard is used as a basic requirement for a museum to be eligible for most grant schemes, and to participate in professional activity such as lending and borrowing artefacts from other museums for exhibition.
- 2.3 All three Museums Worcestershire museums have been accredited since the start of the scheme and were last assessed in April 2017.
- 2.4 The programme is overseen by Arts Council England (ACE) and includes a professional committee who assess and judge museums against the standard. The schedule of assessment by ACE has been impacted by Covid and was paused for over a year in order to support museums through the challenging period. Museums are now being invited in waves to apply for re-assessment. It is anticipated that Museums Worcestershire Museums will be invited in 2023.
- 2.5 It is important that the museums remain working to the standard over this pause, and start to prepare for the next assessment. Museum policies adopted prior to the last assessment have been reviewed and still meet the standard, albeit with some updating required before the next assessment.
- 2.6 Rationalisation and disposal of collections is included in the Accreditation standard and is supported as a tool to be used within a tight framework of checks and balances.

The Accreditation standard requires specific decision processes to be followed when the disposal of any museum object is required, and the decision to dispose must be made by the governing body.

The Joint Museums Committee adopted a disposal procedure aligned to Accreditation at their meeting in November 2015.

### **3. Preferred Option**

3.1 In November 2015, the Joint Museums Committee approved the following policies for adoption by Museums Worcestershire. These policies were originally scheduled for review by the Committee in November 2020 in preparation for an expected Accreditation assessment in 2021. It is proposed that the existing policies be extended until March 2023:

- Museums Worcestershire Collections Management Policy
- Worcester City Museum Collections Development Policy
- Worcestershire County Museum Collections Development Policy

3.2 The Collections Development Policies require the most updating before 2023, partly because of the work achieved over the last four years in improving research, documentation and storage of the collections. The following work is proposed before these return to the committee in March 2023:

- The research gained through Glove Affair project, funded by Esmee Fairbairn Collections Fund, the Vardo project, funded by the John Ellerman Foundation, and the art collection supported by the upcoming philanthropist donation be reviewed and development plans for these collections updated.
- An investigation into which Worcestershire communities' history are under-represented in the collections be undertaken. Museums Worcestershire has a network of community partners and proposes to consult through these networks to better understand and build collections gaps.
- The Tickenhill Collection be set out as a separate collection in line with its charitable purpose.
- Museums Worcestershire and Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service took part in a national archaeology rationalisation scoping project in 2018 and contributed to national guidelines. It is proposed to incorporate these guidelines.
- Scoping work for rationalisation has also been undertaken in the furniture and transport collections and it is proposed to integrate recommendations from this work.

3.3 Following investigation ahead of planned conservation of the Angela Caravan (County Museum accession number 4142), it was found that the vehicle is damaged beyond repair and cannot be moved or worked upon without further significant damage, leaving very little left of the original available for research and the object not suitable for display. Following the disposal procedure, a disposal report and significance matrix has been completed and is appended to this report. It is recommended that object be deaccessioned from the collection but retained by Museums Worcestershire for use as a working object. It is proposed that the caravan be reconstructed and used and stored outside in the grounds of Worcestershire County Museum rather than conserved as a museum artefact.

## **4. Alternative Options Considered**

- 4.1 In common with all museums, time allocated in work plans in 2020 and 2021 to undertake the policy reviews required for Accreditation assessment has been redirected towards Covid impact management and recovery.

Realigning that work to the new deadlines has enabled the museums to successfully recover from the impact of the lockdowns.

- 4.2 Withdrawing from the Accreditation scheme and no longer being required to work to the standard would have significant impacts on the ambition of the museums. Without being Accredited, many of Museums Worcestershire's externally-funded projects and significant exhibitions would not have been possible.
- 4.3 Retaining the Angela Caravan (County Museum accession number 4142) within the collection would mean attempting to stabilise what is left of the original object and returning the incomplete caravan to store for long term storage. It's likely that the original caravan elements would be stored in parts to ensure safe transport and handling. The proposed solution will ensure that the object can be used by the museum, albeit not with the status of collection object and the additional responsibilities for preservation this entails.

## **5. Implications**

### **5.1 Financial and Budgetary Implications**

Accreditation assessment does require time set aside in the work programme and it can impact on other capacity. But this is far outweighed by the benefits of grant funding and networks available to Accredited museums.

Reconstructing the Angela Caravan so it can be safely used can be achieved within the funding available in core budgets.

### **5.2 Legal and Governance Implications**

There are no legal or governance implications to these proposals, assuming adopted policies and procedures are followed.

### **5.3 Risk Implications**

There is a risk in not renewing policies or pursuing Accredited status, as delivering below Accredited standards can put the museums at risk of reputational damage or impact on forward planning ambitions.

### **5.4 Corporate/Policy Implications**

This report will ensure that key museum policies remain operational and sets out the way forward to update these over the next 18 months when they will return to the committee.

### **5.5 Equality Implications**

Equalities policies and procedures are considered as part of Accreditation assessment, so this is an additional assurance of best practice in this area. The planning to consider histories under-represented in Worcester and Worcestershire's museum collections will include communities with protected characteristics in the programme of consultation.

### **5.6 Human Resources Implications**

There are no specific HR implications to these proposals

5.7 Health and Safety Implications

There are some H&S implications implicit in the collecting of certain object types. These are identified in the policies adopted in 2015 and are not believed to have changed in the interim, although will be reviewed as part of the updating work.

5.8 Social, Environmental and Economic Implications

This work contributes to the museums wider aims to improve the social, environmental and economic impacts for Worcestershire residents.

**Ward(s):** All Wards

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**Background Papers:** Joint Museums Committee meeting 23 November 2015,  
[reports pack](#)

**Supporting Documents:** Appendix Angela Caravan Disposal Report