

COLLECTIONS ACCESS POLICY

Revision	Revision Date	Revision Owner	Reference	Comment
00 - New	January 2016	Registrar	COL-POL-030-00	To meet Accreditation Standard
01	November 2016	Registrar	COL-POL-030-00	Amended following comments from Executive Board
02	June 2019	Director of Collections and Head of Collection Services	COL-POL-030-00	Rewrite & review to reflect collections department structure & up to date standards
04	March 2025	Head of Collection Services and Registrar	COL-POL-030-00	Reviewed and updated standards references
05	May 2025	Director of Collections, Research and Learning	COL-POL-030-00	Amendments following Trustee meeting and Sub-Committee meeting

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1. Introduction

The Royal Armouries (the Museum) is required to care for, preserve and add objects to the collection, as well as to exhibit them to the public, make them available for study and research, and generally promote the public's enjoyment and understanding of arms and armour (National Heritage Act 1983 (as amended by the Museums & Galleries Act 1992)).

The Museum is committed to making the collection accessible to all in line with its purpose and vision (see *Corporate Plan 2023-2028*) adhering to the law, ethical considerations, best practice and standards in collections care, and within the reasonable constraints of resources, conservation and security. The Museum believes that all people and sectors of the community have a fundamental right to engage with, use and enjoy the collection and services it provides.

The Museum recognises that there are many barriers to access at all levels. Collections of arms and armour have specific challenges, but the Museum is committed to making all aspects of its activities as fully accessible as the law and resources allow, including physical and intellectual access to buildings, the collection, events, exhibitions, learning and to staff and volunteers as well as visitors.

2. Legal and ethical framework

The Museum will adhere to all international and national statutes of law, including specifically in relation to access, but not exclusively the Equality Act 2010 (and subsequent amendments), General Data Protection Regulation ((EU) 2016/679), Freedom of information Act 2000 (and subsequent amendments), and the Data Protection Act 2018. This policy is consistent with the *Equal Opportunities Policy*.

Given the type of collection the Museum holds, access is also subject to the Firearms Act 1968 (and subsequent amendments), Knives Act 1997 (and subsequent amendments), Explosives Act 1875 (and subsequent amendments), HSE Explosives Regulations 2014, Offensive Weapons Act 2019, and the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 (and subsequent amendments).

The Museum will follow national standards, ethical codes and best practice guidelines including, but not limited to, BS ISO 5727:2024 Accessibility and usability of the built environment. Accessibility of immovable cultural heritage. Principles and methodology for interventions, BS EN 17820:2023 - Conservation of Cultural Heritage. Specifications for the management of moveable cultural heritage collection, and the Royal Armouries' Ethics Policy.

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3. Access to the Collection

The Museum is committed to making its collection and the knowledge it holds about the collection as accessible and broadly available as possible within legal, moral ethical and collections care constraints.

There may be instances where the Museum cannot grant access, or restricts access to objects or information. This may be due to the legal, moral, ethical grounds such as human remains (see *Human Remains Procedures*), and / or on health and safety grounds, such as hazardous materials. Where access is restricted or refused the Museum will offer an explanation of that decision and try to provide alternatives wherever reasonably practicable.

3.1 Access

Access to the collection involves physical proximity to objects and intellectual use of information and knowledge relating to them.

3.1.1 Physical and sensory access is provided through display, temporary exhibition, loans and access to the study and reference collection. Access is available subject to compliance with all relevant legislation, including Health and Safety, the care and management of the collection (see *Collections Care and Conservation Policy*).

The Museum has designated areas of high security (*Red Zones*) where access is governed by an enhanced level of security due to collection types, legislative framework and sensitive nature of the material. Access to these areas by staff and visitors is controlled and detailed within the *Red Zone Procedures*.

In line with Section 21 of the 1968 Firearms Act (as amended by the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2006 and Crime and Policing Act 2014), Prohibited persons are not allowed access to any weapons in the collections. When accessing the study and reference collection, anyone under the age of 18 must bring a supervising adult with them, and those under 14 will not be permitted as per restrictions in the Act.

3.1.2 The Museum acknowledges and recognises cultural differences and seeks to represent varied cultural experiences and issues through its programmes and exhibitions, and ensuring that all visitors feel welcomed and valued.

3.1.3 Financial exclusion will be minimised wherever possible, but charges may be levied for specific activities (see *Collections Charges*).

The Museum recognises that this is not always possible, especially in relation to the Tower of London, which is owned by the Sovereign and operated by Historic Royal Palaces (HRP). The Museum has a Memorandum of Understanding with HRP detailing arrangements.

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3.1.4 Intellectual access involves making available information about objects through a variety of formats and at different levels for example through exhibitions, catalogues and other publications in paper and/or electronic formats, photographic media and access to supplementary information about the collection (see *Collections Information Policy*).

3.2 Use of the Collection

The Museum is committed to use the collection to fulfil its Purpose and Vision (see *Corporate Plan 2023-2028*) wherever possible following a risk managed methodology. Use encompasses a variety of forms such as display, outreach and online activity.

3.2.1 Display and exhibition

Temporary exhibitions allow items to be displayed in different contexts and alongside items borrowed from other collections to enhance understanding and access to the collection.

Accessibility will be considered in the design of any new collection display or exhibition. The Museum is committed to a risk managed approach to displaying collection objects, whilst recognising and addressing the long-term conservation and security issues this presents for certain areas of the collection (see *Collections Care and Conservation Policy*).

3.2.2 Working and Handling

Working objects are defined as anything that originally had an operational function with moving parts. In order to meet the Museum's Vision, the Museum may need to work and handle objects where possible within legal, ethical and safe operating bounds (see *Working Objects Framework*).

The Museum maintains a handling collection separate from the permanent collection; to support object-based learning and interaction (see *M class procedures*).

3.2.3 Outreach and Lending

The Museum recognises both the international and national importance of its collection and the contribution it can make to the increase of knowledge and appreciation of arms and armour by lending.

The Museum will endeavour to meet all requests for loans for public display and research from its collection, subject to the conditions of loan, its own display requirements and the needs of the collection.

The Museum will not knowingly lend objects to any organisation or exhibition where the objects intended for inclusion in the display or exhibition have been stolen, illegally exported or illegally imported from their country of origin, (as defined in the UNESCO

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Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, 1970) (see *Collections Development Policy*).

All loans are managed according to the relevant collections policies and loans procedures (see *Collections Development Policy* and *Loans Out Procedures*).

4. Monitoring and Review

This document will be reviewed from time to time, but at least every five years, and specifically following updates in corporate policy and plan, legislation and international conventions.

This document will be reviewed by a panel of collections staff and agreed by the Director of Collections, Research and Learning, before submission to the Board of Trustees for approval.

5. Risk Management

The associated risk of non-compliance with this policy is:

Impact of non-compliance: High
Likelihood of non-compliance: Low

6. Effective date

This policy is effective from the date of signing.

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Chair of the Board of Trustees

Date.....

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