

COLLECTIONS CARE & CONSERVATION POLICY

REVISION	REVISION DATE	REVISION OWNER	REFERENCE	COMMENT
00	October 2013	Conservation Team	COL-POL-025	Format and content change to meet Accreditation requirements.
01	September 2015	Registrar	COL-POL-025	To meet new collections management policy and PAS 197 standard.
02	November 2016	Conservation Team	COL-POL-025	Changes to phrasing to meet accreditation return.
03	June 2019	Head of Collection Services	COL-POL-025	Rewrite & review to reflect collections department structure & up to date standards.
04	March 2025	Head of Collection Services	COL-POL-025	Review and update
05	May 2025	Director of Collections, Research and Learning	COL-POL-025	Amendments following Trustee meeting and Sub-Committee meeting.

Policy Number	COL-POL-025	Date Printed	16/02/2026	Owner	Director of Collections, Research and Learning
Revision	05	Page	1	Change Ref.	COL-POL-025

1. Introduction

The Royal Armouries (the Museum) is required to maintain and exhibit a national collection of arms, armour and associated objects, and to maintain a record relating to arms and armour and to the Tower of London (the National Heritage Act 1983, as amended by the Museums & Galleries Act 1992). The Act requires the Museum 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.

The collection is at the heart of all the Museum's activities. Caring for the collection and sites is fundamental. The Museum and all its staff (permanent, temporary and freelance) are committed to caring for and using the collection, archives and libraries in ways that are sustainable and ensure they are available to generations to come.

The Museum operates a risk managed approach to collections care and conservation and strives to provide the best possible conditions for the care and use of the collection and excellence in all activities relating to collections care within available resources.

Conservation, as defined by The Institute of Conservation (ICON) is the prevention, protection, care and restoration of cultural heritage. Preventive conservation attempts to slow down or minimise deterioration of museum collections. Remedial conservation is the treatment of an object to stabilise it or enhance some aspect of its cultural, scientific and historic value.

2. Legal Framework

The Museum will adhere to all national and international statutes of law, including specifically, but not exclusively UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property; Conservation for the International Trade in Endangered Species 1973; Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003 and all Health & Safety legislation.

3. Ethical Framework & Guidance

The Museum will follow national standards, ethical codes and best practice guidelines including, but not exclusively the International Council of Museums (ICOM) Code of Ethics, the Museums Association (MA) Code of Ethics, ICON professional guidelines, CEN / TC 346 Conservation of Cultural Property standards by the European Committee for Standardisation, Health and Safety Executive Guidelines, British Standards Institute (BS) standards, including but not exclusively BS ISO 5727:2024

Policy Number	COL-POL-025	Date Printed	16/02/2026	Owner	Director of Collections, Research and Learning
Revision	05	Page	2	Change Ref.	COL-POL-025

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, Benchmarks in Collections Care and SPECTRUM guidelines as they relate to conservation and care of collections, and the Royal Armouries' Ethics Policy.

Wherever possible, the Museum seeks to minimise the unnecessary use of energy and to reduce the environmental impact of caring for the collection (see *Collections Environmental Policy*). Consideration will also be given to the materials used in the storage, display and remedial care of objects. These should not pose a hazard to health or the environment now or in the future, and where possible they will be re-purposed or disposed of in a sustainable manner.

4. Scope

The collection and good collections care are of fundamental importance to the work of the Museum with the long-term aim of preserving the collection so that they can continue to be used into the future. Collections care ranges from organisation wide strategies such as incident management planning and conservation surveys of collections, to operation, which have a more direct impact on the physical condition of the collection (i.e. conditions of storage and high standards of building maintenance; transportation, display, environmental control and loans).

The historic buildings and their interiors are considered as much an integral part of the collection as the objects and within the Museum's control will be managed with an equal degree of care and expertise.

The collection is safeguarded through the specification and management of the following (in alphabetical order):

- building management systems
- collections management system
- collections surveying
- emergency response
- environmental systems
- fire and evacuation procedures
- good building maintenance
- hazard management, including asbestos, radiation & heavy metals
- housekeeping
- integrated pest management
- key control
- management of personnel and resources
- mechanical and electrical maintenance, storage
- physical security
- professional development

Policy Number	COL-POL-025	Date Printed	16/02/2026	Owner	Director of Collections, Research and Learning
Revision	05	Page	3	Change Ref.	COL-POL-025

- working objects
- working within acknowledged best practice guidelines when dealing with potential hazardous materials and / or objects
- The recognition, development and retention of specialist conservation and craft knowledge and skills unique to historic arms and armour.
- The development and use of materials and conservation science

5. Conservation Approach

The Museum has a proactive approach to collections care through the programme of collections care assessments and plans. Resources and priorities for conservation and for improving collections care are set out within the Corporate Plan, Annual Operating Plan and the Collections Strategy. These will be reviewed regularly, particularly when circumstances change.

Objects will be conserved and preserved according to national and internationally recognised standards using both preventive and remedial techniques.

The Museum will adhere to the security requirements as set out in the Government Indemnity Scheme Guidelines for National Institutions, and work within all best practice guidelines on the safety and security of the collection on display, in store and whilst on loan.

Wherever possible, Royal Armouries seeks to minimise the unnecessary use of energy and to reduce the environmental impact of caring for the collection (see *Collections Environmental Policy*).

Any object known or suspected to contain a hazardous material will be assessed and managed in line with legal regulations and best practice.

5.1 Remedial or Interventive Conservation

Remedial conservation will only be undertaken after appropriate research and assessment by a trained conservator or specialist. All treatments and proposed treatments will be recorded and archived. The Museum will opt for interventions within accepted ethical guidelines as resources allow. Any treatment will safeguard as far as possible the material, integrity, understanding and significance of each object.

5.2 Preventative Conservation

The Museum aims to slow down or minimise deterioration of objects through preventative measures including the management of museum buildings, sites and environment to achieve optimum conditions,

Policy Number	COL-POL-025	Date Printed	16/02/2026	Owner	Director of Collections, Research and Learning
Revision	05	Page	4	Change Ref.	COL-POL-025

environmental control and monitoring, integrated pest management and appropriate storage and display conditions.

The Museum as an organisation is split across three sites: the buildings in Leeds, which were purpose-built for the Museum, the Tower of London and Fort Nelson, both historic buildings.

Buildings are the first line of defence for the collection and regular inspections of all the Museum buildings will be carried out to ensure any potential threats to the collection are identified. All plant and other equipment will be regularly inspected in line with legal and Health & Safety regulations. The Museum acknowledges the challenges of working within Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Listed Buildings.

The Museum aims to house its collection in a manner that protects them from harmful environmental conditions within available resources. The Museum will actively monitor the environment across the sites, try to improve conditions wherever possible and within resources. The Museum aims to provide best practice conditions for storage and display depending on material type within available resources.

The Museum will follow an Integrated Pest Management approach, actively monitoring, with a strict organisation wide quarantine regime.

6. Staff and Contractors

All staff share the responsibility for safeguarding the collection and will be appropriately trained to their roles. Conservation of objects will be carried out or overseen by appropriately qualified or experienced professional staff. The Museum strongly encourages all those working with the collection to be qualified with the relevant professional museum, conservation or industry qualifications, and will provide support to those undertaking professional development within the resources available.

The Museum is committed to encouraging staff to share their expertise and to continuing professional development. This allows staff to make use of new methods and develop new solutions themselves and share their knowledge through presenting papers at conferences, giving talks to the general public and providing work experience placements and training opportunities to the next generation of conservators and museum professionals.

The Museum will only let contracts relating to care and / or conservation of the collection to suitably qualified contractors following financial consideration, regulation and procedures.

Policy Number	COL-POL-025	Date Printed	16/02/2026	Owner	Director of Collections, Research and Learning
Revision	05	Page	5	Change Ref.	COL-POL-025

Records of activity will be documented and kept in line with best practice standards including those detailed within the SPECTRUM guidelines and the Institute of Conservation (ICON).

7. 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.

8. Risk Management

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

Impact of non-compliance: High

Likelihood of non-compliance: Medium

9. Effective date

This policy is effective from the date of signing.

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Chair of the Board of Trustees

Date.....

Policy Number	COL-POL-025	Date Printed	16/02/2026	Owner	Director of Collections, Research and Learning
Revision	05	Page	6	Change Ref.	COL-POL-025