Elmbridge Museum

Collections Care and Conservation Policy

Date approved by governing body:

To be reviewed:
Contents

1. Introduction and Statement of purpose 2
   1.1. Principles of conservation and collections care 2
   1.2. Ethics and legislation 3
   1.3. Standards 3

2. Collections Care and Preventive Conservation 3
   2.1. Handling and use 4
   2.2. Provision of suitable buildings 4
   2.3. Environmental monitoring and control 5
   2.4. Housekeeping 6

3. Emergency preparedness 7

4. Professional Conservation Advice 7
1. Introduction and statement of purpose

This policy will guide the work that Elmbridge Museum does in the field of collections care and conservation.

Caring for the collections is a fundamental duty for all museums. This policy includes a combination of preventative and remedial measures, designed to ensure long-term preservation.

- Preventative conservation covers the measures necessary to slow down or minimise deterioration of museum objects and specimens and structures. The necessary preventive measures are based on a thorough understanding of how objects and specimens react to their environment and deteriorate physically or chemically.
- Remedial conservation involves a treatment to an object or specimen to bring it to a more acceptable condition or state in order to stabilise it or enhance some aspects of its cultural or scientific value.

The policy will be reviewed and reapproved by the Governing body, Elmbridge Borough Council, in February 2022

The Collections Care and Conservation Policy ensures that Elmbridge Museum will achieve its Mission to ‘engage people with their past, present and future by collecting, preserving and presenting selected and significant objects from the history of Elmbridge, for the purposes of learning and enjoyment’, and deliver our Elmbridge Museum 2016-2019 Forward Plan Strategic Aim to ‘further improve collections care and management to meet museum professional standards’.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Elmbridge Museum 2016-2019 Forward Plan, Emergency Plan, Collections Care and Conservation Plan and Environmental Policy.

1.1 Principles of conservation and collections care

This policy details how Elmbridge Museum will:

- Monitor the condition of the collections
- Manage and improve the preservation of the collections through good environmental conditions and building maintenance
- Maintain best practice in the care and conservation of the collections
• Increase access to the collections through the conservation process, research and display

1.2 Ethics and legislation

This policy will be guided by the following ethical guidelines and legislation:
• Code of Ethics for Museums (2015: Museums Association)
• Additional Guidance to the Code of Ethics 2015 (2016: Museums Association)
• Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
• COSHH Regulations 2002
• Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums (2005: DCMS)
• PAS 197: 2009, Code of practice for cultural collections management (BSI)
• PAS 198: 2012 Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections (BSI)
• PD5454: 2012 Recommendations for storage and exhibition of archival documents (BSI)
• Benchmarks in Collections Care 2.0 (2011: MLA)

1.3 Standards

Elmbridge Museum is committed to use and work within the following standard:
• SPECTRUM 4.0 The UK Museum Collections Management Standard (2011: Collections Trust)

2. Collections Care and Preventative Conservation

Elmbridge Museum’s collection represents a wide variety of different types of objects. The eclectic nature of the collection requires that a variety of procedures must be adopted to ensure their long-term preservation. In addition to the ethics and guidelines, and standards mentioned in 1.2 and 1.3, respectively, of this policy, Elmbridge Museum will make every effort to refer to up-to-date published guidelines, such as those produced by the Collections Trust, on the preventative conservation of the different types of collections.
2.1 Handling and Use

The use of the collections for education, exhibition, loan and research purposes, is always considered within the context of the care, conservation and long-term preservation requirements of the objects. The risk assessment framework in place enables staff to make well-informed decisions on using objects versus their long-term preservation.

The framework developed enables staff to make better informed decisions regarding the benefits of using objects and exposing them to more risk of deterioration, versus their long-term preservation. This gives collections care a more positive role in increasing access to the collections, whilst still allowing their care and conservation to be considered.

The handling of museum objects is undertaken in accordance with object handling guidelines, which are detailed in the Museum’s Collections Care and Conservation Procedures.

All staff, and appropriate volunteers and researchers working to support the care and conservation of the collection must be aware and follow all policies and procedures. Staff, volunteers and visitors receive instruction in proper object handling procedures, where relevant. Manual handling training is also provided.

The Museum provides surrogate copies, where possible and appropriate, to reduce handling and the risk of physical damage to collections.

2.2 Provision of suitable buildings

Elmbridge Museum seeks to provide suitably constructed, secure and well maintained buildings that contribute to appropriate environmental conditions for the display and storage of our collections. Where conditions are not up to the required standard, Elmbridge Museum is dedicated to improving the buildings and storage conditions used to house its collections.

The Museum has displays both within the Civic Centre and at three Surrey County Council managed Library buildings that all have fire detection and monitored fire alarms installed. The display cases are of museum grade quality.
The Museum’s two storage facilities, one of which is commercially leased, are of varying construction quality. Both have fire detection and monitored fire alarms installed. Light levels are adequately controlled, but both sites provide challenges in pest management and maintaining stable environmental conditions at optimum levels for different collection types.

Conditions in all store facilities are monitored and any defects are reported to the Museum Manager, and/or Lessor, as appropriate. Additionally, a programme of regular inspections of the Borough Council owned storage facility is undertaken by staff from Elmbridge Borough Council’s Asset Management and Property Services Team.

The last security review for Elmbridge Museum was conducted on 19th March 2013. Security arrangements for staff and visitors and buildings, where collections were displayed and stored were assessed and a report with recommendations was produced.

Following the Museum move to the civic centre and the consolidation of storage areas within the commercially leased premises a review of security arrangements using external expert advice is due and will be undertaken.

2.3 Environmental Monitoring and Control

Elmbridge Museum controls and monitors environmental conditions to ensure collections are not at risk of damage from unsuitable conditions and to alert staff should unsuitable conditions arise. Programmes exist to monitor and record temperature, light levels and relative humidity in the display cases as well as the two collections stores.

A range of equipment is used to both monitor and control environmental conditions. The equipment includes Tiny Tags, thermohygrometers, thermometers, dehumidifiers and oil-filled radiators. Equipment maintenance schedules are detailed in the Museum’s Collections Care and Conservation Procedures.

Museum staff record environmental conditions with regular readings and spot-check readings of the equipment. The data is monitored and evaluated by the Collections Officer. Procedures for monitoring and evaluation plus an indication of appropriate action to be taken in the event of any potential problems are detailed in the Museum’s Collections Care and Conservation Procedures.
2.4 Housekeeping

A programme of Integrated Pest Management is in place to reduce the likelihood of damage to the collections through pest infestation. This involves regular, scheduled inspections of all display and collections storage areas for evidence of insects and rodents. Spot check inspections are also carried out when pests are known to be locally active.

Monitoring equipment includes pest traps and pheromone traps. Records are maintained and assessed, and immediate appropriate action is taken in the event of a potential or actual infestation.

Collections are spot checked to assess for plastic degradation, and damage from mould and rust. Informal notes are recorded on the Collections EMu database and, through this, priority areas are identified for items requiring conservation work to improve storage of objects. A scheduled programme will be fully implemented following the consolidation of storage areas within the commercially leased premises.

Additionally, all incoming material is initially placed “in quarantine”. The objects are checked for infestation, damage and mould. Arrangements for remedial action are made for at risk items. Other objects are then documented and transferred to the most suitable collections facility.

Details of all these procedures and schedules will be documented in the Museum’s Collections Care and Conservation Procedures.

A programme of good housekeeping is necessary to reduce the likelihood of pest infestation and damage to collections by cleaning both objects and the areas in which they are housed.

At present, collections and the areas they are stored in are cleaned dependent on results of pest monitoring or when items receive conservation treatment or are used for temporary exhibitions. A scheduled programme of careful cleaning of collections and the stores in which they are housed will be fully implemented following the consolidation of storage areas within the commercially leased premises.
3 Emergency Preparedness

The Elmbridge Museum Emergency Plan has been updated. All Museum staff have received Emergency Response training and their salvage boxes. Further salvage boxes have been distributed to the Civic Centre and two collection stores.

Elmbridge Museum is registered as a Priority User Plus member of Harwell Document Restoration Services (HRDS) as part of the joint agreement with Surrey Museums Partnership. In the event of an emergency whereby collections have been damaged or are at risk, HRDS can respond to our callout. Costs will be recovered through insurance policies held by Elmbridge Borough Council.

4 Professional Conservation Advice

Elmbridge Museum is committed to achieving the highest standards of conservation through the use of professional, qualified staff and contractors. Elmbridge Museum is in regular contact with the South East Museum Development Programme (SEMDP) Preventive Conservation Officer for general advice and to follow up on recommendations.

Where necessary, the Museum seeks advice from the Institute of Conservation (ICON), Surrey Museums Partnership (SMP), the South East Museum Development Programme (SEMDP) and Surrey, East and West Sussex (SEWS) Museums Service to identify and appoint appropriate external conservation contractors.

Elmbridge Museum prioritises conservation requirements within the framework of resources available, documenting all conservation measures undertaken while objects and specimens are in the Museum’s care.