

2015

Freedom of Information Request

Reference number – 15-016

Information relating to the Museum's collections in store and on display.

1. How many items does Museum Wales currently store that are not on display?
2. How much does it cost to store and maintain these items?
3. Have, or will these items ever be on display?

Reference no.: 15-016

02 September 2015

Dear

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION – *Information relating to the Museum's collections in store and on display.*

Thank you for your request for information. As Museum Secretary for Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales ('the Museum'), I am responsible for responding to your request for information.

I refer to your email of 07 August 2015 in which you asked for the following information:

1. How many items does Museum Wales currently store that are not on display?
2. How much does it cost to store and maintain these items?
3. Have, or will these items ever be on display?

Response

1. How many items does Museum Wales currently store that are not on display?

The collections currently extend to approximately 5.1 million items ranging across social and industrial history, archaeology, art and the natural sciences and include artefacts, scientific specimens, paintings, prints and drawings, paper archives, digital files, photographs, recordings and publications. The Museum is the chief repository of three-dimensional material relating to Wales's natural and cultural heritage and of international material that helps to define Wales's place in the world.

Of these 5.1 million items there are currently 26,264 items on display and 2,769 items on loan to other organisations for exhibition and display. The vast majority of the Museum's collections are held for specimen and research purposes and whilst they are available to members of the public for research purposes, they would not collectively be placed within an exhibition or display environment. In addition, the amount of the collection in storage varies in accordance with our temporary exhibition and loan programme as well as the need to temporarily close galleries for maintenance and refurbishment. For example, until their recent closures as part of the St Fagans Re-development Project, 3,717 items were

displayed in the Origins Gallery at National Museum Cardiff, and 472 items in the galleries at St Fagans. Some items such as works on paper can only be displayed periodically and for short periods of time for conservation reasons.

Amgueddfa Cymru maintains large and exceptionally diverse collections developed since its foundation in 1907. Our Royal Charter of 2006 identifies our purpose as: ‘the advancement of the education of the public ... by the comprehensive representation of science, art, industry, history and culture of, or relevant to, Wales, and generally, by the collection, recording, preservation, elucidation and presentation of objects and things and associated knowledge, whether connected or not with Wales, which are calculated to further the enhancement of understanding and the promotion of research’.

The collections are held in trust for the people of Wales and exist to serve society. The Museum’s ten-year Vision (2015-2025) Inspiring People, Changing Lives provides clear priorities and focus for our service to the public. Our staff and partners use our collections in an ever-wider range of ways for enjoyment, inspiration and discovery. They enable museum and online experiences, learning, research and participation. As they also underpin ways in which we make a difference to Wales, through co-production and co-collecting with communities, new priorities for display and rapidly evolving public expectations of digital delivery, our collections are a crucial part of the cultural and scientific infrastructure of the nation.

2. How much does it cost to store and maintain these items?

The Museum does not separate out the costs as they relate specifically to collections storage and maintenance – these are absorbed into the overall costs of running a national museum.

3. Have, or will these items ever be on display?

The Museum collects items for the purposes of research and expanding knowledge, which is communicated in a variety of ways such as our learning programmes, our public events, our online resources, as well as through displays to the public both at our sites and through our loans programme and partnerships with others. All items in the collection are accessible to anyone who wishes to see them, subject to resources being available to facilitate the request. We currently have 26,836 items out on loan for research purposes. We are constantly reviewing the way our collections are used and are actively developing more opportunities for members of the public to engage with our collections. Our staff work closely with our volunteers and partners to help improve the museum and on-line experience for all our audiences, as well as developing opportunities for creative learning, and increasing participation and inclusion.

Your request was considered according to the principles set out in the National Assembly’s Code of Practice on Public Access to Information (third edition). The Code is published on the Internet at www.information.wales.gov.uk.

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, you should write to the Director Finance and Corporate Resources at the following address:

Mr. Neil Wicks
Director of Finance and Corporate Resources
Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NP

When dealing with any concerns, we will follow the principles of the National Museum of Wales's Code of Practice on Complaints, which is available on our website at www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/45/. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of the response to your original letter. You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) if you are not content with the outcome of your complaint or review. Generally, the ICO will not make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the Museum.

The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

If you have any further queries or concerns then please contact me via my email address.

Yours sincerely

Elaine Cabuts
Museum Secretary