

Reference no.: 17-002

14 February 2017

Dear

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION – *Information relating to collections*

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 24 January 2017, in which you asked for the following information:

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I should like to request the following information on each of the seven museums that National Museum Wales currently operates across Wales:

- 1. How many artefacts/objects does each museum hold?*
- 2. How many of the artefacts/objects are currently in storage at each museum?*
- 3. What object at each museum has been the longest amount of time in storage? How long was this?*
- 4. In regards to the National Collections Centre: Are any of the objects here rotated to other museums for display?*

Response

Before responding to each question, I hope the following general statement helps provide some narrative context for our answers that follow.

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.

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg.
We welcome correspondence in Welsh.

Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales

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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. 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.

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.

In addition to our display and research collections we also have a very active loans programme which allows us to make our collections much more widely available to other organisations for exhibition and display. During the financial 2015 / 2016 there were 459 active loans to 309 venues (100 Welsh, 104 UK and 105 International). These loans represent 3,316 objects loaned for exhibition and outreach and 27,477 objects loaned for research.

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.

Question 1 - How many artefacts/objects does each museum hold?

The figures below are as of April 2016 when the annual baseline is calculated.

| Museum | Number |
|--|---------------|
| National Museum Cardiff | 3,958,190 |
| National Roman Legionary Museum | 484,553 |
| St Fagans National History Museum | 396,301 |
| National Wool Museum | 12,000 |
| National Waterfront Museum | 1,310 |
| Big Pit National Mining Museum | 4,753 |
| National Slate Museum | 10,090 |
| National Collections Centre (Nantgarw) | 600,000 |

Question 2 - How many of the artefacts/objects are currently in storage at each museum?

National Waterfront Museum – None. All objects held here (1,310) are on display.

Big Pit National Coal Museum – 3,800 are in storage. 953 are on display.

National Slate Museum – 7,100 objects in storage. 2,990 objects are on display or in open store areas such as the Pattern store.

National Wool Museum – 11,000 objects are in storage. Just over 1,000 objects are on display.

St Fagans National History Museum – The majority of the collection (388,413) is in storage either in St Fagans or at Nantgarw. 7,888 objects are currently on display in the houses and grounds of St Fagans. Whilst the museum site has remained open during the redevelopment works, the galleries in the main building have been closed as they are an integral part of the redevelopment programme.

National Roman Legion Museum – 483,445 objects are in storage. 1,108 objects are on display.

National Museum Cardiff – The majority of the collection is in storage. 8,000 objects are on display across a range of departments. There are 5,200 Natural Science objects on display and the remaining display collections are made up of Artworks and a very small amount of Archaeological material.

National Collections Centre Nantgarw

As this is not a public museum or gallery in the same way that our other National Museums are, all items can be classified as being in storage.

Question 3 - *What object at each museum has been the longest amount of time in storage? How long was this?*

It is not possible to answer this question specifically because of the nature in which we hold, display and share our collections.

Since the founding of the Museum in 1907, the Museum has collected items for the purposes of research and expanding knowledge. We communicate this research in a variety of different ways in addition to the public exhibitions and displays that we hold, either at one of the seven national museums, or at other venues.

Large amounts of material are brought back from Archaeological excavations or marine surveys that we have carried out over many decades. This research material, although unlikely ever to go on display, informs the understanding we have of the history, archaeology and natural sciences within Wales.

All items in the collection are accessible to anyone who wishes to see them subject to resources being available to facilitate the request. 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.

Question 4 - *In regards to the National Collections Centre: Are any of the objects here rotated to other museums for display?*

The Museum's exhibitions and display programme, and our national and international loans programme, regularly draws upon all our collections, wherever they are held.

The National Collections Centre is open to the public and to researchers by appointment. It is also the hub of much of our accessioning, cataloguing, researching and conservation.

- We offer an appointment service for researchers/visitors wishing to see collections that are in store.
- We have a research room where researchers and visitors can examine the smaller collections and staff can work with external researchers/visitors on collections held on site.
- We offer group visits to the Industry and Transport stores where collections and access staff give a guided tour of the stores and conservation staff give presentations on their current projects as well as a talk and demonstration of the smaller stationary engines.
- In September 2017 we take part in Open Doors offering the public opportunities to see the collections and hear about our current work projects.
- We also have a room with video conference and projector facilities where we hold meetings, training events, learning and volunteer workshops, welcome specialist groups and give presentations on collections.

- Collections services and collections and access staff based at the National Collections Centre accession, catalogue, conserve and store collections held on site.
- There are two conservations laboratories, an engineering workshop and woodworking workshop at the National Collections Centre enabling conservation staff to prepare collections for display.

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 <https://museum.wales/freedom-of-information/publications-scheme/>.

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