AMGUEDDFA CYMRU

Collection Development Strategy 2023-28

Introduction

The Collection Development Strategy supports the delivery of Amgueddfa Cymru 2030, Widening Engagement Action Plan, Green Land Management Plan, and our responsibilities towards delivering the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, Welsh Government's LGBTQ+ Action Plan and Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan, Welsh Government's Sporting Heritage Framework for Wales, our statutory responsibilities in relation to the Treasure Act, the Programme for Government, and Remit Letter.

Amgueddfa Cymru's collection is multidisciplinary and is unique in its range and breadth across the Natural Sciences – botany, geology and zoology; History and Archaeology – contemporary, social, industrial and architectural, and community archaeology; Art incorporates design, applied art, photography, historic, modernist and contemporary art. We also have library, archive, oral history and audio-visual collections that cover a range of different areas across the collection disciplines.

The strategy aims to support a greater diversity of collecting across all disciplines, with a new focus on acquisitions and commissioning, supporting more diverse representation in decision making about what and how we collect, and increasing access to collections physically, intellectually, and digitally.

The Covid 19 pandemic, the pressing impact of the climate emergency, and the murder of George Floyd changed the ways in which we engage with and support our visitors to deliver social benefit. This opened up new questions about the collection and how we collect with the people of Wales to make sure that everyone is represented, that everyone has a voice and that we adequately represent the natural environment in the collection.

Our Strategy, Amgueddfa Cymru 2030, sets out our commitment to ensuring that everyone in Wales can shape and participate in the development of the national collection. We recognise our responsibility to focus our work with those who do not yet see themselves adequately represented in the collection. We also recognise the value of collaborative working to collect specimens to represent the natural environment in Wales.

Through prioritizing our collection development areas, we will support the achievement of our Strategy's six commitments to Wales. We will work with communities to make sure that everyone is represented within the collection. Diversifying the collection and increasing representation will inspire creativity and learning for life. We will contribute to internationally important work to help safeguard and restore nature and our natural environment through collaborative working and acquisition of strategically important specimens.

We will review collection priority areas to ensure that they can support wellbeing through inspirational spaces and experiences, with accessibility at their core. Digitising priority collecting areas and collecting born digital material will help visitors to discover and explore the collection digitally and create new digital content. Finally, we will build global connections through our collection to ensure that communities both within Wales and internationally collaborate in its development.

Our Collecting Methodologies - how we collect and develop the collection

Cultural democracy is at the heart of developing the collection. We will work collaboratively with communities as co-curators, collectors and decision makers. We'll actively support communities who experience inequalities or racism, by supporting the delivery of the Welsh Government's Race Equality, LGBTQ+ and other equality action plans. These policies will provide clear focus for future collecting.

We will build on existing ways of collecting and develop new methodologies that ensure that we actively engage individuals and communities across Wales in deciding what and how we should collect. Working in partnership with diverse communities, and local and national organisations, we will prioritise the development of community-led practice in the following areas:

- **Commissioning.** Building on the commissioning model developed through the Reframing Picton project, we will reframe and refocus the commissioning process to support a diverse range of practitioners to respond to existing collections and create new works.

- **Oral history.** We will develop training hubs for community oral history and build on the collaborative approach of the Windrush model to supporting communities to record and tell their own stories. We will extend oral history to diversify and record stories that are relevant across all our collecting disciplines.

- **Rapid response collecting.** Building on our work to collaboratively collect the material culture of the BLM movement, and the Collecting Covid Initiative, we will develop processes that support community led collecting in response to rapid socio-political and economic changes in society. We will also target rapid response collecting of threatened archaeology and natural history, in particular geological specimens, where it would be otherwise destroyed. In addition, we will respond quickly to acquire nationally significant and star objects for the collection when appropriate and where possible.

- **Deliver the Decolonising Charter.** We will pilot and experiment with collaborative ways of working with a range of diverse communities to develop deeper and multiple meanings. In collaboration with our community partners, we will identify objects that support the delivery of a more balanced, authentic and decolonised account of history.

- **Develop existing collections.** With communities of relevance, we will reframe and reclassify existing collections to increase their relevance, visibility and accessibility. These will include disability representation, LGBTQ+, and collections that can support people living with dementia. Making more of our existing collection will extend to amplifying objects of significant importance and increasing their reach and impact.

- **Community archaeology.** Supported by the Portable Antiquities Scheme and Treasure Act, we will shift the focus from what we collect to focus on how we support communities to find archaeology on their doorsteps in partnership with local museums and other organisations.

- **Natural sciences partnerships.** Through strengthened partnerships with National Resources Wales, National Botanic Garden and third sector bodies such Wildlife Trusts, National Parks, Buglife and Plantlife, we will create opportunities for public involvement.

- **Use our sites across Wales.** We will develop our collections to ensure a greater range of material is available to support and tell more diverse stories across our sites. Collect with communities to support delivery of Amgueddfa Cymru strategic objectives. Greater diversity of collecting will be visible at all sites

- **Distributed national collection model.** We will work more collaboratively with Museums Federation Cymru (and other organisations across Wales to ensure the development of a distributed national collection.

Sustainable collecting

- Re-homing objects

As the national collection continues to evolve, we have a responsibility to actively and critically review the collections we already have. We have already initiated a pilot collection rationalization programme which focuses on the public benefit that can be derived from underused objects in our collections through re-homing them. The aim is to give these objects a new 'lease of life' through being displayed and/or used in different contexts where they can once again be enjoyed by the public. Our priority is to re-home to organisations in Wales that operate in learning and the third sector, such as museums, schools, social enterprises, community groups and health and well-being settings such as care homes. Communities are at the centre of our decision-making.

We will also review our natural science collections to identify material which does not fit with our collecting priorities and identify suitable museums or collection-holding research bodies who can use them more productively with relevant expertise to produce new research.

- Increasing accessibility

We have about 5.2m items in our collection of which only about 30,000 are regularly accessible to the public through exhibition and display, either at our sites or through loan to third party venues. Although anyone can ask to see items in our stored collections, we want to make it easier for people, especially those who live throughout Wales, to use and enjoy our collections. To ensure these are physically accessible, we need to fully consider the long-term care and storage implications of the items we collect at the point that we collect them. We need to recognize the challenges of conserving certain types of material, for example plastics, and actively challenge prevailing orthodoxies that everything must be kept in perpetuity. It is also important we recognise that actively using an object now can be more beneficial than preserving it in its current state for an undefined future use. It is essential that we are open and honest about why we collect, and plan ways in which our existing collections have greater use. To achieve this, we will:

- Expand and embed our pilot rationalisation programme

- Create a framework for actively involving the communities we collect from in decisions regarding the use, care and conservation of the items we have collected from them

- Consider the access and learning needs of diverse users as opportunities arise to refurbish or expand collection storage

Digital access

As not everyone is able to physically engage with our collections, we need to continue to develop digital access to our collections. We need to continue to capture and record as much information as we can about the items we collect at the point we collect them - in both our collection management system and digital asset library. As these digital assets are the building blocks for all digital access to our collections, the quality of the platforms we then build is entirely dependent on the quality of these assets. Our primary platform for digital publication is our on-line catalogue Collections Online. We want this, and any associated platforms that we develop (for example the contemporary art website), to reflect the diverse voices of the communities of Wales.

To do this, we will:

- Develop classifications of relevance through our decolonising work

- Develop user-focused key words, building on the work initiated through the Contemporary Art Digitisation Project

- Prioritise a programme to make natural science specimens accessible on-line by diverse audiences

- Work with our Community Action Researchers to incorporate community voices into our collection management systems

- Prioritise digitising collection areas that support representation, decolonisiation and the climate emergency, and add this content to Collections Online as the gateway to developing associated dedicated platforms
- Develop on-line geographical referencing of specimens from Wales (i.e., GIS or co-ordinate-based presentation)

Collection priorities

The strategy recognises that Amgueddfa Cymru has limited resources. It therefore focuses on the areas where we will prioritise our collecting activity over the next 5 years. The purpose of developing the collection is to ensure that it can directly support the following commitments in Amgueddfa Cymru 2030:

- Make sure that everyone is represented

- Help protect and restore nature and our environment

- Inspire creativity and learning for life

In addition, the strategy will support the following commitments:

- Support well-being through inspirational spaces and experiences

- Discover and explore the museum digitally

- Build global connections

We will also give particular emphasis to collections that support the cross-cutting research themes in the Research Strategy.

Decolonisation, Inclusion, Environmental protection and sustainability and Cynefin.

Alignment with other Amgueddfa Cymru strategies and policies

This strategy is aligned with Amgueddfa Cymru's Strategy for Public Programmes and Research Strategy. It aims to support the delivery of some of Amgueddfa Cymru's Public Programmes. Some programmes outlined in the Public Programmes strategy can also generate collecting in new areas with new audiences of relevance. The Collection Development Strategy also aligns closely to the Research Strategy, as new collaborative research methodologies bring new and deeper meaning to existing and new collections. This approach will strengthen working across museum departments and bring coherence to future collecting and research initiatives and funding applications.

Whilst the Collection Development Strategy sets out why and how we will collect, the Collection Development Policy, which is a requirement of Museum Accreditation, provides more details about what we collect. Our collecting activity is further supported by a suite of public-facing collection care and management policies and internally focused procedures.

Aims and Impacts

The following aims will be developed as priorities to support the commitments in Amgueddfa Cymru 2030. Intended impacts and a sample of activities have also been outlined.

Make sure that everyone is represented		
Aim	**Examples of Activity**	**Impact**
Collect material culture and oral histories with culturally and ethnically diverse communities, LGBTQ+ communities, D/deaf and disabled people, and people facing socio-economic disadvantage to ensure that their histories are represented in the national collection.	• Align the work of the Representation in Collections and Research group to support the delivery of the Collection Development Strategy • Co-develop collecting initiatives with grass-roots community-based organisations to collect objects and oral histories that represent their creativity, heritage, language, cultural identity, and origins. • Develop and deliver a national LGBTQ+ collecting plan in collaboration with LGBTQ+ organisations and communities across Wales. • Build on past work of auditing collection for ignored disability relevance and work with D/deaf and disabled people to increase representation of D/deaf and disabled lived experiences within the collection. • Develop a collecting plan for Art in collaboration with communities across Wales that addresses under representation within the collection.	Increasing representation within the collection is embedded across departments and supports the delivery of Public Programmes Strategy, and Research Strategy. Greater alignment between Research Strategy, Collection Development and Public Programmes Strategy. Communities are empowered to shape the national collection, ensuring that items collected are representative and interpreted through their lived experience. Collection becomes more diverse, relevant and accessible to a wider audience and underpins development of further community action research. Collection supports research into and with underrepresented groups. LGBTQ+ collections support Pride activity across Wales, at Pride events and during Pride month. Co-developed collection increases representation and interpretation, supporting the principle of Nothing about us without us. A co-developed collection is available to support development of Disability History Month. The art collection is more representative of diverse communities living in Wales today and in the past. The art collection will account for a wider range of voices who have hitherto been omitted from the historical canon because of their sex/and or sexuality.

Decolonise international work and decolonise and diversify the national collections.	• Deliver the aims of the Decolonising Charter across the 6 defined areas of work. • Pilot and evaluate different methodologies and ways of working with community partners to deliver the Charter. • Develop international networks to share this work and build global partnerships to support decolonising process.	Decolonising the collection supports the delivery of the Public Programmes Strategy and development of programme proposals that support anti-racism, and a recognition of historical injustices and increase in awareness. Increased opportunities for international communities to collaborate with Amgueddfa Cymru on collecting initiatives and decolonising processes. Black history narratives of collections amplified. Collections with links to colonial aggression identified, Racist collections identified. Number of objects relating to the history of Black communities in Wales today and in the past is increased.
Collect objects that present a historic narrative that presents a balanced, authentic and decolonised account of the past – one that recognises both historical injustices and the positive impact of ethnic minority communities.	• Build on and deliver the Black History, Art and Natural Sciences collecting plan with Black communities across Wales. • Deliver the Hip Hop Collecting Plan • Ensure that Black History is embedded within all collecting disciplines and part of all curatorial job plans	The collection can be used as a training tool to support anti-racist training. The collection is more representative of the population of Wales, and therefore more relevant to more people living in Wales today Increased skills development for community-based collectors and oral history recorders Collecting methodologies are community developed and led. Historical narrative we can present is more balanced, decolonised and authentic, challenging assumptions of the historical canon and countering erasure.
Ensure the history and culture of our Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities are properly represented by investing further in our cultural sector and museum network.	• Use Representation in Collections and research Group to support a review of collection for underrepresentation across all Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. • Review audit with community partners and prioritise focus areas. • Develop multi-disciplinary collecting plans with community partners across Wales to address identified under-representation.	All Asian and Minority Ethnic communities feel better represented within the collection Audit and development of collecting plans is community driven to tackle underrepresented areas of the collection.

Develop and expand rapid response community led collecting & rapid response to preserving at risk natural history.	• Respond to national and international political and socio-economic events and ensure that everyone has a voice and that everyone has a right to have their story heard e.g., Collecting Covid, Cost of living crisis, BLM • Embed Participatory Action Research into community led collecting. • Respond to at risk natural history sites such as temporary construction excavations.	Community led rapid response embedded into how we develop collections. New methodologies for collecting are community led and evaluated by communities. New methodologies are evaluated by communities. Representative material collected with partners and preserved in the collections for future use. Widening representation of specimens from Wales
Deliver the recommendations of the Sporting Heritage Framework for Wales.	• Recognise intersectional potential of sporting collections to reach new and diverse audiences. • Work with FAW and Football Museum to support development of football collection. • Work with WSHF to distribute the collection to where it is most relevant across Wales.	Sporting collections used in a range of ways by diverse communities. Clearer framework for collecting sporting heritage across organisations in Wales.

Inspire creativity and learning for life

Aim	Activity	Impact
Develop and establish a National Contemporary Art Gallery.	• Work with network of galleries across Wales to facilitate wider access to the art collection. • Use the collection as a foundation for a range of community led initiatives.	• The art collection will be available to communities across Wales, • The art collection will be more widely accessible to inspire artists, through residency opportunities and arts commissioning research opportunities will be developed to create a broader understanding of the development of arts teaching and its impact in Wales. • The Design Collection will create a broader understanding of the history of craft, design, architecture and making in Wales, offering the potential for drawing in future design thinking and systems change models.
Develop a Design Collection for Wales that supports, inspires and celebrates creativity across all our sites	• Develop new design collection plan, with audit of current collection and plan for future collecting.	

Helps protect and restore nature and our environment

Aim	Activity	Impact
Develop the collection to raise public awareness of the environmental change. Develop the collection to raise awareness of value and diversity of the natural world.	• Add to and augment biological collection through research programmes and collaborative projects. • Collect relevant national and international material which informs our local biodiversity and helps us to monitor change. • Reframe historic buildings as resources to learn about sustainable ways of living today and in the past. • Enhance holdings of natural resources to underpin 'green living'.	Research which identifies and characterises the natural world and supports identification of environmental changes to inform how it can be protected. Increased public appreciation of nature and the need to protect it through Public Programmes. Collections are recognised as critical to supporting research to understand environmental change. Increased public understanding of the climate and nature emergency. Collection that can support the delivery of Public Programmes that raise awareness of environmental emergency. Increased global impact of our work improved transfer of knowledge putting our collections in context Increase public understanding of the source and sympathetic use of building stone.
Develop the collection to support the delivery of Cynefin.	• Review geographical distribution of specimens and identify gaps and add key specimens. • Frame the archaeology and natural science collection to support the delivery of Cynefin and build on the emphasis of local heritage through the On your doorstep initiative. • Use GIS to map collections to highlight their local relevance across Wales.	Audiences and communities can engage with material relevant to their local area. Communities feel ownership of their local heritage, and actively participate in collecting and preserving their history and natural environment.

| Deliver our statutory responsibilities for the Treasure Act, and the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) | • Continue to work with finders to report on treasure that is discovered in Wales.

• Work collaboratively with the FED to ensure that collections are acquired locally when appropriate.

• Contribute to dialogue within Wales to determine whether some Treasure finds are of national importance.

• Increase support for community engagement with the Portable Antiquities Scheme in Wales. | Local and regional museums collect more treasure finds that are of local relevance.

Better skills sharing and closer partnership working between Amgueddfa Cymru and local museums across Wales.

Local museums confirm that dialogue for determining significance of treasure finds is more transparent and open.

Arbitration for decisions about Treasure finds moves to Wales.

Communities who engage with and contribute to the PAS scheme feel more supported and activity is more structured across more of Wales.

Communities and local museums feel more ownership over archaeological collections in Wales. |

Support well-being through inspirational spaces and experiences

Aim	Activity	Impact
Develop and diversify the collection to support the delivery of Amgueddfa Cymru in the north.	• Identify how the Natural Sciences collection needs augmenting to represent the natural world in new displays. • Develop and deliver a programme of consultation with diverse communities in north Wales to review and test relevance of existing collections. Identify priority areas for focusing collection development that support the delivery of the redevelopment project.	Visitors have a more holistic understanding and respect for the natural history of the area. Collections of Amgueddfa Cymru in the north are diverse, multidisciplinary and intersectional and can be used in a range of ways to deliver the aims of the redevelopment project. Collection has greater reach across Wales. Collection in north Wales tells the story of diverse communities today, and in the past.
Build-on the development of a collection across all disciplines that supports the delivery of the wellbeing agenda	• Ensure identity of a Wellbeing collection for Wales on Collections Online through tagging. • Ensure collection development supports the delivery of Amgueddfa Cymru's Wellbeing agenda.	Newly identified natural science specimen resource accessible for well-being projects. More objects identified as relevant to the delivery of the wellbeing agenda programme. Wellbeing collections are more accessible to more people and can support the development of the museum's social prescribing programme.

Discover and explore the museum digitally

Aim	Activity	Impact
Develop and deliver programme of digitising priority collections and ensuring collections are accessible online.	• Digitisation of the Contemporary Art Collection and the creation of a new bespoke digital platform • Deliver the digital and collections access strands of the Decolonising Charter • Ensure that community voices are embedded into COL supported by Community Action Research process	All contemporary works of art and those of contemporary relevance are digitally accessible. Voices of Welsh and/or practising in Wales artists are amplified through the contemporary art website. Artists, educators, learners, art spaces and communities have a contemporary art resource tool. All objects on the decolonising audit are digitised and accessible on COL. Community action research outputs are embedded into COL.
Establish a new classification for objects in collaboration with communities. Initiate a programme of digitisation for the Natural Sciences collection so it is available to diverse audiences online.	• Pilot new approaches to classification through the NCA digitisation project and decolonising charter. • Establish new search words and key word searches through tagging • Design and deliver long term digitisation project with a flexible platform which maximise access for diverse audiences.	Searching for collections online is easier. More objects are more relevant to more people. Community interpretations included in COL. Development of new classification is community led. Better collection access relevant to users' needs to facilitate greater awareness and use of the collections. Collections used to support new Welsh Curriculum. Collections accessible through global portals (UKRI AHRC initiative) Collections contribute to global impact through access to scientific research.

Build global connections		
Aim	**Activity**	**Impact**
• Share collections to build on the global understanding of the natural world, arts, and humanities.	• Maintain active programme of international loans for exhibition and research. • Use collections to host international collaborators. • Make scientific data available to international users, via digital access and peer review publications. • Use decolonising of collections to build global links with source communities	Contribute to global research programmes and ensure we gain international scientific information. Collection will enable us to lead on research into Wales's role in the British Empire Collections used as widely as possible for knowledge transfer and maximising the global impact of the collection. Promotion of Museum-produced research to international audiences Digitised collections can reach audiences and communities of relevance across the world. Local stories can link globally to challenge the othering of different societies.

Some collecting initiative are dependent on external funding

How we will measure and report on our work

Primary Measures	Secondary Measures
Number of objects or specimens collected with community partners from underrepresented areas	
Community partner evaluation of collecting initiatives and delivery of collecting plans	• Case study provided by collecting initiative lead curators
Number of objects that have been decolonised	
Number of new search/keywords developed with communities / number of tagged objects	
Number of collections on COL that have community information field filled in	
Loans within Wales	• Evidencing distributed national collection model
Digital loans	
Supplying digital images (i.e. natural sciences providing images to researchers, but not physical loan)	
Number of objects re-homed for public benefit.	• Case study to provide context and qualitative data re impact of public benefit
Number of new objects/artefacts/specimens with images and supporting information shared on digital platforms in the reporting period.	
No of collection online users	• Set baseline and business planning for key performance indicators
No of users of other collection platforms	
Articles on Amgueddfa Cymru website relating to collections	
Develop evaluation methodology based on our values and commitments – how are we enacting our values through our processes?	• Create theory of change to measure against. Inputs and activities set against intended key outputs, outcomes and impact.

Reporting and monitoring progress reports on delivery of Collection Development Strategy discussed quarterly at Senior Executive Team, with quarterly report at PPRC presented by Director of Collections and Research.