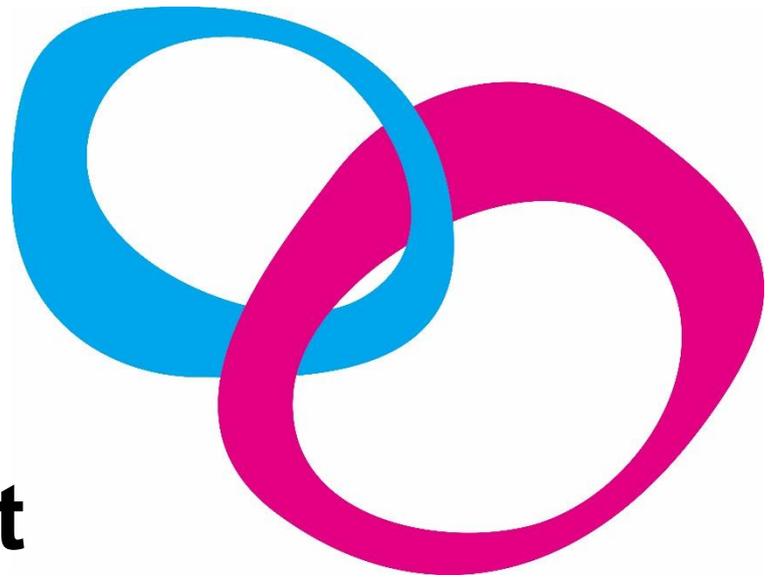


Copeland Borough Council – The Beacon Museum



Collections Development Policy

2016 – 2021

Version 3: approved 5/4/2016

Copeland
borough council



Proud of our past. Energised for our future.

Name of museum: The Beacon Museum, Whitehaven

Name of governing body: Copeland Borough Council

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: 5/4/2016

Policy review procedure: The collections development policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years.

Date at which this policy is due for review: March 2021

Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the collections development policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.

1. Relationship to other relevant policies/plans of the organisation:

1.1. The Beacon's statement of purpose is:

"To enable everyone to explore Copeland's rich and diverse history by collecting, preserving, interpreting, and displaying artefacts for inspiration, learning and enjoyment."

1.2. The purpose of this policy is to guide The Beacon's acquisitions and disposals in order to develop and shape the Beacon's collection in line with its mission statement.

1.3. This policy should be read alongside the following other Beacon policies and plans:

- Forward Plan, 2016 – 2018
- Collections Care and Conservation Policy, 2016 – 2021
- Collections Care and Conservation Plan, 2016 – 2021
- Collections Documentation Policy, 2016 – 2021
- Collections Documentation Plan, 2016 – 2021

1.4. This policy is intended for all Beacon staff and stakeholders.

1.5. The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.

1.6. By definition, the Beacon has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in the Beacon's collection.

1.7. Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

1.8. The Beacon recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Standard. This includes using SPECTRUM primary procedures for collections management. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

- 1.9.** The Beacon will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the Beacon can acquire a valid title to the item in question.
- 1.10.** The Beacon will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.

2. History of the collections

2.1. Copeland

With the exception of a small number of towns, much of Copeland is rural landscape or developments along the coast. This rural nature is part of Copeland's charm but also adds to its isolation, being about an hour's drive away from the nearest motorway. The sea and coast have been used since prehistoric times for fishing, and later for salt, shipping and shipbuilding industries. Evidence of agriculture dates from Neolithic times and Herdwick sheep farming from before the Viking settlements. Mining for coal and iron took place across the Borough for many centuries, coming to an end during the closing years of the 20th century. These have now been replaced by light industry, nuclear reprocessing, and tourism.

2.2. Origins of The Beacon's collections

Originated by the Whitehaven Scientific Association, Copeland's early collections were begun in the mid-19th century, in the Association's Howgill Street premises, Whitehaven. These early collections comprised mostly items of fine and decorative art, natural history, prints and books. Finds of archaeology and social history ephemera, numismatics, photographs and maps formed later additions.

The nucleus of existing collections, they were later housed and exhibited in an early museum run by Whitehaven Town Council in the Public Library on Catherine Street. In 1974, Local Government Reorganisation resulted in the transfer of the collections to Copeland Borough Council. The museum collections were displayed in the Old Market Hall, Market Place, Whitehaven, in 1975. The museum was later relocated to the Civic Hall's Dunboyne Hall in 1987 where it remained until 1996 when the purpose-built Beacon was completed on the harbourside. The Beacon and its associated museum store are now the permanent homes for Copeland's museum collection.

More recently The Beacon has undergone complete refurbishment (2007-08) and added further new galleries during 2011, 2012, and 2016. It has seen the establishment of new storage areas for its fine art collections, new thematic displays throughout, a refurbished Harbour Gallery for temporary and touring exhibitions and has seen many artefacts exhibited for the first time following a major programme of conservation work. Current themes focus on the history of Copeland, especially the local industries of coal mining, iron mining, shipbuilding and maritime history, and the lives of local people.

3. An overview of current collections

The total collection now numbers over 30,000 items covering the following subject areas:

- 3.1. Social History** – A broad range of artefacts relating to the communal, domestic, personal and working life of the people of Copeland since Medieval times. The collection includes items which relate to coal mining, iron mining, shipbuilding and maritime history, local industry

and technological developments, agriculture and rural crafts, costumes, military history and archival materials and ephemera. **(12,791 items)**

- 3.2. Fine Art** – A collection of paintings, water-colours, drawings and sculpture either by local artists or works that depict local views or local people. The collection includes an important group of maritime paintings featuring nationally and internationally renowned marine artists such as Joseph Heard who lived and worked in Whitehaven before moving to Liverpool in 1832 and Whitehaven-born Robert Salmon whose work was much influenced by Dutch marine painters of the period. **(1,186 items)**
- 3.3. Decorative Arts** –The decorative art collections include substantial amounts of 19th century Whitehaven-made pottery, silverware and ceramics commemorating the launch of local ships and an exemplary 18th century enamelled glass goblet by William Beilby. Beilby was the first person in England to fire enamels into glass so that the enamel almost became part of the glass itself. The Beacon's Beilby goblet commemorates the launch of the King George slave ship and commends "Success to the African Trade of Whitehaven". **(718 items)**
- 3.4. Archaeology** – A varied collection of local archaeology including the St Bees Shroud c1300AD; the d'Irton tombstone; a 'series' of quernstones; a glass bottle from Hardknott Roman Fort; some bulk archaeology and three excavation archives. The St Bees Shroud and associated artefacts are well known locally and are displayed at St Bees Priory Church, the site of their excavation and as part of a medieval lead coffin burial during the 1980s. **(431 items)**
- 3.5. Natural Sciences** –Comprises a large geology collection; a herbarium; a small collection of stuffed birds, animals and birds' eggs. **(2,047 specimens)**
- 3.6. Numismatics** – These include 131 local trade tokens used in 19th century and a number of coins found in the Borough. These range from early Roman examples to a 2007 issue, £2 coin to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade.
- 3.7. Photographs** – A strong local collection of photographic prints, postcards, glass plate negatives, magic lantern slides, 35mm slides and over 5000 black and white negatives relating to Copeland, especially its towns, harbours, shops and people. Frequent requests are made to view the photographic collection and plans are underway to digitise the entire collection and make it accessible online via the Beacon's website. **(10,107 photographs, 5,000-plus B/W negatives)**
- 3.8. Prints** – A small collection of engravings, etchings and lithographs of local places or people. **(118 items)**
- 3.9. Books** – A library of over two and a half thousand books on a variety of subjects, mainly relating to the existing collections and history of Copeland. They also include bound newspapers such as the 18th century Cumberland Pacquet and Cumberland Chronicle papers, and the Whitehaven News since 1907. Due to their fragility access to these items is restricted and researchers are supervised on a one to one basis. The Beacon is working in partnership with Cumbria County Record Office and Archives to review its collecting policy relating to archives and ephemera and with the aim of cataloguing its Library collections more effectively to improve it as a research facility and learning resource and thus increase its use. **(2,663 books)**

3.10. Maps – A combination of both originals and copies of maps and plans relating to Copeland. **(1,689 items)**

3.11. Non-accessioned objects in the collection

The Beacon has a Handling Collection which it uses for Learning. These objects are not required in the Accessioned collection, and are not subject to the same restrictions of use and storage.

3.12. Meeting the statement of purpose

The majority of the objects in the collection meet the Beacon's statement of purpose as they relate to the area of Copeland and can be interpreted for inspiration, learning and enjoyment of users.

Following the completion of a major cataloguing project up to 1997 and subsequent audits, the strengths and weaknesses of the collection are clear. The core collection is made up of objects which illuminate Copeland's social history, and local examples of fine art. Particular strengths include maritime paintings, an extensive local photographic collection, Victorian costume, and 19th century Whitehaven-made ceramics. Areas for reconsideration include the geology and taxidermy collections. This is due to a combination of lack of expertise, and therefore interpretation, and overall poor condition of the specimens.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

4.1. Enhancing Existing Collections During the next five years the Beacon will continue to collect items which address the gaps highlighted by previous collection audits (e.g. Copeland since the 1940s, examples of men's clothing and World War 2 items), with the intention of deepening and enriching the existing collections to offer a holistic representation of Copeland's history.

4.2. Contemporary Collecting The Beacon will acquire items made by contemporary artists and makers where relevant to Copeland and will collect artefacts which represent Copeland's many communities since the 1940s.

4.3. Resource considerations The Beacon recognises its responsibility, in acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Accreditation Standard. Collecting will take place providing that suitable accommodation (display and/or storage within appropriate environmental conditions) is available supported by staff time and skills for accessioning, cataloguing, research, cleaning, etc. Financial resources must also be available and in place for purchases or for preventative and remedial conservation.

4.4. Uses of new material Any new material acquired will be made accessible for research and available for future interpretation and displays.

4.5. Period of time and / or geographical area to which collecting relates

- The Beacon has a responsibility to preserve and display or make available for study, evidence of human and natural history of the Copeland area, the boundaries of which were designated under the Local Government reorganisation of 1974.

- In certain fields (including geology and geology based-industries, maritime history and photographic record work), these man-made boundaries are inconsistent with the proper understanding and presentation of the subject and some overlap with adjacent areas is unavoidable. Where any possible conflict of interest might arise between museum collecting areas, this will be resolved by negotiation and mutual agreement. For specific organisations see Section 7.
- As all periods of history are represented by The Beacon's collection, future collecting will not be restricted to specific periods of time.

4.6. Subjects / Themes for active collecting:-

- **Social History** All aspects, especially coal mining, maritime history and the nuclear industry as they form key elements in the historical development of the area. New areas for collecting include the history of climbing and mountaineering in the Copeland area.
- **Costume** Examples of uniforms or work-wear from the 1920s to the present day will be collected in particular, plus examples of male costume, providing that they have been worn or made locally and are of display quality.
- **Contemporary material** Will be collected wherever possible in addition to 1950s memorabilia and 1980s clothes, games and music illustrating 20th Century life in Copeland. Archival material will only be collected where it relates directly to the specimens in the collection or assists in the interpretation of the history of the area (potential donors will be advised to contact the Whitehaven Record Office and Local Studies Library as a possible alternative repository).
- **Fine Art** The Beacon will continue to add to the fine art collection when opportunities arise and resources are available, providing that the item refers to a local subject / theme or has been created by a local artist.
- **Decorative Art** Some additions will be made to the collection of Whitehaven-made ceramics. It is also intended that the scope of this collection be widened to include contemporary Whitehaven ceramics and glassware where appropriate.
- **Geological specimens** Will continue to be collected, drawing expert guidance from subject specialist groups and volunteers.
- **Photographs, postcards and prints** The Beacon will actively add to its photographic collection in the form of original prints and negatives, and also as copy negatives. This policy also applies to postcards and prints.
- **Books** Will be added to the collection only where the subject relates directly to Copeland and its history (potential donors will be advised to contact Whitehaven Record Office and Local Studies Library as a possible alternative repository).
- **Archaeology** Single or small groups of finds will be accepted into the collection if there is a direct link to the area and the item is of historical and aesthetic value and suitable for display. We will not accept large quantities of bulk finds from excavations or unidentified material.

4.7. The following list indicates those subjects where The Beacon does not intend to add to the existing collections :-

- **Archaeological excavated material** It is not possible for The Beacon to accept large archives (i.e. over 30 boxes) from archaeological excavations due to storage limitations. Currently Tullie House at Carlisle serves as the main repository for such collections. Storage difficulties at Tullie House require that this issue be regularly reviewed by their Curator of Archaeology and policies amended where necessary.
- **Natural History** For the period of this policy there will be no expansion to the collection of natural history specimens (excluding geology) due to storage restrictions and the lack of specialist expertise.
- **Paper Archives** The Beacon will only add to its collection of paper archives with the agreement of Cumbria County Council Record Office and Archive Service, Whitehaven.
- **Duplicates** of items already in the collection will not be accepted unless they are in better condition than the existing example.

5. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

- 5.1 The Beacon recognises that the principles on which priorities for rationalisation and disposal are determined will be through a formal review process that identifies which collections are included and excluded from the review. The outcome of review and any subsequent rationalisation will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well managed collection.
- 5.2 The procedures used will meet professional standards. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.
- 5.3 The Beacon will conduct curatorially motivated rationalisation and disposal as the collection contains some objects outside the current Collections Development Policy. In the case of any rationalisation and disposal project an audit will be undertaken and objects considered for disposal will be: objects not related to Copeland; duplicates; objects in such poor condition that they are unlikely to be used for future interpretation.

6 Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items

- 6.1 The Beacon recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal.
- 6.2 The Museum will exercise due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the Director, as the designated responsible officer is satisfied that the Museum can acquire valid title to the item in question.
- 6.3 So far as items incorporating animal or plant materials are concerned, the Beacon will not knowingly acquire by any direct or indirect means any item that has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of the United Kingdom or any other country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

- 6.4 The Beacon will not acquire archaeological antiquities in any case where the Director, as the designated responsible officer, has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures, such as reporting finds to the landowner or occupier of the land and to the proper authorities in the case of treasure as defined by the Treasure Act 1996 (in England, Northern Ireland, and Wales) or reporting finds through the Treasure Trove procedure (in Scotland).
- 6.5 The Beacon will not, except in very exceptional circumstances, and then only with the agreement of its governing body, acquire any specimen or collection if any restrictions governing the way it can be stored, displayed, documented or used are imposed as a condition of the donation, bequest, sale, transfer or exchange.
- 6.6 The Museum may occasionally, and with the written agreement of the donor or person transferring the material, acquire items that are not intended to be retained for the permanent collection. These items may be used as part of educational or handling activities. These acquisitions will be recorded separately outside the main accession record of the Museum and shall not be treated as part of the permanent collection since their intended use implies that preservation cannot be guaranteed.

7 Collecting policies of other museums

- 7.1 The Beacon will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.
- 7.2 Specific reference is made to the following museum(s)/organisation(s):

Helena Thompson Museum
Kendal Museum
Keswick Museum
Millom Folk Museum
Senhouse Roman Museum
Tullie House Museum Trust
Whitehaven Record Office and Local Studies Library (Cumbria County Council)

8 Archival holdings

8.1 Paper Archives The Beacon holds a collection of paper archives acquired under previous curators. These are used for reference by staff and researchers. The Beacon will only add to this collection with the agreement of Cumbria County Council Record Office and Archive Service, Whitehaven.

8.2 Photographs The Beacon holds a strong local collection of photographic prints, postcards, glass plate negatives, magic lantern slides, 35mm slides and over 5,000 black and white negatives relating to Copeland. Frequent requests are made to view the photographic collection and a project is underway to digitise the entire collection and make it accessible online via the Beacon's website. The Beacon will actively add to its photographic collection in the form of original prints and negatives, and also as copy negatives.

9 Acquisition

9.1 The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

The Beacon Director, as the Council's senior professional curator, has delegated authority to acquire works for the collection within the terms of this policy.

9.2 The Beacon will not acquire any object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the object or specimen has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom).

9.3 In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1 2002, and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003, the Beacon will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The governing body will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.

10 Human remains

As the museum holds or intends to acquire human remains from any period, it will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005.

11 Biological and geological material

11.1 So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the museum will not acquire by any direct or indirect means any specimen that has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of the United Kingdom or any other country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

12 Archaeological material

12.1 The museum will not acquire archaeological material (including excavated ceramics) in any case where the governing body or responsible officer has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures.

12.2 In England, Wales and Northern Ireland the procedures include reporting finds to the landowner or occupier of the land and to the proper authorities in the case of possible treasure (i.e. the Coroner for Treasure) as set out in the Treasure Act 1996 (as amended by the Coroners & Justice Act 2009).

13 Exceptions

13.1 Any exceptions to the above clauses will only be because the museum is:

- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin

- acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin

In these cases the museum will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority. The museum will document when these exceptions occur.

14 Spoliation

- 14.1 The museum will use the statement of principles ‘Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period’, issued for non-national museums in 1999 by the Museums and Galleries Commission.

15 The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains

- 15.1 The museum’s governing body, acting on the advice of the museum’s professional staff, if any, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the ‘Guidance for the care of human remains in museums’ issued by DCMS in 2005) , objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The museum will take such decisions on a case by case basis; within its legal position and taking into account all ethical implications and available guidance. This will mean that the procedures described in 16.1-5 will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.
- 15.2 The disposal of human remains from museums in England, Northern Ireland and Wales will follow the procedures in the ‘Guidance for the care of human remains in museums’.

16 Disposal procedures

- All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures on disposal.
- The governing body will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Agreements on disposal made with donors will also be taken into account.
- When disposal of a museum object is being considered, the museum will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.
- When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale, exchange or as a last resort - destruction.
- The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the governing body only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including public benefit, the implications for the museum’s collections and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. Expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the museum will also be sought.

- A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the governing body of the museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the curator or manager of the collection acting alone.
- Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.
- If the material is not acquired by any Accredited museum to which it was offered as a gift or for sale, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material normally through a notice on the MA's Find an Object web listing service, an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).
- The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from other Accredited Museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, the museum may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.
- Any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied solely and directly for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from the Arts Council England.
- The proceeds of a sale will be allocated so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard. Money must be restricted to the long-term sustainability, use and development of the collection.

Disposal by exchange

16.12 The nature of disposal by exchange means that the museum will not necessarily be in a position to exchange the material with another Accredited museum. The governing body will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.

16.12.1 In cases where the governing body wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or non-Accredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 16.1-5 will apply.

- 16.12.2 If the exchange is proposed to be made with a specific Accredited museum, other Accredited museums which collect in the same or related areas will be directly notified of the proposal and their comments will be requested.
- 16.12.3 If the exchange is proposed with a non-Accredited museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, the museum will place a notice on the MA's Find an Object web listing service, or make an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).
- 16.12.4 Both the notification and announcement must provide information on the number and nature of the specimens or objects involved both in the museum's collection and those intended to be acquired in exchange. A period of at least two months must be allowed for comments to be received. At the end of this period, the governing body must consider the comments before a final decision on the exchange is made.

Disposal by destruction

- If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.
- It is acceptable to destroy material of low intrinsic significance (duplicate mass-produced articles or common specimens which lack significant provenance) where no alternative method of disposal can be found.
- Destruction is also an acceptable method of disposal in cases where an object is in extremely poor condition, has high associated health and safety risks or is part of an approved destructive testing request identified in an organisation's research policy.
- Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought to establish the appropriate method of destruction. Health and safety risk assessments will be carried out by trained staff where required.
- The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the museum workforce. In circumstances where this is not possible, e.g. the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.

17.0 Policy Awareness

To achieve maximum understanding and awareness, the approved version of this document will be issued to all team members.

Curatorial staff will attend the Executive Committee and any related preliminary meetings to tackle any queries raised by elected members relating to this policy.

In addition to hard copy versions being available at The Beacon, this document will also be available in alternative formats, languages and print sizes as well as downloadable from the museum's website www.thebeacon-whitehaven.co.uk.

18.0 Policy Review

This Collections Development Policy requires adoption by Copeland Borough Council via Executive Committee after formal review every 5 years.

This document will be reviewed and submitted to Copeland's Executive Committee by March 2021, or sooner as required.