AREA MUSEUMS
COMMITTEE 7 March 2017
Item no:7

Norfolk Museums Service
Collections Review and Rationalisation Programme 2015-18
A report by the Head of Museums

Executive Summary

As part of its strategy to review service needs and reduce costs Norfolk Museums Service (NMS) has an ongoing Collections Review & Rationalisation programme whereby collections are reviewed on a regular basis, and those which are not suitable for future display or study needs may be found alternative homes.

The programme follows best practice as advised by Arts Council England's Museums Accreditation Standard and the Museums Association's Code of Ethics standards of which have been incorporated into the NMS Collections Development Policy. The outline of which is noted in Annex 1

Recommendations:

Committee Members are asked to consider and approve the rationalisation of:

- The Norwich Social History items listed in Annex 2

1 Executive summary

This report asks Committee Members to consider and approve the rationalisation of museum collections identified by staff as falling outside of NMS' Collections Development Policy.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 NMS' ongoing Collections Review & Rationalisation Programme assesses collections for their relevance and cultural significance. Those that are not suitable for the future display or study needs of NMS may be found alternative homes, usually retaining them within a publicly-accessible domain. This is done with the aim of:

- Reducing NMS' accommodation needs to the minimum necessary for the safe and accessible storage of collections, in order to reduce the financial and staffing burden of collections care
- Ensuring that all collections are accessible and used on a regular basis for the benefit of the public
- Improves the care of the collections it retains

- Ensuring that those collections which are not key to the mission of NMS are cared for and made accessible by other organisations

The methods by which collections are rationalised are set out in Annex 1.

The programme was considered and approved by the Norfolk Joint Museums & Archaeology Committee on 14 January 2011.

2 Collections Review Programme

2.1 The objects listed in Annex 2 are from the Norwich Social History Collections and recommended for rationalisation by the methods proposed against each object.

2.2 The objects listed have been scrutinised and approved by NMS' internal Rationalisation Committee on 23 February 2017 which comprises the Chief Curator, the departmental Curator, Collections Development Manager, Collections Documentation Officer, the Senior Conservation Officer and the Registrar. Every effort will be made to find these objects a home in another museum or cultural institution.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Finance

3.1.1 The Review & Rationalisation Programme is fully funded through Arts Council England's Major Partner Museums funding. There are no other revenue implications.

4 Other Implications

4.1 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

4.1.1 The NMS Service Plan places diversity, equality and community cohesion at the heart of service development and service delivery. It aims to ensure that activities included in the service plan are accessible to diverse groups in Norfolk and that all policies, practices and procedures undergo equality impact assessment.

These assessments help the Service focus on meeting the needs of customers in relation to age, disability, gender, race, religion & belief and sexual orientation.

4.1.2 This review of collections aims to improve accessibility. Principles of representation and equality will guide the selection of objects for rationalisation, which will all be offered in the first instance to other Accredited museums.

4.2 Health and Safety Implications

4.2.1 The rationalisation programme will improve health and safety conditions for staff by removing risks inherent in overcrowded stores.

5 Section 17 – Crime and Disorder Act

5.1 NMS is working hard to help address the issues of social exclusion, one of the key triggers for crime and disorder. NMS provides services that are accessible to local people, encourage participation in cultural activities by people who are at risk of offending, engage offenders through a range of cultural projects, assist schools in improving pupil attainment and deliver opportunities to increase the number of people who are in education, employment or training.

Through these and many other projects the NMS is using its resources to contribute towards reducing crime and disorder in Norfolk.

6 Recommendation or Action Required

6.1 The Joint Museums Committee is asked to consider and recommend for rationalisation:

- the Norwich Social History items listed in Annex 2

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper please get in touch with:

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Annex 1: Strategy for Rationalising NMS Collections

1. Introduction

As part of a regular programme of good collections care all museum collections will be reviewed to ensure that objects conform to standards of high priority and top quality. Material which does not conform will be disposed of. This paper sets out how the review will be undertaken. The key elements of the process outlined below are required under the Museum Accreditation Scheme, Arts Council England's standards scheme for museums that ensure good practice is followed in all publicly-funded museums.

The policy of NMS is to preserve and interpret Norfolk's history while also providing a window on the world for the people of Norfolk. NMS has rich and diverse collections and is ranked within the top 2.5% of non-national Accredited museums. These collections are held in trust on behalf of current and future generations. Those housed in the Castle Museum & Art Gallery and the Norwich Castle Study Centre have been Designated by the DCMS as being of national significance; only 50 out of over 2,000 Accredited museums have received this distinction.

Collecting within NMS is undertaken in accordance with the Collections Development Policy, which is reviewed and approved by Committee every five years (last revised in July 2015). This sets out the strengths of the collections, areas for future collecting and constraints on collecting, such as resources, space such as resources, space and expertise. Cromer Museum, for instance, will only acquire material that provides information about the history of Cromer not currently held within the museum. Thus, duplicates or material that is historic but not otherwise interesting or informative, will not be acquired.

This does not preclude collecting outside the terms of the Collections Development Policy in exceptional cases, such as the West Runton elephant, which is within the terms of the Policy but of unusual size and national importance. A similar exception is the famous teapot collection of over 3,000 examples, which is a nationally-important collection without parallel elsewhere in the country and supports the study of styles in ceramic design.

2. Using Collections

The Core Collections fall into three categories, with different levels of access:

1. **Display material** represents the best or most significant items in the collections and is easily accessible by all people visiting the museums. Gallery displays are highly interpreted to attract the interest of the general visitor and, hopefully, enthuse them. The Egyptology collection at Norwich Castle, for example, provides an interesting display for the general visitor

and an important resource for schools, which are able to study this part of the national curriculum from real objects in their local museum.

2. **Study collections** provide depth for people who want to learn more about a specific subject. The emphasis is on presenting as many objects as possible for study. Study facilities are provided at the Collections Study Centres at Shirehall and Gressenhall. Objects are either freely accessible when a museum is open, on open storage (easily accessible with an appointment or on regular open days) or in study rooms (open on set days a week).
3. **Long-term research material** is needed as evidence for current or future research and only needs to be available on an appointment basis. This can be contained in high density storage, thereby making the most cost effective use of space. Some of this material may duplicate other collections but museums have a responsibility to future research to ensure that important evidence is not destroyed unnecessarily. New analysis techniques are being developed all the time and often unprepossessing archaeological samples can provide important information. A balance needs to be struck between keeping enough for future needs but not so much that there are no resources to do anything else.

Items not retained for the Core Collections are categorised as follows:

4. **Working or demonstration material** Objects are put to working use or demonstration use at or on behalf of the museum. Items may require sufficient restoration to satisfy health and safety requirements and functionality. Work carried out on an object should take account of presentation issues of object preservation or restoration within the museum environment. Objects should be used under defined conditions that are stated in their documentation.
5. **Education, handling and loan collection** Objects are included for educational reference material only, including loans. There is an implied deterioration through usage over time.
6. **Set dressing** Objects are used as set dressing for on-site activities of the museum, following the principal of ultimate disposal through usage. They may also be re-used to enable the restoration of working collections.
7. **Dispersal** Objects are transferred or (as a last resort) sold to other organisations or individuals. NMS will follow Arts Council England's Accreditation and the Museums Association's guidelines. There will be a presumption that objects will be retained in the public domain and offered initially to similar institutions at whichever location provides the best balance of appropriate care, context and access.
8. **Disposal** Following Accreditation and Museums Association guidelines, objects which have no other viable home or use are disposed of or reused for restoring other objects or in creative projects.

3. The Review & Rationalisation Programme

The Review & Rationalisation Programme will particularly concentrate on identifying material which falls into categories 3-8. Some material in category

2 may also be reviewed as it is likely that this group contains objects which, over the years, have become surplus to requirements due to duplication within NMS.

Material in category 1 will not be reviewed since this will have been assessed when a decision was taken to put it on display. NMS has an ongoing programme of renewing or refreshing displays which allows for changing objects on display and assessing their importance.

3.1 First steps in the Rationalisation Programme

The Collections Development Manager will be responsible for the review programme. Other staff to be involved include:

- Chief Curator
- Head of Conservation or Senior Conservator
- Staff with curatorial responsibility for collections at specific sites, e.g. Curator of the museum
- Subject specialists

The first step will be to agree a review process and timetable with staff and identify staff teams to carry out the review. The timetable will be affected by major developments currently underway or in the planning cycle that will determine the availability of staff.

3.2 Identifying material for rationalisation

NMS shall particularly examine material in the following categories to consider them for rationalisation:

- Does not fall within the current collecting policy.
- Unethically acquired material.
- Loan material no longer required for display.
- Does not provide important information about Norfolk and its history.
- Is irrelevant to the collection.
- Has no reasonable expectation of being useful for display or research.
- Is unaccessioned (i.e. has not been properly recorded).
- Is unprovenanced (i.e. has no background information to provide a context).
- Is an unnecessary duplicate.
- Is of poor quality compared with other examples in the collection.
- Has deteriorated beyond any useful purpose (e.g. through decay or infestation. This might be a textile item that has rotted or a natural history specimen that has an infestation)
- Poses a threat to other objects or people (e.g. by contamination. This might be WW2 gas masks with degraded asbestos filters or radioactive geological specimens).
- Where there is no reasonable expectation that NMS will be able to provide suitable levels of curation or collections care.
- Is of good quality but would fit better into another museum's collection.
- May be more appropriate to the Norfolk Record Office or Norfolk Library & Information Service.

Meeting one of the above criteria does not automatically condemn any object. Each object will be considered on its merits. There may well be good reasons why objects that fall into one or more of the above categories should be kept, but they will be critically examined and justified.

3.3 Options for disposal

There are several ways in which material that is not suitable for NMS core collections might continue to fulfil a useful purpose. The list below indicates the methods of disposal which will be considered for each object, in descending order of priority:

- Transfer to another Accredited museum by gift
- Repatriation to country of origin
- Transfer to another public institution by gift
- Return to donor or lender (if there are compelling reasons to do so)
- Transfer to a handling collection for use with schools or the public
- Re-used to enable the restoration and operation of working machinery, which can be used to engage the public and demonstrate historic practices
- Set dressing to enhance museum displays
- Charitable donation
- Sale on the open market
- Destruction (as a last resort)

3.4 Process for decision taking

The process for taking decisions about disposal is time consuming but it is important to ensure that:

- all legal responsibilities are fulfilled,
- that the sensibilities of donors are respected,
- that the political views of the partners in the Joint Museums Agreement are taken into account, and
- that the public retain confidence in NMS and Norfolk County Council as trustees of Norfolk's heritage.

3.5 The process of selection for disposal will be as follows:

- Objects for disposal will be identified by staff with curatorial or collections care responsibilities at each site, assisted by subject specialists as appropriate
- Documentation will be checked to confirm that NMS is the legal owner of the items and is legally free to dispose of them (for example, there may be conditions attached to a bequest)
- The views of particularly interested groups or organisations will be sought
- If material was acquired or conserved with grant aid, contact will be made with the grant funding body to establish whether the funder has any requirements or views on the disposal. Reimbursement of grant aid is a standard requirement unless the object is to be transferred as a gift to another Accredited museum.

- Permission for disposal will be sought from the Joint Museums Committee

3.6 Process for disposal of accessioned material

Once the Joint Museums Committee has agreed the list of proposed disposals the following steps will be taken:

- As required by the conditions of the Museum Accreditation Scheme, a notice will be placed in the Museums Journal or its on-line equivalent, and any other appropriate specialist publications, advertising the availability of significant material to other Accredited museums.
- Direct contact will be made with any Accredited museums or other public institutions which would have a particular interest in any of the objects.
- If no Accredited museum is interested and the material was donated within the last 20 years, attempts will be made to contact the donor to return the item.
- Material in which no interest is expressed will be either sold or otherwise disposed of, once all reasonable efforts to find it a new home have been exhausted.
- Complete records of all transactions will be kept.

Record number	Object simple name	Brief Description	Image	Disposal Reasons	NMS Committee Recomendations
NWHCM : 1938.10.SH 2	spinning wheel	Small spinning wheel, decorated with bone		Object is incomplete and is in poor condition. Other spinning wheels in better condition and with stronger provenance have been retained. Kett, Wayne 11.10.2016	Transfer. Offer to museums via Museums Journal.
NWHCM : 1955.215	spinning wheel	Wooden spinning wheel; probably 19th century; set on three legs; 2 reels attached at the top these are set on brass brackets;		This object is incomplete and in poor condition having suffered wood worm damage. We have numerous and more significant spinning wheels in the collection. Kett, Wayne 29.9.2016	Transfer. Offer to museums via Museums Journal.
NWHCM : 1975.481	press	Trouser press, 'Corby Automatic Stretcher Trouser Press', early 20th c		This object has been damaged by wood worm and is in very poor condition. Kett, Wayne 11.10.2016	Transfer. Offer to museums via Museums Journal.
NWHCM : 2008.325	collar	Collar for chinese woman to be worn on formal occasions with formal costume; overlapping embroidered leaves in blue with larger embroidered leaves in red below them black edging to leaves ; cream silk tassels ,with knot at top near collar edge ,from point of lower red leaves, fastening at back		This object is Chinese in origin and as such is outside NMS collecting policy. Suggest we find an alternative home with a more approporiate collection.	Transfer. Offer to SADAC and other museums via Museums Journal.

Record number	Object simple name	Brief Description	Image	Disposal Reasons	NMS Committee Recomendations
NWHCM : 2008.326	wedding robe	Wedding robe for chinese woman in red silk with embroidered motifs of butterfly and flower, centre front opening ; wide sleeves with band of black silk embroidered with flowers in silk thread and wider sleevebands in ivory silk with floral silk thread embroidery; black silk embroidered bands from side slits to base of robe and at neckline; robe embroidered with floral motifs in coloured silk threads		This object is Chinese in origin and as such is outside NMS collecting policy. Suggest we find an alternative home with a more approporiate collection.	Transfer. Offer to SADAC and other museums via Museums Journal.

Record number	Object simple name	Brief Description	Image	Disposal Reasons	NMS Committee Recomendations
NWHCM : 1979.463.2	film	Film in metal container with red and white label; Kodak Nitrate Film 4M 20040 / 7U 00995; first frame shows two men in nightshirts; 1930s		Nitrate film is difficult to store. NMS do not have the capability of legally storing nitrate film. This film was stored with the East Anglian Film Archive, they are no longer able to store the film for us, and neither are the Norfolk Record Office. The film is currently being stored by the BFI. Having viewed the film the BFI have declined the opportunity to acquire the film as it either duplicates what they already have or is unidentified. John Oliver from the BFI advised us that "another organisation who would wish to acquire those reels of film does not come readily to mind, as few places can legally store nitrate, in addition to the fact that the reels are just very small fragments from some unidentified features or shorts." The BFI are happy to safely dispose of the film for us providing we secure approval. Kett, Wayne 14.12.2016	Disposal. BFI to safely dispose of this object.

Record number	Object simple name	Brief Description	Image	Disposal Reasons	NMS Committee Recomendations
NWHCM : 1979.463.3	film	Film in metal container with red label; No. 00/5/2 Kodak No. 1 3; title - Garlands of Welcome at the Indian Pavilion; 1930s		Nitrate film is difficult to store. NMS do not have the capability of legally storing nitrate film. This film was stored with the East Anglian Film Archive, they are no longer able to store the film for us, and neither are the Norfolk Record Office. The film is currently being stored by the BFI. Having viewed the film the BFI have declined the opportunity to acquire the film as it either duplicates what they already have or is unidentified. John Oliver from the BFI advised us that "another organisation who would wish to acquire those reels of film does not come readily to mind, as few places can legally store nitrate, in addition to the fact that the reels are just very small fragments from some unidentified features or shorts." The BFI are happy to safely dispose of the film for us providing we secure approval. Kett, Wayne 14.12.2016	Disposal. BFI to safely dispose of this object.

Record number	Object simple name	Brief Description	Image	Disposal Reasons	NMS Committee Recomendations
NWHCM : 1979.463.4	film	Film in metal container with yellow label; No. 9026/2 Kodak 3F 24913 / Kodak A20038 8439; first frame shows three men sitting on desk with another man standing in front of them; 1930s		Nitrate film is difficult to store. NMS do not have the capability of legally storing nitrate film. This film was stored with the East Anglian Film Archive, they are no longer able to store the film for us, and neither are the Norfolk Record Office. The film is currently being stored by the BFI. Having viewed the film the BFI have declined the opportunity to acquire the film as it either duplicates what they already have or is unidentified. John Oliver from the BFI advised us that "another organisation who would wish to acquire those reels of film does not come readily to mind, as few places can legally store nitrate, in addition to the fact that the reels are just very small fragments from some unidentified features or shorts." The BFI are happy to safely dispose of the film for us providing we secure approval. Kett, Wayne 14.12.2016	Disposal. BFI to safely dispose of this object.

Record number	Object simple name	Brief Description	Image	Disposal Reasons	NMS Committee Recomendations
NWHCM : 1979.463.5	film	Film in metal container with no label; Kodak UF 622H S7; first frame shows a boy and a woman in front of a house; 1930s		Nitrate film is difficult to store. NMS do not have the capability of legally storing nitrate film. This film was stored with the East Anglian Film Archive, they are no longer able to store the film for us, and neither are the Norfolk Record Office. The film is currently being stored by the BFI. Having viewed the film the BFI have declined the opportunity to acquire the film as it either duplicates what they already have or is unidentified. John Oliver from the BFI advised us that "another organisation who would wish to acquire those reels of film does not come readily to mind, as few places can legally store nitrate, in addition to the fact that the reels are just very small fragments from some unidentified features or shorts." The BFI are happy to safely dispose of the film for us providing we secure approval. Kett, Wayne 14.12.2016	Disposal. BFI to safely dispose of this object.

Record number	Object simple name	Brief Description	Image	Disposal Reasons	NMS Committee Recomendations
NWHCM : 1979.463.6	film	Film in metal container with a broken red and white label with inscription ...WBOY; Kodak Nitrate Film / Pathe & Eastman; first frame shows man and boy in front of grocery shop; 1930s		Nitrate film is difficult to store. NMS do not have the capability of legally storing nitrate film. This film was stored with the East Anglian Film Archive, they are no longer able to store the film for us, and neither are the Norfolk Record Office. The film is currently being stored by the BFI. Having viewed the film the BFI have declined the opportunity to acquire the film as it either duplicates what they already have or is unidentified. John Oliver from the BFI advised us that "another organisation who would wish to acquire those reels of film does not come readily to mind, as few places can legally store nitrate, in addition to the fact that the reels are just very small fragments from some unidentified features or shorts." The BFI are happy to safely dispose of the film for us providing we secure approval. Kett, Wayne 14.12.2016	Disposal. BFI to safely dispose of this object.

Record number	Object simple name	Brief Description	Image	Disposal Reasons	NMS Committee Recomendations
NWHCM : 1979.463.7	film	Loose film, Phate Cinema France / 3393 16; title - Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Trenchard inspects cadets at R.A.F. College, Cranwell; 1930s		Nitrate film is difficult to store. NMS do not have the capability of legally storing nitrate film. This film was stored with the East Anglian Film Archive, they are no longer able to store the film for us, and neither are the Norfolk Record Office. The film is currently being stored by the BFI. Having viewed the film the BFI have declined the opportunity to acquire the film as it either duplicates what they already have or is unidentified. John Oliver from the BFI advised us that "another organisation who would wish to acquire those reels of film does not come readily to mind, as few places can legally store nitrate, in addition to the fact that the reels are just very small fragments from some unidentified features or shorts." The BFI are happy to safely dispose of the film for us providing we secure approval. Kett, Wayne 14.12.2016	Disposal. BFI to safely dispose of this object.

Record number	Object simple name	Brief Description	Image	Disposal Reasons	NMS Committee Recomendations
NWHCM : 1979.463.8	film	Loose film, Kodak K F 1293 8250; first frame shows an old lady, a man and a woman in a room; 1930s		Nitrate film is difficult to store. NMS do not have the capability of legally storing nitrate film. This film was stored with the East Anglian Film Archive, they are no longer able to store the film for us, and neither are the Norfolk Record Office. The film is currently being stored by the BFI. Having viewed the film the BFI have declined the opportunity to acquire the film as it either duplicates what they already have or is unidentified. John Oliver from the BFI advised us that "another organisation who would wish to acquire those reels of film does not come readily to mind, as few places can legally store nitrate, in addition to the fact that the reels are just very small fragments from some unidentified features or shorts." The BFI are happy to safely dispose of the film for us providing we secure approval. Kett, Wayne 14.12.2016	Disposal. BFI to safely dispose of this object.

Record number	Object simple name	Brief Description	Image	Disposal Reasons	NMS Committee Recomendations
NWHCM : 1979.463.9	film	Loose blue film, Eastman / Ambrosia Torino Societa Anonima; first frame shows two men carrying a coach with woman inside; 1930s		Nitrate film is difficult to store. NMS do not have the capability of legally storing nitrate film. This film was stored with the East Anglian Film Archive, they are no longer able to store the film for us, and neither are the Norfolk Record Office. The film is currently being stored by the BFI. Having viewed the film the BFI have declined the opportunity to acquire the film as it either duplicates what they already have or is unidentified. John Oliver from the BFI advised us that "another organisation who would wish to acquire those reels of film does not come readily to mind, as few places can legally store nitrate, in addition to the fact that the reels are just very small fragments from some unidentified features or shorts." The BFI are happy to safely dispose of the film for us providing we secure approval. Kett, Wayne 14.12.2016	Disposal. BFI to safely dispose of this object.

Record number	Object simple name	Brief Description	Image	Disposal Reasons	NMS Committee Recomendations
NWHCM : 1979.463.10	film	Loose film, C Kodak 93G0918; first frame shows man leaning against wall; 1930s		Nitrate film is difficult to store. NMS do not have the capability of legally storing nitrate film. This film was stored with the East Anglian Film Archive, they are no longer able to store the film for us, and neither are the Norfolk Record Office. The film is currently being stored by the BFI. Having viewed the film the BFI have declined the opportunity to acquire the film as it either duplicates what they already have or is unidentified. John Oliver from the BFI advised us that "another organisation who would wish to acquire those reels of film does not come readily to mind, as few places can legally store nitrate, in addition to the fact that the reels are just very small fragments from some unidentified features or shorts." The BFI are happy to safely dispose of the film for us providing we secure approval. Kett, Wayne 14.12.2016	Disposal. BFI to safely dispose of this object.

Record number	Object simple name	Brief Description	Image	Disposal Reasons	NMS Committee Recomendations
NWHCM : 1979.463.11	film	Loose film, Kodak UF 622H 5 7; first frame shows two ladies playing tennis; 1930s		Nitrate film is difficult to store. NMS do not have the capability of legally storing nitrate film. This film was stored with the East Anglian Film Archive, they are no longer able to store the film for us, and neither are the Norfolk Record Office. The film is currently being stored by the BFI. Having viewed the film the BFI have declined the opportunity to acquire the film as it either duplicates what they already have or is unidentified. John Oliver from the BFI advised us that "another organisation who would wish to acquire those reels of film does not come readily to mind, as few places can legally store nitrate, in addition to the fact that the reels are just very small fragments from some unidentified features or shorts." The BFI are happy to safely dispose of the film for us providing we secure approval. Kett, Wayne 14.12.2016	Disposal. BFI to safely dispose of this object.

Record number	Object simple name	Brief Description	Image	Disposal Reasons	NMS Committee Recomendations
NWHCM : 1979.463.12	film	Loose film, Pathe & Eastman / Kodak Q F 1160 5741 Nitrate Film / Dupont P 096 96; first frame shows a man in military clothing; 1930s		Nitrate film is difficult to store. NMS do not have the capability of legally storing nitrate film. This film was stored with the East Anglian Film Archive, they are no longer able to store the film for us, and neither are the Norfolk Record Office. The film is currently being stored by the BFI. Having viewed the film the BFI have declined the opportunity to acquire the film as it either duplicates what they already have or is unidentified. John Oliver from the BFI advised us that "another organisation who would wish to acquire those reels of film does not come readily to mind, as few places can legally store nitrate, in addition to the fact that the reels are just very small fragments from some unidentified features or shorts." The BFI are happy to safely dispose of the film for us providing we secure approval. Kett, Wayne 14.12.2016	Disposal. BFI to safely dispose of this object.