

# Didcot Railway Centre – Home of the Great Western Society

## Collections Development Policy

### Approval and review

This policy was approved by Great Western Trust on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2013, Great Western Preservations Ltd on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2013 and Great Western Society Board (the governing body) on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2013.

This policy is due for review in May 2018.

### 1. Museum's statement of purpose

Our Vision is to recreate the golden age of the Great Western Railway.

Our mission is:

- To be a nationally accredited independent organisation
- To develop and maintain Didcot Railway Centre as a working museum dedicated to the Great Western Railway
- To provide suitable facilities to demonstrate restoration and maintenance of the Collection
- To be open to the public for the enjoyment, benefit and education of the community.

Our challenge is to become a more commercially orientated organisation in order to achieve the Vision.

### 2. Constituent bodies

The constituent bodies of the Great Western Society – Didcot Railway Centre Tripartite Board who are parties to the Collection Development Policy (previously Acquisitions & Disposal Policy) agree that they will only undertake actions in relation to their own collections as follows:

- Great Western Society Ltd [buildings and operational plant]
- Great Western Preservations Ltd [locomotives, coaches and wagons]
- Great Western Trust ['Small artefacts' and paperwork items]

### 3. An overview of current collections

The museum has collected objects and artefacts pertinent to the Great Western Railway (GWR) Company, constituent companies, absorbed companies and joint undertakings, as well as its successors (e.g. British Railways, predominantly Western Region) – this is the Core Collection. The Core Collection's aim is to cover the era from the conception of the GWR to the demise of the diesel hydraulic period on British Railways (Western Region).

The Core Collection comprises a representative collection of:

- locomotives [original, rebuild or replica]
- carriages and wagons [original, rebuild or replica]
- road vehicles [original, rebuild or replica]
- buildings and structures [original, rebuild or replica]
- permanent way [original, rebuild or replica]
- 'Small artefact' items, such as locomotive nameplates, number plates, documents, maps, posters, photographs, books, tickets, cast iron signs, station signs, clothing, cutlery, crockery, furniture, stationery, models, social history items, trolleys, horse drays and signalling equipment, etc.
- items of particular historical significance, both in the general and specific sense, to the

Didcot locality plus local railways such as the Didcot, Newbury & Southampton Railway, Lambourn Valley Railway, Abingdon Railway, located in the counties of Oxfordshire and Berkshire.

- items and memorabilia which reflect the impact and influence of the Railway Age upon the public at large and upon social history. These include both children's toys and books on social and railway history not limited to those directly referring to the Great Western Railway, newspapers and film archives of a transport nature.

Documentation will distinguish between original, rebuild and replica items.

The Great Western Trust is also the custodian of the records etc of the Great Western Society itself under the generic title "GWS Heritage"

#### **4. Themes and priorities for future collecting**

Future collecting of items will be undertaken by the governing body [Great Western Society, Great Western Preservations or Great Western Trust, as appropriate in line with Para 2] to supplement and enhance the collection in the areas defined in Para 3.

Collecting of items that enhance the study, display and enjoyment of the collection by the public and members of the Great Western Society will continue. Acquisitions in this context will be assessed on their individual merit, the pursuit of such material will not generally be given precedence over the key focus of the collection.

#### **5. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal**

Future disposal of items by the governing body [Great Western Society, Great Western Preservations or Great Western Trust, as appropriate in line with Para 2] may include:

- Items which fall outside the Museums Collecting Development Policy, are not relevant to the Museum's mission and whose public accessibility is best served elsewhere
- Duplicate items (after consideration of an item's provenance and research value as well as physical duplication)
- Replica and prop items which should not have been accessioned
- Items in poor condition which have as a result irredeemably lost their useful purpose and which are beyond economical conservation
- Items with no potential for display or research
- Items which pose a health and safety risk, where disposal is required in order to comply with relevant legislation

#### **6. Limitations on collecting**

The museum 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. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

#### **7. Collecting policies of other museums**

The museum 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.

Specific reference is made to the following museum(s):

- National Railway Museum [York]
- STEAM – Museum of the GWR [Swindon]
- Kidderminster Railway Museum (SVR)
- Bluebell Railway Museum

## **8. Policy review procedure**

The Collections Development Policy (previously acquisition and disposal policy) will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years. The date when the policy is next due for review is noted above.

Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the Collections Development Policy (previously acquisition and disposal policy), and the implications of any such changes for the future of existing collections.

## **9. Acquisitions not covered by the policy**

Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in very exceptional circumstances, and then only after proper consideration by the governing body of the museum itself, having regard to the interests of other museums.

## **10. Acquisition procedures**

- a. 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 governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.
- b. In particular, the museum 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).
- c. 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 museum 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.
- d. The museum will not acquire any biological or geological material.
- e. The museum will not acquire any archaeological material.
- f. The museum does not hold or intend to acquire any human remains.

## **11. Spoliation**

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.

## **12. Management of archives**

As the museum holds archives, including photographs and printed ephemera, its governing body will be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (third edition, 2002).

### **13. Disposal procedures**

#### *Disposal preliminaries*

- a. The governing body will ensure that the disposal process is carried out openly and with transparency.
- b. By definition, the museum has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for society in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons for disposal must be established before consideration is given to the disposal of any items in the museum's collection.
- c. The museum will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item and agreements on disposal made with donors will be taken into account.
- d. 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.

#### ***Motivation for disposal and method of disposal***

- e. When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined in paragraphs 13g-13s will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale or exchange.
- f. The museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons

#### ***The disposal decision-making process***

- f. Whether the disposal is motivated either by curatorial or financial reasons, 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 the 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. External 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.

#### ***Responsibility for disposal decision-making***

- g. 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 of the collection acting alone.

#### ***Use of proceeds of sale***

- h. Any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied 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.
- i. The proceeds of a sale will be ring-fenced so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard.

### ***Disposal by gift or sale***

- j. Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain, unless it is to be destroyed. 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.
- k. If the material is not acquired by any Accredited Museums to which it was offered directly 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 an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal, and in other specialist journals where appropriate.
- l. 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.

### ***Disposal by exchange***

- n. 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.
- o. In cases where the governing body wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or unaccredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 13a-13d and 13g-13h will be followed as will the procedures in paragraphs 13p-13s.
- p. 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.
- q. If the exchange is proposed with a non-accredited museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, the museum will make an announcement in the Museums Journal and in other specialist journals where appropriate.
- r. 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.

### ***Documenting disposal***

- s. Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable in accordance with SPECTRUM Procedure on de-accession and disposal.