

Didcot Railway Centre – Home of the Great Western Society

Collections Development Policy

Approval and review

This policy was approved by Great Western Trust on 24 November 2018, Great Western Preservations Ltd on 20 October 2018 and Great Western Society Limited (the governing body) on 17 November 2018.

This policy is due for review in November 2023.

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. Governing body and constituent bodies

The governing body (Great Western Society Ltd) 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 museum's collection. GWS is responsible for ensuring that the constituent bodies will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency and that acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

The constituent bodies of the Great Western Society 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 collects objects and artefacts pertinent to the Great Western Railway (GWR) Company, constituent companies, absorbed companies and joint undertakings, British Railways, predominantly Western Region and its successors – this is the Core Collection.

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", including the GWS's own Heritage Archive.

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. 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.

6. 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

7. Policy review procedure

The Collections Development 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.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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).

12. Disposal procedures

By definition, the museum has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for society in relation to its stated objectives. The museum will not dispose of any item, except for exceptional curatorial reasons and after consultation with our museum mentor, when the governing body will ensure that any disposal is carried out openly and with transparency. In these exceptional cases, the disposal decision will be reviewed by the constituent bodies [Great Western Society, Great Western Preservations or Great Western Trust, as appropriate in line with Para 2] and ratified by the governing body, Great Western Society Limited. Any disposal will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures on disposal.