**RRM Collections Development Policy**

Name of museum: **Ravenglass Railway Museum**

Author of this document: **Peter van Zeller – Curator**

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: **15th January 2019**

Date at which this policy is due for review: **December 2022**

Acquisition Policy Overview: (see also section 4)

**Our image and documentation collections will be augmented with the extensive archives of the associated Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway Company and Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway Preservation Society. The Museum will endeavour to represent local industry and rural life in the district served by the railway. It will collect a representative example of rolling stock and other objects made redundant by the railway, small items and ephemera.**

**The museum will continue to monitor specialist interest sales and online auctions for items of particular interest or significance for the collection. A fund of £1,000 is available for bidding on such objects, authorised by consultation between the Curator, Project Manager and a representative from the Board of Trustees.**

**Material produced for public use (e.g. leaflets/newsletters/posters/merchandise) will be accessioned from the year it has been produced. Private and confidential material such as office admin and personal letters will be accessioned 25 years after production. Items of interest for the collection can be stored until then.**

*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. The museum’s statement of purpose is:

**Ravenglass Railway Museum exists to tell the story of the Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway’s rich heritage, by collecting, protecting and presenting a collection of artefacts that represent the history of local railways from 1849 to the present day, for the benefit of local people, visitors to the Lake District National Park and interested people world wide**

* 1. **The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.**
  2. **By definition, the museum 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 museum’s collection.**
  3. **Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.**
  4. **The museum 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 5.0 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.**
  5. **The museum 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 museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.**
  6. **The museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.**

1. History of the collections

**History – The origin of the Museum was an Exhibition to celebrate the Centenary of the opening of the Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway in 1976, which gathered a number of items of equipment and small objects with a photographic display. It attracted interest and funding to convert a disused station building with wheel chair access for a permanent museum site which opened in 1978. The museum was recognised by the Museums & Galleries Commission and subsequently Arts Council England. A further development was the restoration of the former Furness Railway Signal Box in 2000. A two-stage programme to refurbish and extend the original Museum buildings achieved its first phase in 2015 and continued with a new Train Shed for rolling stock with an Archive Room which was completed and opened to the public in June 2017**

1. An overview of current collections

**The Ravenglass Railway Museum has a collection of over 3,000 items- the largest items being narrow gauge and miniature railways rolling stock and locomotives connected with the Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway in Cumbria dating from 1875 to the present. These Museum also holds library, archive and image collections of material about the Railway company and associated Preservation Society. Significant objects are part of a 3ft gauge coach from the original railway and 15in gauge Bassett-Lowke 4-4-2 Synolda, 0-4-0 Katie, Internal Combustion Loco No 1 and Quarryman, with redundant wagons and coaches of historic interest that had a valuable role in the railway’s commercial operations. This is supported by a small collection of railway models representing the wider work of the Bassett-Lowke model company which converted the railway to its present form in 1915 and by a large collection of small objects and ephemera covering all aspects of railway and the economic activities associated with it.**

1. Themes and priorities for future collecting

4.1 **These image and documentation collections will be augmented with the extensive archives of the associated Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway Company and Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway Preservation Society as physical space is available. The Museum will endeavour to represent local industry and rural life in the district served by the railway. It will collect a representative example of rolling stock and other objects made redundant by the railway, small items and ephemera.**

4.2 **The museum will continue to monitor specialist interest sales and online auctions for items of particular interest or significance for the collection. A fund of £1,000 is available for bidding on such objects, authorised by consultation between the Curator, Project Manager and a representative from the Board of Trustees.**

4.**3 Material produced for public use (e.g. leaflets/newsletters/posters/merchandise) will be accessioned from the year it has been produced. Private and confidential material such as office admin and personal letters will be accessioned 25 years after production. Items of interest for the collection can be stored until then.**

**4.4 Objects which contain hazardous materials (e.g. asbestos, radioactive material, nitrate film stock) will NOT be collected unless they are of special significance to the collection and measures are in place for their immediate isolation or decontamination on being accepted.**

1. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

5.1 **The museum does not intend to dispose of collections during the period covered by this policy. Any disposals will only be undertaken for legal, safety or care and conservation reasons (for example, spoliation, radiation, infestation)**

1. Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items
   1. **The museum recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal.**
2. Collecting policies of other museums
   1. **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.**
   2. Specific reference is made to the following museums and organisations:

**National Railway Museum, The Beacon, Eskdale Mill, Millom Discovery Centre, Narrow Gauge Railway Museum**

1. Archival holdings

**The museum holds an archive of documents, photographs and ephemera in paper-based and digital form. This is material dedicated to the Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway and its environs. It will have due regard for the collections of the Cumbrian Railways Association and other material at Cumbria Archive service. It will continue to acquire further material within the stated collecting guidelines. It will digitise material for research and public access, however risks with physical accommodation of archives are recognised and will be actively managed.**

1. Acquisition
   1. The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

**The Museum Curator has authority for accepting donations where the object can be easily stored and cared for within the current resources of the museum. In cases where the object will present an additional commitment (e.g. conservation, storage or the like) the Museum Trustees should be consulted. The museum reserves the right to decline an offer if a gift, bequest or loan does not meet the collecting policy. (SPECTRUM 5.0 Acquisition and Accessioning 2017)**

* 1. **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).**
  2. **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.**

1. Human remains
   1. **The museum does not hold or intend to acquire any human remains.**
2. Geological and geological material
   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.**
3. Archaeological material

* 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.**
  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).**

1. Exceptions
   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.**

1. Spoliation
   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.**
2. Disposal procedures
   1. **All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures on disposal (5.0 Object Exit 2017)**
   2. **The governing body will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Written agreements on disposal made with donors will also be taken into account.**
   3. **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.**
   4. **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.**
   5. **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.**
   6. **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.**
   7. **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.**
   8. **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.**

* 1. **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.**
  2. **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***.*
  3. **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.**
  4. **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 (5.0 Object Exit 2017)**

*Disposal by exchange*

* 1. **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.**
  2. **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 15.1-5 will apply.**

* 1. **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.**

* 1. **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.**
  2. **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*

* 1. **If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.**
  2. **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.**
  3. **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.**
  4. **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.**
  5. **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.**