
Guidance

Want to borrow from other museums?
Here's how...

SCOTTISH
MUSEUMS
COUNCIL



SMC can help make it possible for museums to borrow objects from each other. We do so by providing advice and grant aiding projects which result in improvements to facilities and standards in care: for instance, enhanced security; new display cases or display equipment suitable for receiving loan material; conservation measures designed to protect items on loan; training for staff in object handling or security in anticipation of loan requirements.

http://www.scottishmuseums.org.uk/areas_of_work/grants_intro.asp

Why borrow?

'loans of significant items or small groups give museums the opportunity to shed new light on their collections, or to meet public demand in areas where their own collections are weak'

Collections for the Future

http://www.museumsassociation.org/assets/text/ns/policy_collections.pdf

To begin with, you need to think about what it is you want to borrow and which museum it belongs to. You can do this by speaking to other curators, subject specialists or by looking at collection descriptions in the National Audit (available on cd-rom from SMC). Try to find out as much as you can about the lending policy and procedures of the museum. You should also consider how much time to allow for negotiating and

organising loans, for instance arranging a loan from the National Museums of Scotland can take up to six months.

Next, you should make contact, by phone or letter, with the museum from which you want to borrow. Ask if they have a Registrar that you can speak to or a curator with responsibility for the subject area in which you are interested. It is most important to begin a dialogue as soon as possible so that together you can work out solutions to possible problems.

Lenders may need to set conditions before a loan can be made, such as asking you to improve security. They will however be willing to take into consideration the resources available to you and will make every effort to help your museum reach required standards.

In preparing for a loan, the main things that you will need to anticipate are:

Security – you will probably be required to provide enhanced security (the building, display area, display case and extra invigilation) before you can receive loaned material.

Environment and display – your display cases or display area must be able to provide and maintain suitable environmental conditions, agreed with the lender.

Insurance and Government Indemnity – you may be expected to provide extra insurance for objects while they are in your care, including whilst in transit. Depending on the nature of the material being borrowed, you may need to seek Government Indemnity. Advice on the Government Indemnity Scheme is available from the Museum Security Adviser at the Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA).

<http://www.mla.gov.uk/information/advice/00security.asp>

Packing, transport, couriers – you must agree who will take responsibility for arranging and paying for packing and transportation. You may also have to be able to store packaging materials during the period of the loan.

Monitoring and documenting – you should record all the processes surrounding the loan.

Installation and maintenance – you will need to be able to provide space and staff to safely receive, unpack, display and invigilate loaned material as well as to pack and return the loans.

In 2003 the National Museum Directors Conference (NMDC) produced a set of best practice standards for **Loans Between National and Non-National Museums**.

This document states the national museums' commitment to improving access by lending objects from their collections to publicly funded museums all over the UK.

To find out more about the standards that you are likely to have to meet it is essential that you take a look at two important and extremely useful sources of information:

1. The NMDC guidelines on Loans between National and Non-National Museums which provides a very thorough description of the range of procedures surrounding loans

http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/images/publications/loans_standards_guidelines.pdf

2. The United Kingdom Registrars' Group forms for reporting on facilities, security and display cases

<http://ukrg.org/Publications/Standard%20Facilities%20Report.pdf>

<http://ukrg.org/Publications/Security%20Supplement.pdf>

<http://ukrg.org/Publications/Display%20Case%20Supplement.pdf>

Next steps

As part of your preparations for exhibiting loaned material you should be planning interpretation, promotion and possibly an associated events and education programme.

Organisations to contact

- Look at the SMC website for contact details for museums in Scotland
- For advice on loans from the National Museums of Scotland, contact: Ros Clancey, Loans Manager, 0131 247 4297, and see the NMS website for more about the NMS loans service
<http://www.nms.ac.uk/nms/collections/loans.asp?m=5&s=5>
- For advice on security and Government Indemnity, contact Iain Slessor, Museum Security Adviser at MLA, 020 7273 1457
- For advice on project development or SMC grant aid contact Gill Findlay, Collections Development Officer, Scottish Museums Council, 0131 476 8458

Further sources of written advice and information

Museum Association Yearbook for UK museum staff lists

www.scottishmuseums.org.uk for collections care and conservation factsheets and advice sheets, and guidance note on choosing new display cases; security guidance; increasing access

www.mda.org.uk for SPECTRUM documentation standards on procedures attached to loans

www.mla.org.uk for advice and guidance on conservation and general security as well as specific advice on the Government Indemnity Scheme, invigilation, security specifications and A Specifier's Guide for Display Cases

www.ukrg.org/Publications.php for standard facilities report and security and display case report supplements

www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/publications.html for Loans between National and Non-national Museums: New Standards and Practical Guidelines (2003)

The following case studies are provided as examples of how small museums have borrowed objects from other museums and successfully applied for SMC grant aid to assist with preparations for the loans.

Case study 1

National Museums of Scotland Loan to Historylinks

Here is an example of how a small independent museum in Dornoch agreed a three year loan of items from the National Museums of Scotland (NMS).

In April 2005, NMS made a long-term loan from its archaeological collections to Historylinks, a fully registered museum which is dedicated to the history and development of the Royal Burgh of Dornoch. NMS lent an oval Viking brooch, dating from the 10th century and a portion of a circular bowl of steatite. Both items were found near Ospidale House in Dornoch. Historylinks applied to the SMC grants programme and were successful in obtaining funding towards the purchase of a new display case suitable for housing the NMS loan.

Here's how it was done....

In the Historylinks collections there is a photograph of the Viking brooch. A local historian is an expert on this period and has written a booklet on the subject. Historylinks knew that the brooch was held in the collections of the National Museums of Scotland and wondered if it would be possible to borrow it for display.

The Historylinks assistant curator wrote to David Clarke, Keeper of the Department of Archaeology, making a request to borrow the brooch. David Clark wrote back agreeing to the request and offering, in addition, the portion of steatite bowl which had been discovered along with the brooch. The NMS Loans Manager, Ros Clancey, then wrote to agree the loan in principle, subject to a security check, and to explain NMS conditions for loan. The Museums Security Adviser, Iain Slessor at MLA, sent Historylinks a security form to complete. Historylinks found the process to be straightforward and progress was smooth.

In advance of making the approach to NMS Historylinks had started planning for the purchase of a new display case which would house the loan once negotiated. Historylinks took external advice from their curatorial adviser and staff from Inverness Museum before submitting a successful application to the SMC Small Grants Fund for £1,800 towards the total cost of £3,800. The details of the case were passed to NMS for approval. With the case in place before the loans arrived, Historylinks was able to make a temporarily display of a large item of costume, a military uniform, from their collection.

Historylinks also approached Inverness Museum to borrow additional objects which would enhance the interpretation of the early history of Dornoch. Negotiations and preparations were lengthy. Historylinks were also very

conscious that the stands on which to display objects and the layout of the case all had to be ready in time for the arrival of the objects. (The Historylinks Assistant Curator used paper templates to organise the layout so that once objects were in place there was no further need to handle them.) It is a

condition of loan that only NMS staff handle objects and that display cases containing NMS items are not opened unless an NMS representative is present. This meant that Historylinks needed to co-ordinate the simultaneous arrival of loans from NMS and Inverness. These additional preparations took around six months.

The new display has been, and continues to be, a great success in the museum: a highlight of the collections for staff and visitors.

SMC wishes to thank Peter Wild, Assistant Curator of Historylinks and Ros Clancey, Loans Manager at the National Museum of Scotland, for their assistance in the preparation of this case study.

Please visit <http://www.historylinks.org.uk>

Case study 2

Increasing access through temporary exhibitions and loans at Dunbeath Heritage Centre.

Dunbeath Heritage Centre (DHC) wanted to improve their public service by providing a higher standard of display and increasing access to a wider range of exhibits. This was in direct response to public demand as expressed by visitors and by local residents keen to see more than the permanent display. To meet this demand, DHC decided to put on their first ever temporary exhibition in the summer of 2005, 'Life in South-East Caithness 2,000 years ago'. They sought funding from SMC and Highland Council and took advice on appropriate standards for a display case from their curatorial adviser. They ensured that the display case met the standards required by the National Museums of Scotland and were able to agree with them the loan of a Bronze Age sword found in the local parish of Latheron and a number of archaeological artefacts from a local site including pottery, a quern stone and pounders and a jet armlet. They also used their funding to commission the production of moveable reusable interpretation panels locally.

The project enabled DHC to extend their interpretation of local cultural heritage and provide access to parts of their stored collections as well as to material from the National Museums of Scotland. This brought about an increase in visitor numbers. Locals and visitors to the area responded positively as recorded in the Centre's Comments Book and through discussions with staff and volunteers. The Centre is carrying out further evaluation in the form of an exit survey to inform future developments and to identify possible exhibition themes.

As a result of producing the temporary exhibition staff and volunteers at DHC have gained experience in exhibition display and management and in making funding applications, all of which they intend to put to use again by developing a temporary exhibition programme. NMS is happy to loan more material for

future exhibitions and have offered advice on improving security to enable the loan of more valuable artefacts.

SMC wishes to thank Meg Sinclair, Manager at Dunbeath Heritage Centre, for her assistance with the production of this case study.

Please visit <http://www.dunbeath-heritage.org.uk>

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