

Disposal Policy for Clare Museum

2014 – 2019

Draft Disposal Policy for Clare Museum

Introduction

This document sets out the regulations governing the disposal of items from the collection at Clare Museum. The policy shall be discussed internally on an annual basis and formally reviewed every five years to ensure that it remains fit for purpose, and any revision shall be submitted to the Council for its adoption.

General Principle

The Clare County Council hereby confirms its acceptance of the principle that the collections of Clare Museum are held in trust for future generations, and that there is a strong presumption against the disposal of items in the museum's collection. Clare County Council also accepts that sound curatorial reasons for disposal must be established before consideration is given to the disposal of any items in the museum's collection. Disposal can only occur in exceptional circumstances:

1. Criteria Governing De-Accessioning and Disposal

- 1.1 To remove from the collections any item that is too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any further use for the purposes of Clare Museum.
- 1.2 To remove from the collection any item that new scientific information has lessened or negated the importance of.
- 1.3 To improve the curatorial care of the collections by the disposal of duplicate or unprovenanced items of low intrinsic relevance to the collection policy.
- 1.4 To transfer to the ownership of another equivalent museum any items which, by reasons of changes in public demand, social or educational need, administrative responsibility, development priorities, lack of facilities or resources to carry out required conservation work or the establishment of a new equivalent museum, the Curator advises Clare County Council would be more appropriately placed elsewhere.
- 1.5 To remove from the collection any item which has been acquired by the previous owners through illegal means.
- 1.6 To transfer items which are more appropriate to other sections of the Clare County Council, including the County Archives and Clare County Library.
- 1.7 The sale of museum items with the sole or primary intention of raising funds is not permissible.

- 1.8 Disposal of an item may also occur in instances where the items/s have never been accessioned to the Museum collection.

2. Authority For De-Accessioning and Disposal

- 2.1 No museum item may be de-accessioned or disposed of without the specific authority of Clare County Council. Such a decision must be the responsibility of Clare County Council, acting on the advice of the Curator and not of the Curator or any person acting alone.
- 2.2 If the de-accessioning or disposal of a quantity of similar material is proposed, Clare County Council may, however, give the Curator delegated authority to act in the specific, once a general principle had been approved.
- 2.3 Where recommendations concerning the de-accessioning or disposal of museum items are to be made, it is understood that there will need to be certain preliminary investigations before a report can usefully be brought before Clare County Council. This may include such matters as obtaining valuations, seeking the views of donors, and contacts with other equivalent museums that may be interested in accepting transfer. Within the terms of this policy, it is understood that the Curator has authority to act in this way, without prejudice to Clare County Council's eventual decisions.

3. De-Accessioning and Disposal of Purchases, Gifts and Bequests

- 3.1 Where it is the intention to de-accession and dispose of an item, which was acquired by purchase, the Curator will take all reasonable steps to discover whether the original purchase was assisted by a grant from any identifiable funding source. Where it is known or discovered that such a grant was made, the body concerned or its successors will be notified of the Museum's intentions so that any relevant conditions attached to the original may be fulfilled.
- 3.2 Items given or bequeathed may not be de-accessioned or disposed of without prior consultation with the original donor/s or their families within the first generation, about the course of action proposed. A period of one month should be allowed for a reply. This however is a matter of courtesy and not a legal requirement. The Curator shall be entitled to waive this requirement where all reasonable efforts to trace a donor have failed, and additionally where no details of the donor exists.
- 3.3 In appropriate circumstances having taken account of the procedures set out in this policy, the Curator may recommend the return of an item to its original donor.

4. De-Accessioning and Disposal Procedures

- 4.1 Where a museum item is no longer required by the Museum and approval has been given by Clare County Council to its de-accessioning and disposal, it shall be offered first to other equivalent museums as a gift, exchange or sale.
- 4.2 Where it is intended that an item should be sold, an independent valuation should be sought. Clare County Council will accept this as the maximum price for the sale of an item to an equivalent museum, for a period of six months. It will, however, be open to Clare County Council to authorise a sale to an equivalent museum at a reduced or nominal price in order to keep an item in public ownership.
- 4.3 In the first instance, the Curator shall seek to identify a specific equivalent museum with which an arrangement acceptable to both parties can be made. If this proves impossible, the intended disposal shall be made known to the museum community at large. This will be by means of an announcement placed in the appropriate media.
- 4.4 The announcement must indicate the nature and number of the museum items involved, and the basis on which a transfer would be made. A period of at least two months must be allowed between the appearance of the announcement and the implementation of any decision.
- 4.5 If as the result of such an announcement, more than one museum responds, care must be taken to avoid a situation where museums are competing with each other in ignorance. In such cases, and particularly if the transfer is to be by sale, it will usually be appropriate for the parties concerned to be informed of each other's interest, and time allowed for open discussion before a transfer is finalised.
- 4.6 If after two months no equivalent museum has declared an interest in acquiring the museum item on the basis offered by Clare County Council, it may then be offered for sale to other interested organisations first approved of by the Council. This may also be done if an equivalent museum, which has previously expressed an intention to purchase, is unable to complete such a purchase within a reasonable period, normally six months.
- 4.7 Where a museum item is to be disposed of by gift, if after six months no museum can be found which is willing to accept responsibility for the item, it may be offered for sale to a private individual or by auction. If this is unsuccessful the item may be given to any appropriate organisation willing to receive it.

5. Disposal by Destruction

- 5.1 If the disposal of a museum item by all other means has proved to be impossible and disposal is regarded as absolutely essential the Council may be asked to authorise its destruction. The disposal by destruction of a museum item will only be acceptable if its retention in the collections would not be appropriate and no alternative public or private home can be found for it.
- 5.2 Museum items that have become in some way seriously damaged, or have deteriorated beyond the point of further usefulness for the collections, may also from time to time need to be formally de-accessioned and disposed of. In such circumstances, the Council acting on the advice of the Curator may authorise the immediate de-accessioning and disposal by destruction of such an item. This must be carried out in a discrete, confidential and permanent fashion.

6. Procedure Following Disposal

- 6.1 Full object records including (a) the reason for disposal (b) that the object has been disposed of (c) method of disposal and new location of object, if relevant (d) date of disposal (e) signature of staff responsible will be kept, along with photographs of all museum items that have been de-accessioned and disposed of from the Museum. The accessions register, object database and all relevant documentation must be annotated to record the disposal.
- 6.2 Where a museum item is transferred to another equivalent museum, all the associated documentation must accompany the item or follow within a period of one month. Clare Museum will retain on file copies of key sections of the documentation for future reference.
- 6.3 Any money received by Clare County Council as a result of the sale of a museum item will be placed in the Museum budget and used for the purchase of others items for the collection. The prior approval of Clare County Council will be sought on any occasion when an alternative use, such as improvements to the care of collections, is proposed.

References

Donegal County Museum Draft Disposal Policy

Galway City Museum Draft De-Accessioning Policy

National Museums Liverpool Acquisitions and Disposal Policy

South Tipperary County Museum Draft De-Accessioning Policy