

Report to The City of
Lincoln Council on
the proposed
transfer of Museum
Collections to
Lincolnshire County
Council

Report 1

18 August 2023

1. Arrangements for Collections Management:

Prior to April 1974 Lincoln County Borough Council owned and operated a museum called the City and County Museum and an art gallery known as the Usher Gallery pursuant to its powers under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. Under and by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972 and certain Orders made thereunder the City Council was constituted as the district council for the City of Lincoln and property in the City and County Museum and the Usher Gallery buildings and the collections housed therein passed to the City Council.

On 26 November 1973 the City Council resolved to approve proposals put forward by the County Council for a County Museums Service for Lincolnshire including the operation of the City and County Museum and the Usher Gallery by the County Council from 1 April 1974 subject to certain conditions. This included the retention in the City Council's ownership of the museum and art gallery buildings and the collections then housed therein. Since 24 October 1974, the City Council resolved to appoint the County Council as its agent under s 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 for the operation of the City and County Museum and the Usher Gallery. Today this operates as Lincoln Museum and The Usher Gallery.

In November 2021 the City Council and the County Council agreed revised terms and conditions in order that the County Council shall act as the provider of collections management services in relation to those items in the collections of the Usher Gallery and Lincoln Museum (The Collection Museum, formerly the City and County Museum) that are the property of the City of Lincoln Council.

2. Description of the Collection

The City Council collections accessioned into the Usher Gallery collection or The Lincoln Museum (The Collection Museum / City and County Museum) collection on or before 31 March 1974 cover a broad range of material types and subject matter.

The collections were formed from several substantial private collections including, but not exclusive to the Lincoln Cathedral Dean and Chapter, the Trollope bequest, the Melville bequest, the Carlbom collection, the Smith collection, the Lincolnshire Naturalists' Union collection, the James Ward Usher bequest and the Sir Francis Hill collection, and subsequently developed through smaller bequests, systematic fieldwork (e.g., excavation and surface survey), donation and purchase.

The collections include specimens from the natural world spanning millions of years, and art and artefacts from the earliest human settlers in the county around 300,000 years ago to the first three quarters of the 20th Century. They incorporate specimens, art and artefacts:

- created, deposited, discovered or collected in the county of Lincolnshire.
- collected by Lincolnshire residents from the UK, or from other countries.
- presented to the museum and gallery collections as significant examples of their kind but with no connection to the county.

The breadth and depth of the collections cared for by the County Council enable stories of Lincolnshire to be told through evidence left behind by those that have lived here before, in their daily lives, their ways of earning a living, and their artistic endeavors; and those that have travelled from Lincolnshire

and collected art and artefacts from further afield in the UK and abroad, or presented art and artefacts of significance beyond the boundaries of the county of Lincolnshire.

The County Council's museum sites and associated collections in its care are accredited by Arts Council England under its Museum Accreditation scheme.

3. Public Benefit

The City Council license the use of items in the City Council collections to the County Council for the purpose of audience access and engagement in line with the strategic objectives of the County Council's Culture Service delivered via County Council managed sites, services, and programming.

The County Council's vision for heritage is to showcase Lincolnshire's rich heritage to the world, with a commitment to connect people and places onsite, online and within local communities by:

- Sharing stories that inspire through engagement with our sites and collections.
- Creating experiences that put our visitors and customers at the heart of all we do.
- Bringing history to life through experiences that ignite the imagination, delight, and entertain.
- Valuing our sites and collections so that they can be enjoyed now and by future generations.
- Caring for our sites and collections and making them accessible for all.

The collections in the care of the County Council contribute significantly to the County Council's Mission by bringing a wealth of enjoyment and engagement opportunities which further helps fulfil the commercial sustainability of its heritage sites.

The service helps to ensure the cultural heritage and life of the county and the country are preserved for future generations, and that the present population can access culture and heritage in a relevant way which contributes to the local visitor economy and place making agenda.

The County Council's portfolio of sites includes Lincoln Castle, Lincoln Museum, The Usher Gallery, Discover Stamford, Museum of Lincolnshire Life, Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Visitor Centre, as well as outreach within our communities and online.

Under the County Council's management Lincoln Museum and The Usher Gallery have recently been awarded Visit England's Welcome Accolade, recognising their excellence within the visitor attraction sector and showcasing the county's rich archaeology and art as a venue that goes the extra mile to provide a high-quality day out. The service's associated learning programme has been awarded the Sandford Award in recognition of its outstanding offer.

In 2022-23 the breadth of public engagement delivered by the County Council's Culture service resulted in over 894,000 physical visits to its sites, including 89,353 visits to Lincoln Museum and The Usher Gallery, 16,917 pupils from educational settings, and over 2.8million online interactions. Over 6,400 enquiries were responded to specifically in relation to the service's collections and archives.

4. Transfer of Collections

Within the Collections Management Agreement and accompanying Service Level Agreement the City Council and County Council agreed to seek to review items in the City Council collections where they hold a provenance outside of the current geographical remit and jurisdiction of the City Council. This review is with the intention of exploring the permanent transfer of title for relevant artefacts from the City Council to the County Council as the appropriate accredited body- for their incorporation into the County Council museum collections.

The County Council is the relevant body for receipt of proposed collection transfers as the Arts Council England accredited museum body for Lincoln Museum and The Usher Gallery. Under prior and existing arrangements for Lincoln Museum, The Usher Gallery and their associated collections, Lincolnshire County Council has demonstrated a long-term commitment to the provision of collections management, care, and access for City Council owned collections.

All proposed transfers are made with a view to maintaining or improving the overall curatorial integrity of the collections and not for any other purpose. No transfer is proposed that would be to the detriment of the collections and is made with the curatorial recommendation of the County Council's team of qualified museum professionals. Transfer of title requires the prior agreement of the City Council to approve transfer of title, and the acceptance by the County Council in accordance with the collecting criteria of its Collections Development Policy. Transfers will be undertaken at nil cost to the City of Lincoln Council. The transfer of the material in scope provides for both the future security of the artefacts within the museum collection, and security for the City of Lincoln Council in the event of future changes to the current Collections Management Agreement.

The Service Level Agreement accompanying the Collections Management Agreement records the agreement of the Parties with regards to the priorities and any exclusions in force for the review of the City Council collections. The following categories of items are the agreed priorities for the period 2021-2025 for review and transfer of title to the County Council:

- Natural History
- Geology
- Archaeology (British)

This report serves to address the transfer of the Natural History and Geology collections, and the first batch of items within the Archaeology collection.

4.1 Geology and Natural History Collections

4.1.1 Proposal:

The recommendation is made for the wholesale transfer of the City Council owned Geology and Natural History collections from the City Council to the County Council.

In both categories a significant proportion of these collections come from historic/antiquarian collectors, with large deposits made by several key individual donors representing a range of geographical areas sometimes working as a group.

Significant wider geological and natural history collections are held by the County Council, sometimes involving the same donors across the 1974 date divide in collections ownership. Therefore the transfer of the collection will strengthen its integrity by being brought into a single legal ownership.

Groups of specimens donated together would be split further if geographic variables are applied. In addition, for large proportions of both natural history and geology collections, documentation relating to the identification of and exact provenance for individual items is minimal. As such, there is a notable degree of uncertainty as to the exact origins of some of the items within these collections in terms of geographical location – although an educated prediction would be that the majority of these items are not from the area defined as within City of Lincoln Council jurisdiction. Therefore, in order to best uphold the integrity of the collections for future research and interpretation wholesale transfer is recommended to avoid a further artificial split of these collections by geographical boundary.

Furthermore, due to the historic detachment of identification labels from individual items; incorrect identification in the documentation; and no inventory having been created in March 1974 without specialist input, it is impossible to match up all the physical items with the available documentation. In addition, pre 1974 some rationalisation of natural history is understood to have taken place due to the condition of the items which is not always documented to individual object level. Wholesale transfer will support the County Council's ongoing management of these collections in their entirety to resolve these issues. This will better allow for the alleviation of discrepancies and for the collection's ongoing management in line with sector standards for good collections practice.

The wider benefits of wholesale transfer of these collections to the County Council in the longer term will allow these complex, specialist collections to be better reviewed and developed, as a whole, representative of the County and within the single title of the County Council's museum collection. This would present a stronger proposition for funding and collaborating with partners to undertake specialist research and review work in order to better understand these collections for the benefit of our shared audiences and communities.

4.1.2 Documentation to support transfer.

A digitised extract of accession register entries provides information as to records of natural history and geology collected between 1906 and 31 March 1974. Headings include accession number, object name, description, and location (findspot/collection spot) where this information is recorded and available.

Please note one record may equate to more than one physical item. Therefore, totals relate to number of records for items to be transferred.

For these categories, the digitised extract comprises the full list of items in scope for transfer of title.

Copies of the relevant hardcopy accession registers held by the museum have been created and entries for each category proposed for transfer highlighted. The original accession registers will be

annotated to update transfer of title (subject to this being agreed). The original ledgers are available for City Council inspection upon request.

4.2 Archaeology (British)

4.2.1 Proposal:

The recommendation is made to permanently transfer the title of British Archaeological material from the City Council to the County Council where the physical provenance of items/collections sits outside of the current geographical jurisdiction of the City of Lincoln Council.

Unlike natural history and geology, providing find spot data is available, archaeological collections largely support application of a straightforward geographical specification for transfer given their provenance from specific areas/locations.

The transfer will provide improved accountability for the City Council, in that the title of collections held by the City Council represent the current jurisdiction as relevant to its current electorate.

Transfer of these collections to the County Council will provide improved coherence of these collections within a single heritage entity- and go some way to reducing the artificial split of the collection by date (i.e., by 1974 local authority division).

The archaeological record of the county continues to evolve and is collected at county level by the County Council at Lincoln Museum as the place of deposit for archaeological archives. The museum's archaeological collection is recognised for its significance at national and international level. The transfer of title for non-City of Lincoln originating material to the County Council will result in permanent union of the transferred material with the wider archaeological record in the care of the County Council. This will maintain the format under which this collection has been collectively managed and developed since 1974.

Items where a straightforward application of geographical boundary is possible are brought forward within this initial report.

Further reports for the transfer of archaeological material by geographical location will follow where more complex queries require further investigation. In some cases, these will need to be considered through case-by-case proposal and agreement. Future reports will include items where it is not possible to readily apply the geographical principle in a straightforward manner, e.g.:

- Items where find spot data/ geographical location is not readily available via accession register entries and requires further examination by museum officers to assign find spot information.
- Items where location provenance is undeterminable following research.
- Items within early accession registers entries which are:
 - detailed by material type rather than category i.e., glass, pottery rather than archaeology which in some cases will require physical inspection of items to cross reference and define a specific archaeology category.

- detailed under a redundant category type e.g., by-gones, and/or which may be undated which require physical inspection of items to cross reference against the application of a 1750 cutoff date of archaeology.
- Items on 'permanent loan', 'undefined loan', or other historic basis for their holding by the museum which are not recognised within contemporary sector guidance, and which require appropriate conversion.
- Groups of items or archives where:
 - accession dates span across 1974 title dates and where a major part of a collection sits within the County Council's owned museum collection.
 - provenance spans the defined geographical boundary where there is a case to discuss transfer to ensure permanent integrity of closely related collections.

These points are particularly relevant where this would lead to missed opportunities for new identifications, or even reuniting parts of an object based on items remaining in two separately owned collections.

4.2.2 Documentation to support transfer.

A digitised extract of accession register entries provides a first batch of information as to records of British archaeology collected between 1906 and 31 March 1974 where the geographical boundary criteria (current City of Lincoln Council jurisdiction) have been readily available and applied. For the purposes of this first report this focuses on records of archaeology collected between 1954 and 1974, with remaining material to follow in a subsequent report. The digitised extract includes accession number, object name, description, and location (findspot/collection spot) where this information is recorded.

Please note one record may equate to more than one physical item. Therefore, totals relate to number of records for items to be transferred.

Further extracts from the accession register of additional British archaeology items for transfer will follow in subsequent reports. This is where the application of geographical boundary criteria or wider criteria requires further examination.

Copies of the relevant hardcopy accession registers held by the museum have been created and entries for each category proposed for transfer highlighted. The original accession registers will be annotated to update transfer of title (subject to this being agreed). The original ledgers are available for City Council inspection upon request.

5. Recommendation:

For the City of Lincoln Council to approve the permanent transfer of title for the detailed museum artefacts from The City of Lincoln Council to Lincolnshire County Council for incorporation into the museum collection.