

Scope of the Policy

This document sets out the Collections Care and Preservation Policy for the Highland Archive Service (HAS) and identifies the preservation and conservation requirements necessary to ensure that all the physical and digital collections in our care will be available and accessible in the future. A robust Collections Care and Preservation Policy for our physical collections; the principles of which can be applied systematically across all collections, is essential to prevent and mitigate damage; mechanical, biological and chemical from occurring and to stabilise collections. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Collections Management Policy, Digital Preservation Policy, Collections Information Policy, Deposit Agreement Form and other relevant policy documents.

Mission Statement

Highland Archive Service, as part of High Life Highland, enables The Highland Council to fulfil its legal responsibility to preserve and provide access to its public records. Alongside this core function, we are dedicated to collecting, conserving, and making accessible, records that reflect the history and diversity of the Scottish Highlands and its inhabitants. We strive to make these collections as widely accessible as possible in our Archive Centres, through a variety of digital channels, and via an active community engagement programme.

Our mission is to benefit present and future generations, promoting the use of these records in:

- informing local decision-making
- strengthening community and cultural identity
- engaging with communities in ways that enhance learning, representation, inclusion, and equity
- improving health and wellbeing through the study and enjoyment of history
- **Making Life Better** for everyone, across Highland communities and beyond

Background to the Conservation Service

The Conservation Service was established in 2009 when HAS relocated to a purpose-built archive facility including conservation studio, supported by The Highland Council (THC) and the Heritage Lottery Fund. The team consists of two full time Conservators; a Senior Conservator with overall responsibility for collections care, work planning and health and safety as well as acting as an Instructor on the Archive and Records Association (ARA) Conservation Training Scheme, and a Conservator working on externally funded projects. The Conservation Team is responsible for looking after the collections which are held at Highland Archive Centre, as well as those held at Nucleus: The Nuclear and Caithness Archives, Lochaber Archive Centre and Skye and Lochalsh Archive Centre.

Preservation Assessment

A 'Preservation Assessment Survey' has been carried out to assist HAS by identifying the percentage of physical collections in our care which have specific preservation and conservation requirements. Preservation is paramount to preserving our unique archival heritage. The Conservation Team aims to ensure that all of the collections in its care will be available for future generations to access, and the survey assists this aim by identifying the extent of the Collection's conservation needs.

1 Preservation Provision

1.1 Preventive Conservation

- HAS recognises that preventive conservation is the most effective means of preserving the large number and diverse range of materials and record types and takes a 'whole collection' approach to ensuring collections are protected in the present and for the future
- The aim of preventive conservation is to minimise deterioration and damage by managing risks to the collections and its success depends on collaboration between staff and disciplines in all areas

Highland Archive Service

Collections Care and Preservation Policy

- Preventive conservation draws on knowledge from materials science, building science, chemistry, physics, biology, engineering, systems science and management and requires involvement of almost all staff

Preventive conservation occurs at all stages of the record's life and encompasses:

- Integrated pest management
- Ensuring that all staff and other users are trained to appropriate levels for their interaction with and/or management of the collections or individual items
- Provision of stable environments while in storage, on display, in transit and in use
- Protection from physical damage through appropriate support, housing and handling
- Readiness to respond appropriately to events that put collections at risk, by identification and management of risk, including disaster response planning

1.2 Provision of suitable building conditions

- HAS staff are tasked with ensuring that appropriate building conditions are in place for the long-term storage of the collections
- Fire detection and prevention systems are maintained in line with current standards, and are tested and serviced regularly
- Buildings are checked regularly and routinely for signs of water ingress, pests, vandalism and structural defects
- Once identified, problems are immediately reported to the Highland Archivist or Senior Conservator and the facilities management team
- When capital projects are planned, the care of the collections is considered, and professional archive staff are involved in the planning and sign-off process
- Environmental sustainability practices are actively considered and implemented to reduce the carbon impact of service activities and support THC and HLH's broader sustainability goals

1.3 Handling

- Practicality dictates that archives must be handled by staff and other users for research and access purposes
- All of the searchrooms are supervised by staff who have been trained in the safe handling of historic documents
- Users are given appropriate guidance and surrogates are provided where necessary
- Fragile items are identified and withheld from public access, and conservation treatment is prioritised and scheduled as resources permit

1.4 Training

- HAS staff are given training in the safe and appropriate handling of archives as part of their induction
- Refresher courses, led by a member of the conservation team are held periodically
- Training includes how to handle documents correctly and safely, use of trolleys and handling aids when applicable, and guidance on using appropriate Protective Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Disaster response and salvage training is provided to all relevant staff

1.5 Group visits

- Many of the groups who visit the Highland Archive and Registration Centre, Inverness spend time in the conservation studio as part of their visit, learning about document preservation including storage, treatments and handling
- The Conservation Team regularly features in the HAS engagement programme and participates in open days and events including those in partnership with external bodies

Highland Archive Service

Collections Care and Preservation Policy

2 Integrated Pest Management

2.1 Quarantine

- New acquisitions are inspected before being allowed into the main storage areas to ensure that the introduction of pests is prevented
- If staff identify potential pests in any collection, they will hold items temporarily in a safe place, and/ or in quarantine until a conservator has assessed the items and/ or until all risk of contamination has passed
- Every archive centre has a disaster box which includes appropriate packaging, allowing items to be double bagged and frozen if infected. If this is not possible, the affected items shall be removed from the collection, and advice sought from the conservator

2.2 Cleaning

- Training is provided by a professionally trained conservator to staff and volunteers
- Once trained, archive staff are able to clean documents unsupervised, however volunteers are always supervised

2.3 Environmental Controls

- HAS is committed to pursuing the standards of best practice which are set out in BS4971 2017 'Conservation and Care of Archive and Library Collections' and EN16893 2018 'Conservation of Cultural Heritage Specifications for Location, Construction, and Modification of Buildings or Rooms Intended for the Storage or use of Heritage Collections'
- All repositories are controlled by air conditioning systems; three by Building Management Systems and one, Skye and Lochalsh Archive Centre a standalone air conditioning system. This helps to preserve and prolong the longevity of vulnerable and fragile documents
- Staff monitor the climate within each of the repositories to ensure that the temperature and relative humidity is consistent with the standards recommendations; 16c - 50%rh. (At the Highland Archive Centre, Inverness, there are two repositories, storing photographic and audio-visual material; 14c – 40%rh.)

2.4 Environmental Monitoring and Pest Control

- Environmental conditions within all repositories, searchroom and display areas are monitored 24/7 using data loggers, recording the temperature and relative humidity
- The data is collected and analysed on a monthly basis by a member of the conservation team and this information is used to plan improvements and to implement control measures as necessary
- In addition, weekly environmental checks are carried out in across all archive centres using a handheld digital thermohygrometer
- Repositories are monitored using insect traps as part of weekly environmental checks. Traps are changed every 3 months
- When an insect is identified as an 'archival enemy' eg beetles or larvae, appropriate action is then taken to eradicate them

2.5 Display Cases

- Exhibition cases are secure, positioned to avoid excessive vibrations, sources of strong light and heat
- The environment is kept stable using a Pelsorb® cassette (that can be re-conditioned in a repository) and a data logger, allowing consistent data recording of collections
- Appropriate light levels are measured using a lux meter using guidance, found on BS4971 and the National Conservation Service's guidance document on Display Lighting and Fading Policy¹

¹ National Conservation Service; Guidance on Display Lighting and Fading Policy, CMR 127 17-04-01, 28th April 2019

Highland Archive Service

Collections Care and Preservation Policy

2.6 Packaging

- We aim to increase the number of documents which are housed within archival-quality packaging materials. Acid-free boxes, filefolders and wrapping papers are used, along with polyester and Tyvek® sleeves
- Potentially acidic ancillary packaging materials, or those of unknown quality, are replaced using appropriate packaging
- Documents will be labelled and packed in a manner which reduces the need for handling
- Photographs will be stored in polyester, polypropylene or Silver-safe® enclosures, rolled items will be protected with polyester, acid-free tissue or Tyvek®, and vulnerable unboxed material will be wrapped and stored appropriately
- Records collected by the Records Management Service will only be accepted if they are placed in the approved corporate records box and do not exceed the maximum weight limit of 15kg

3 **Records in Transit**

Occasionally archives are in transit, whilst uplifting a collection for accessioning or before and after conservation. The item(s) must be assessed as fit for travel by an archivist, who will consult with a conservator as necessary and appropriate training will be provided

3.1 Packing

- Archive staff must wear relevant Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as required and always use trolleys and handling aids when applicable
- Documents should be carefully wrapped and placed into sturdy containers which can be sealed and moved without difficulty
- Documents must be packed in such a way that they will not be compromised or damaged during the journey. They should be protected from sudden jolts, excessive vibration, and environmental factors such as wind and rain
- Vulnerable or fragile documents should be protected by enclosing them within suitably padded boxes.
- Each transit container should be addressed clearly, and all boxes and packaging should be labelled with the relevant reference numbers. Production slips must be completed and filed correctly, ready for transit if applicable
- When transporting a large quantity of material, boxes should be packed into plastic containers or carefully stacked onto pallets and transported within a suitable van or lorry
- Records should be packed carefully into vehicles to ensure that the movement of the vehicle will not damage them

3.2 Loading/unloading

- It is preferable to place documents onto a suitable trolley to minimise the risk of personal injury, and to prevent the accidental damage of records from poor handling or dropping
- Careful consideration should be given to the unpacking process to minimise the risk of accidental damage on arrival
- Staff must ensure that records are protected from exposure to weather, excessive light and other risks such as theft eg original records must not be left unattended in a vehicle
- To ensure the safety of both staff and documents, a risk assessment must be carried out in advance of any transit taking place which involves a large quantity of materials

3.3 Vehicles

- Archive staff may transport documents between sites, only once approved by their Line Manager in line with service/depositor agreements
- Staff vehicles (own car, pool car or hire vehicle) must be covered by business insurance

Highland Archive Service

Collections Care and Preservation Policy

4 Digital Preservation and Digitisation

4.1 Digital preservation

- Selection, accessioning and ingest of digital records along with a strategy for digital preservation is available in more detail in our Digital Preservation Policy

4.2 Scanning and photography of records

- Digitisation for the purposes of this policy describes the scanning and photographing of books, maps, plans, drawings, manuscripts, prints, negatives and slides, i.e. it refers to the creation of digitally produced surrogates and facsimiles
- HAS may digitise historic records which are held as part of the HAS archive collections to facilitate access, for display purposes or as part of a wider project
- HAS may digitise historic records on behalf of private clients and external organisations, subject to copyright and our pricing policy
- Digitisation may be carried out either in house or by a professional photographer when required

5 Disaster Planning

5.1 Disaster Planning

- Each archive centre has a disaster response plan which is reviewed regularly by the Senior Conservator, working closely with the Archivist and wider archive team and updated where necessary
- Staff are given a hardcopy of the disaster response handbook as required, and a digital copy is filed in a central location
- Salvage materials and disaster response boxes are located in each of the four archive centres
- Each box has an inventory printed on the lid, and the contents are regularly checked

5.2 Training

- Disaster training is provided as part of induction as appropriate and refresher training for all staff is also delivered periodically
- Training includes how to handle documents correctly and safely along with disaster response and salvage

6 Conservation

6.1 Remedial Conservation

- HAS has two professionally trained archive conservators and remedial conservation work will be undertaken by a member of the conservation team as standard practice
- HAS maintains a conservation priority list, recording items from the collections requiring treatment with each item allocated a priority of High, Medium or Low (Appendix C)
- The Senior Conservator will consult with the relevant Archivist before arranging for treatments, based on conservation priority and service requirements
- The Senior Conservator is available to provide advice, guidance and training on an ad-hoc basis throughout the year
- To ensure the long-term safety of the collections, only appropriately qualified and experienced conservators will be employed. Externally sourced conservators may be employed depending on requirements and as resources permit

6.2 Documentation

- All records requiring conservation should be catalogued before any conservation work is undertaken.
- All conservation work will be recorded using the specialist archive management software (CALM)
- Reports are created for each item which is treated, and these reports are linked to the catalogue record

Highland Archive Service

Collections Care and Preservation Policy

7 Conservation and Staff Responsibilities

7.1 Conservation Service

- The Conservation Team will work collaboratively with other areas of HAS to ensure that optimum care of the physical collections is achieved; ensuring documentation, storage and movement of the collections is managed correctly, and assisting and contributing to the care of collections
- Our aims are to ensure the long-term preservation of the records that we treat and to provide a service that is trusted and valued by providing specialist advice to HAS staff, depositors and external clients

7.2 Staff

- In the course of their daily duties, all HAS staff should be vigilant of risks to the collections and to changes in the condition of collections in their care
- Any risks and changes to the collections or their conditions should be reported to the Conservation Team
- Conservation training forms part of the HAS induction programme and refresher training is given periodically
- HAS encourages conservation staff to have or be working towards Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers (PACR), the professional practice assessment for conservation professionals, and the achievement and maintenance of accredited status
- HAS supports the Conservation & Collections Care Technicians Diploma, V&A

7.3 Monitoring

- Conservation requirements will be monitored regularly, by reporting preservation and conservation requirements to the Conservation Team
- Statistics are collected for preventive conservation work on records, including: records assessed and stabilised for storage; environmental data for storage areas; record condition reports; environmental data for exhibition and transport of collections
- Qualitative information collected on an annual basis, reviews of procedures and lessons learned from projects will all contribute to monitoring the application of the policy and its effectiveness

Policy Review Schedule

This policy is issued in March 2025 and will be reviewed and updated as necessary every three years or earlier if a response is needed to any changes in legislation.

Highland Archive Service

Collections Care and Preservation Policy

Appendix A

Definition of terms

Conservation Collection Care and Preservation terms

The following definitions represent the common use of the relevant terms in the conservation profession.

Conservator

A conservator is a professional who has the training, knowledge, skills, experience and understanding to act with the aim of preserving cultural heritage for the future. Conservators contribute to the perception, appreciation and understanding of cultural heritage in respect of its environmental context and its significance and physical properties. Conservators undertake responsibility for and carry out strategic planning; diagnostic examination; development of conservation plans and treatment proposals; preventive conservation; conservation-restoration treatments and documentation of observations and interventions.

Conservation

Conservation activities are aimed at preserving records and their significance and may include preservation, conservation treatments, examination, documentation, research, treatment, preventive conservation, and education.

Conservation ethics

Conservation practice is guided by conservation ethics which outline conservators' obligations to maintain the integrity of the records being cared for in the long-term; to take into account the interests of stakeholders, including cultural and religious considerations; to preserve the values that contribute to the significance of the record; to record all actions taken to preserve/conservate the record; and to ensure that appropriate skills and knowledge are employed in all conservation activities.

Conservation treatment

Conservation treatments consist mainly of direct, or interventive, action carried out on cultural heritage material with the aim of stabilising condition, repairing damage and retarding further deterioration.

Digital collections

Archival records whether born digitally or as a digitised (surrogate) version of a physical archive within our collections

Disaster

A disaster is any unplanned incident threatening the structure or contents of an archive, with the potential to have a detrimental effect on collections, and which is beyond the immediate ability of the archive's staff and normal management structure to control. A disaster can be a large or small event.

Preventive conservation

Preventive conservation consists of the actions taken to retard or prevent deterioration of, or damage to, cultural material by control of its environment. This is done through the formulation and implementation of policies and procedures for the following: appropriate environmental conditions; handling and maintenance procedures for storage, exhibition, packing, transport and use; integrated pest management; emergency preparedness and response; and reformatting/duplication and surrogacy.

Preservation

The preservation of cultural property through activities that minimise chemical and physical deterioration and damage, and that prevent loss of information. The primary goal of preservation is to prolong the existence of cultural property.

Highland Archive Service

Collections Care and Preservation Policy

Significance

'Significance' refers to the values and meanings that items and collections have for people and communities. Significance helps unlock the potential of collections, creating opportunities for communities to access and enjoy collections, and to understand the history, cultures and environments of the Highlands.

Condition

The condition of collections is framed in terms of risk in *normal* use, i.e. the usual or most common use for those collections or records in their life at HAS. This provides a standardised set of condition definitions that can be applied across the HAS and which relate to the proposed use of the collection or the record. The definitions are set out in Appendix B of this document.

Remedial Conservation – Preservation aspect

Remedial conservation describes those interventions which are applied to promote the chemical and physical stabilisation of materials, in order to extend their life.

Conservation involves the hands-on treatment of items from the collections. This work can be time-consuming and involves such things as the cleaning and consolidation of books and documents, the humidification and flattening of rolled plans and manuscripts, the lining of maps and the strengthening of fragile and / or torn documents.

When repairing a document, we endeavour to retain as much of the original as possible, whilst ensuring that long-term stability and accessibility are maintained.

Remedial conservation will be undertaken only when necessary, to ensure the long-term safety of vulnerable material. The decision to repair a document will take into account the historical importance of the item, its condition, and the cost implications. Consideration will also be given to the needs of the researcher and the level of use which the document is expected to sustain in the future. The decision to allow conservation work to take place will be made by the responsible archivist, after consultation with a professionally trained conservator.

Risk management criteria

HAS CIMSPA risk management policy outlines the organisational approach to risk management and defines the criteria for assigning different levels of consequence to collection-associated risks.

Highland Archive Service Collections Care and Preservation Policy

Appendix B

References

BS 4971:2017; 'Conservation and Care of Archive and Library Collections'

BS 16790:2016 Conservation of cultural heritage. Integrated pest management (IPM) for protection of cultural heritage

EN16893: 2018; 'Conservation of Cultural Heritage Specifications for Location, Construction, and Modification of Buildings or Rooms Intended for the Storage or use of Heritage Collections'

BS EN 16095:2012 Conservation of cultural property. Condition recording for movable cultural heritage
PAS 197:2009 Code of practice for cultural collections management

PAS198:2012 Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections

National Records Scotland (NRS) definitions <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/record-keeping/NRSConservationCareandPreservationPolicy.pdf>

'Standard for Record Repositories' (The National Archives, 2004), supplemented by TNA's 'Framework of Standards (2004) <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives/standards-framework.html>

Reference BS EN 16095: 2012 Conservation of cultural property- Condition recording for moveable cultural heritage.

European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations, *ECCO Professional Guidelines*, 2002, <http://www.ecco-eu.org/about-e.c.c.o./professional-guidelines.html>

Security

External Intruder alarm to conform to BS4737-4.3

Highland Archive Service
Collections Care and Preservation Policy

Appendix C

Rating	Consequence or Impact on Collections
High	<p>Documents in a weak and unstable condition; there is a risk of information loss, e.g. loose pages; cannot be accessed or copied - may be marked 'unfit for production'; evidence of mould/mycological growth as a potential health and safety risk; require conservation treatment to prevent further loss; records with a specific access deadline.</p> <p>The record/s will be damaged beyond salvaging and replacement is not possible. The damage and/or the required conservation treatment will permanently and irreversibly, negatively affect the record/collection's overall significance.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>The number of records that will be affected is high and cost to replace and or/ treat and preserve will exceed the annual operating budget.</p>
Medium	<p>Disfigured or damaged; usable for study; signs of deterioration and so continued use would cause further damage; images of this record in this condition would harm the reputation of HAS.</p> <p>Some permanent impact on one or more of the following would result but may be reduced through treatment: the significance, any of the values that contribute to the significance, accessibility of the records, availability for access and/or exhibition.</p> <p>The cost of remedial treatments may be considerable or have an impact on other programmed work; additional resources may have to be sought if the conservation treatment cannot be undertaken within operating budgets and has the potential for impact on other in-house work programmes.</p>
Low	<p>Disfigured or damaged but stable, e.g. heavily soiled; usable for study but may require further treatment to prevent eventual deterioration; packaging to be evaluated and upgraded; images of this record in this condition may harm the reputation of HAS. Non-standard archival formats that require special storage or transfer to archival medium.</p> <p>Minor damage could occur but could be relatively easily remedied or treated with no permanent impact on the significance, any of the values that contribute to the significance, the functionality or accessibility of a record and/or the record's availability for access and or exhibition.</p> <p>Conservation treatment times are estimated as small and can be accomplished utilising triage efficiently by specialist staff.</p>