

Scope and Purpose of the Policy

This policy aims to ensure that all areas of the Highlands and its communities are reflected by increasing the range and depth of the collections which are collected, preserved, publicised and made accessible. It sets out a framework for responsible and ethical acquisition and disposal of records by taking a standardised and strategic approach. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Collections Management Policy as well as with the Collections Information Policy, Collections Development Plan, 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

Statutory and Legal Status

The archive service operates within the parameters of:

- Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994
- The Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 (s.1)
- Data Protection Act 2018 including General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002
- The Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004

Highland Archive Service (HAS) is empowered to acquire archives by deposit, gift or purchase and to preserve them and make them available under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994, s.54 (1)-(4)

Three of the four Archive Centres (Highland, Nucleus and Lochaber) hold records under Charge and Superintendence Agreements with the Keeper of the Records of Scotland and Nucleus also hold a collection under a similar agreement with Historic Environment Scotland.

Acquisition

Ensuring a transparent, impartial and equitable approach to record acquisition is a key objective of HAS. Ethical acquisition of collections is ensured through consideration of the rationale for the acquisition or disposal of our collections; as well as being integral towards expanding and growing our collections from underrepresented communities.

The core collections which we will acquire are as follows:

- records of The Highland Council (THC) and its predecessor authorities which relate to its core functions and statutory duties
- records of High Life Highland (HLH) which relate to its core functions
- records entrusted to the appropriate Archive Centre by the National Records of Scotland under Charge and Superintendence

- records of individuals, families, estates, societies, businesses, organisations, institutions and religious establishments
- records from all sections of our communities which are currently underrepresented in our collections

Before acquiring records, we require that:

- they have a connection to the Highlands
- they are unique or deemed to be of archival value
- they are non-current and no longer required for business purposes
- they are free of legal or excessive access restrictions
- the depositor has authority to transfer the material, and signs a deposit agreement form confirming that they have agreed to the terms and conditions of the transfer
- all Council records have been checked against their appropriate corporate retention schedule, and have been deemed worthy of permanent preservation

Geographical considerations

- We will not spilt collections which overlap the catchment areas of the four Archive Centres. The main geographical source of origin will determine which Centre is chosen as the place of deposit
- We will not collect records which relate to areas which lie outside the agreed Highland boundaries and instead depositors will be referred to the appropriate record office
- If in certain circumstances such records form an integral part of a collection which has a Highland connection, they will be kept together, and catalogue information shared with the appropriate record office¹
- When advising potential depositors, we will draw attention to the existence of other repositories with similar or overlapping interest, to ensure that material is offered to the most appropriate institution

Limitations of the collecting policy

- We will not routinely collect artefacts, three dimensional objects or works of art. Only where these items are integral to the archive collection will we seek to keep the collection together. Artefacts will usually be directed to the appropriate museum or gallery
- We will not routinely collect printed or published material. Only where these items are integral to the archive collection, contain significant manuscript annotations or is of value as an aid to researchers will we seek to keep the collection together. Printed or published works will usually be directed to High Life Highland's Library Service

Collection Development

- We will review the strengths and weaknesses of our present holdings, seeking to target areas which may be underrepresented, to ensure the range and depth of our collections reflect all aspects of life in the Highlands
- Priority in acquiring records will be given to archives at risk of loss, destruction or damage

¹ HAS follows the Local Authority Archives Collecting Policies Agreement Guidelines which have been agreed by the Archivist in Scottish Local Authorities Working Group, which set out guidelines on which local authority should collect records which relate to two or more local authority areas.

Deaccessioning and Disposal

- We reserve the right to conduct periodic reviews of the collections to reassess their historic value
- Where records are identified as no longer worthy of permanent preservation, they will be offered back to the depositor or disposed of confidentially following the written agreement of the depositor, and subject to the terms of any statutory or other regulatory measure

Access

- We will make the records in our care accessible to the public as soon as priorities and resources allow and subject to any restrictions required by statute, owner/depositor conditions, confidentiality, security or conservation need
- There is a presumption that depositors are willing for records to be made available for public consultation (subject to relevant legislation)
- Depositors are encouraged that any additional access restrictions should be kept to a minimum
- We will promote and highlight our collections through our engagement programme (see Access Policy and Engagement Policy)

Policy Review Schedule

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