

**Lancashire**

County  
Council



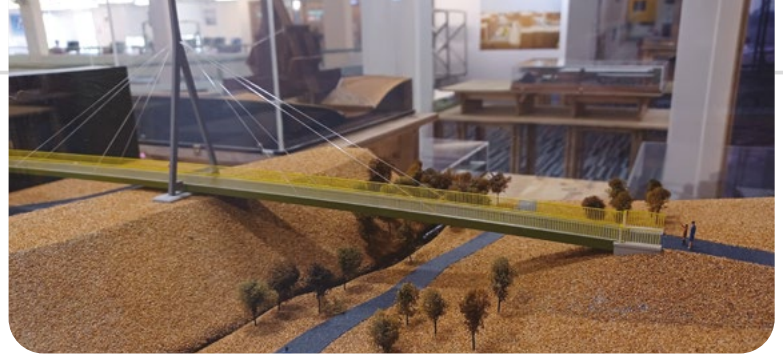
# Lancashire County Museum Service Strategy

2026 – 2028





# Foreword



**County Councillor**  
**Ella Worthington**  
**Cabinet Member for Civic Pride**

The Lancashire County Museum Service tell the stories of the people of Lancashire from ancient times through to the Romans, medieval castles, Tudor times and the industrial revolution, bringing history to life for all Lancastrians, and highlighting Lancashire's contributions to the nation and the world.



We are proud to play a vital role cherishing and championing Lancashire's heritage, looking after our museum sites whilst ensuring they remain an integral part of their local communities, and our conservation team have great expertise in looking after and restoring items of historic significance and enabling us to tell the stories of the lives of past Lancastrians. Connecting museum visitors and schools with and celebrating Lancashire's heritage is key to building strong communities and ensuring all Lancastrians feel a deep sense of Civic Pride and connection to Lancashire.

## Our values

- Supportive
- Innovative
- Respectful
- Collaborative

## Working together

- With residents
- With partners
- With councillors
- With colleagues

## Being accountable

- Managing performance
- Delivering our priority programmes
- Balancing our budget





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# Executive Summary

Lancashire County Museum Service (LCMS) collects and preserves Lancashire's diverse heritage and makes it accessible to everyone through high quality cultural experiences. Our museums are inclusive, collaborative, and creative spaces sharing stories of Lancashire's past but rooted in the present. We collect, preserve and present heritage objects and collections relevant to Lancashire and important to the world. We give people the opportunity to explore and appreciate Lancashire's rich heritage through immersive, creative and inspiring learning programmes.

From 2026–28 we will focus on our services and sites being embedded at the heart of Lancashire communities and the tourism economy. We will work with communities and partners to understand, reflect, share our heritage, enhance learning, engender civic pride and enrich the lives of the people of Lancashire.





Lancashire County Museum Service has identified the following strategic goals which support the Council Plan 2025-2030 including Moving the dial on our priorities 2026/27: Building a better Lancashire, and the Cultural Services Strategy.

- **Sustain and Evolve Our Heritage Offer**

Improve financial sustainability and continuously develop the heritage offer across our sites to engage with local people, schools and young people, visitors, and tourists, maximising the value and impact of our historic places.

- **Develop People and Talent**

Strengthen volunteering, skills enhancement opportunities, placements and early career pathways to support talent development, knowledge transfer and the long-term sustainability of the museum workforce, and promote the skills needed to preserve our heritage.

- **Enrich Learning and Participation**

Develop learning, creativity and participation opportunities for all ages, which enhance individual's wellbeing, skills development, and help communities fulfil their potential.

- **Increase Engagement and Access**

Engage communities, partners and stakeholders to ensure collections and historic sites are relevant, accessible, and reflective of Lancashire's heritage and identity.

- **Civic Pride**

Preserve Lancashire's memory through well maintained collections providing community access, enhancing understanding of place and identity, and supporting existing networks with partners, volunteers, Friends of Lancashire Museums and the education sector.

- **Grow Audiences and Visibility**

Raise public awareness and visitor numbers by enhancing digital resources, strengthening the tourism offer and collaborating with heritage partners to promote Lancashire's stories.

# Introduction

Lancashire County Museum Service (LCMS) has proudly served the people of Lancashire for over 50 years. Preserving more than a million significant objects for future generations and ensuring the county's diverse heritage is expertly collected, cared for, and interpreted. Our collections, and eight museums and heritage sites, are of national significance with castles, historic houses and textile mills telling the unique story of Lancashire. Over 140,000 visitors attend our venues each year, to learn and appreciate Lancashire's heritage and pride of place. Our museums are recognised as quality historic destinations for learning, leisure and tourism, where people of all ages can enjoy and explore stories of Lancashire past.

The service delivers award-winning heritage learning, giving teachers and pupils opportunities to explore and experience Lancashire's rich heritage, reaching 20,000 children each year.

The service provides expertise in conservation, collections care, technical and design support to museums and historic sites across the Northwest and beyond. Our talented teams make the past accessible, recognising our role as custodians of Lancashire's heritage, supported by Friends, volunteers and national partners. In addition, we administer the Portable Antiquities Scheme for Lancashire and Cumbria with the British Museum.

All parts of the service work with local and national partners to make Lancashire's heritage more accessible and secure external grants to support acquisitions, capital improvements and developmental activity. Our vision is to preserve, promote cultural heritage, engage Lancashire's residents and visitors, and inspire learning through history and the curriculum.



# What do we do

**Lancashire County Museum Service aims to provide access for everyone to quality resources, knowledgeable and customer focused staff and welcoming museum spaces. In addition to delivering services at our historic sites, we provide access and support across the county, ensuring that wherever Lancashire's communities are, they can benefit from the wider cultural offer of the Lancashire County Museum Service.**

**We fulfil our core purpose by:**

## **Collections –**

preserve and make accessible Lancashire's museum collections linked to physical and intangible heritage.

## **Sites –**

preserve and make accessible unique heritage buildings which contribute to communities, the economy and pride of place.

## **Learning and training –**

give people the opportunity to explore and appreciate Lancashire's rich heritage through immersive, creative and inspiring programmes. Providing training programmes for teachers supporting the Lancashire Way Education Strategy.

## **Workforce –**

talented and specialist staff who provide trusted and high-quality services in Lancashire and beyond.

## **Health and wellbeing –**

provide people with the opportunity to enrich their lives and confidence through education, learning, volunteering and partnership working.

## **Communities –**

engage with local communities to tell their stories and foster Civic Pride supporting people to develop a stronger sense of place through our collections both in person and online with a range of digital resources. We will have a positive impact on people's lives through the information we provide and the experiences we offer.



# Context and Who we are

The service is made up of three teams – Conservation and Collections, Museums, and Heritage Learning Lancashire.

The **Conservation and Collections** team is responsible for collecting Lancashire's heritage. We care, preserve and interpret the collections across all our heritage venues both on display and in stored research collections. The team consists of highly qualified specialist conservators, subject specialist curators, designers, museum technicians and collection management staff. In several areas we are the only specialists in the north of England. We oversee the industrial heritage technical staff operating the historic machinery at Queen St Mill, and Helmshore. Specialist staff respond to public enquiries, support our museums and museums across the northwest with advice and practical conservation, curatorial, exhibition design, technical services and outreach activities across a wide range of heritage areas. We create and deliver the annual temporary exhibition programme as well as the permanent gallery displays. We deliver heritage training both to the sector and to individuals.

The team support museums to maintain their Accreditation Status and advise on listed and scheduled buildings. The team operate the Lancashire Conservation Studios and Collections based in Saint Mary's Church, Preston, from which we also operate a conference and training venue. We are the depository for finds from archaeological excavations and deliver the Portable Antiquities Scheme on behalf of the British Museum for Lancashire and Cumbria. We support heritage and exhibition activities across Cultural Services and at County Hall Preston.





The **Museums** team is responsible for the day-to-day operations at six cultural heritage sites in Lancashire. Judges' Lodgings in Lancaster, Helmshore Mills in Rossendale, Queen Street Mill in Burnley and Clitheroe Castle Museum in the Ribble Valley, are all Accredited Museums. We also operate Gawthorpe Hall in Padiham, a National Trust house, and have a licence to operate guided tours at Lancaster Castle. All our museums are operated by Lancashire County Council trained staff who manage the day-to-day running of the museums as well as developing and delivering regular activities and programmes engaging local communities and visitors. Several of our sites also have a café offer which support social and wellbeing activities as well as enhancing the visitor offer. The team manage dedicated volunteers who support with a range of roles. We work in partnership with friends, trusts, partners, district councils and funders to contribute to vibrant and creative events and activity programmes such as Painting Padiham, the British Textile Biennial and Heritage Open Days.

**Heritage Learning Lancashire** is a multi award winning learning and education team. The team is responsible for delivering a range of bespoke learning programmes covering Primary, Secondary, Further and Higher Education sectors. The programmes are delivered across 13 museum and heritage sites in Lancashire and beyond. This is complemented via outreach sessions within various education settings, bespoke projects, public and place-based events and lifelong learning. Heritage Learning Lancashire provides pupils with the opportunity to explore and value Lancashire's rich heritage through hands-on and experiential learning via unique collections and stimulating sites. The team delivers a range of teacher training workshops, curriculum development, cross curricular projects supporting literacy and numeracy, online resources including subject specific podcasts, and consultancy across Lancashire.



# Sites and Context

The Lancashire County Museum Service maintains centralised specialised services and stores and workshops in Preston to support its operation across the North. Based in the former Territorial Army building adjacent to the Museum of Lancashire and Lancashire Conservation Studios, the Museum HQ houses the Senior Museum Manager, Heritage Learning Lancashire, and members of the Conservation and Collections teams. It provides a research and office base, access to stored collections and a venue to respond to public and organisational enquiries including the Portable Antiquities Scheme. With the Museum of Lancashire, Museums HQ is also used for school sessions on World War 2.

## Lancashire Conservation Studios & Collections

Museum Accreditation Number – 212

The Lancashire Conservation Studios and collections is the only conservation studios listed as a publicly accessible museum within the Accreditation Scheme. Opened in 2007 at the Lancashire County Museum Service HQ, it continued and expanded the important conservation and museum support provided by the former North West Museum Service. The Lancashire Conservation Studios provides the opportunity for the public to see ‘behind the scenes at the museum’. The building, an 1836 Church and graveyard, was redesigned to provide state of the art conservation studios, conference spaces, and collection care and heritage training support for LCC and other museums across the north. Bookable tours of the facility see ‘through the windows’ into five specialist conservation areas and learn about the varying skills required to operate a heritage venue.

Combined with this, the curatorial technical and design staff respond to public enquiries, and undertake outreach activities, regarding our Pan-Lancashire collections. This is the only publicly accessible conservation studios in the country and provides bespoke heritage training within its conference venue.

The team also oversee the care and management of the core Lancashire County Museum Service collections owned by Lancashire County Council, managed collections like Ribbles Valley Borough Council and loans in and loans out. These include the Fleetwood maritime collection at Fleetwood Museum, operated by Fleetwood Museum Trust and in-situ art collections at Scarisbrick Hall and displays in other LCC buildings including libraries.

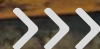


## Judges' Lodgings

Museum Accreditation Number – 214

Judges' Lodgings is an Accredited local authority museum and Lancaster's oldest town house owned and managed by Lancashire County Council. It explores its history and connections to Lancaster's story including the furniture trade. The Grade I listed house was built for the keeper of Lancaster Castle in 1625 on the site of an earlier manor house. It was used as lodging house for the judges of the castle courts who presided over many trials.

Its decorated rooms display fine art and furniture by Gillows of Lancaster. The top floor has a toy exhibition known as the Museum of Childhood. There are changing exhibitions and annual installations working with cultural partners. The museum has a school and events programme, drop-in activities, a garden, gift shop and a pop-up tearoom run by the Friends of Judges' Lodgings. The museum is supported by the Judges' Lodgings Trust.





## Clitheroe Castle Museum

Museum Accreditation Number – 216

Clitheroe Castle Museum is an Accredited local authority museum, owned by Ribble Valley Borough Council and managed by Lancashire County Council. It explores the history of Clitheroe and Ribble Valley over 350 million years. It is housed inside the Grade II listed former home of the Castle Steward, near the Keep at the top of Clitheroe Castle mound. The site has stunning views of Ribble Valley, Clitheroe and the castle grounds which are now a public park. The museum has a permanent exhibition featuring a wide range of local history, archaeology and geology items on display. The Museum and Stewards Gallery host regular changing exhibitions. The museum has a school and events programme, monthly competitions, drop-in activities and a gift shop.





## Helmshore Mills

Scheduled Ancient Monument

Museum Accreditation Numbers – 1889 and 215

Helmshore Mills is a textile museum and industrial heritage site in Rossendale managed by Lancashire County Council. The site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument designated by Historic England. It consists of two Accredited museums and their collections Higher Mill owned by Higher Mill Trust and Whitaker's Mill owned by Lancashire County Council. The museum explores their important role in wool and cotton manufacturing. The collections include original working carders, spinning mules and waterwheel, these and other in-situ machinery are part of the Lancashire Textile Industry Collection which is Designated by Arts Council England. The museum has a permanent exhibition on the Industrial Revolution, runs spinning demonstrations, has a schools and events programme, a café and a gift shop.

The Higher Mill Trust and the Friends of Helmshore Textile Museum support the work of the museum.



## Queen Street Mill

Museum Accreditation Number – 1518a

Queen Street Mill is textile museum and industrial heritage site in Harle Syke in Burnley owned and managed by Lancashire County Council. The building is Grade I listed and is the last operational steam-powered weaving shed in the world. The museum enables visitors to experience what working life was like in a Victorian cotton factory.

The museum is Accredited and the collections which include over 300 Lancashire looms and a steam engine named Peace are part of the Lancashire Textile Industry Collection which is Designated by Arts Council England. The museum offers guided tours, demonstrates machinery for visitors and has a school and events programme, a café and a gift shop.



## Gawthorpe Hall

Non-accredited museum

Gawthorpe Hall is a historic house in Padiham in Burnley, owned by the National Trust. It is leased and operated as a museum by Lancashire County Council. This Grade I listed hall dates back to 1600 and was remodelled in the 1850s by Sir Charles Barry who redesigned the Houses of Parliament. Inside it explores the history of the house and the Shuttleworth family through period rooms, with contents owned by the National Trust, loans from the National Portrait Gallery, private collections, LCMS and Gawthorpe Textiles Collection. The hall has dedicated rooms showcasing the Gawthorpe Textile Collection founded by Rachel Kay-Shuttleworth.

The Gawthorpe Textile Collection is an independent and Accredited museum at Northlight Mill in Brierfield which highlights Gawthorpe's significant textile history. The hall has changing exhibitions, an events programme, special event weeks for schools, drop-in activities and a gift shop.

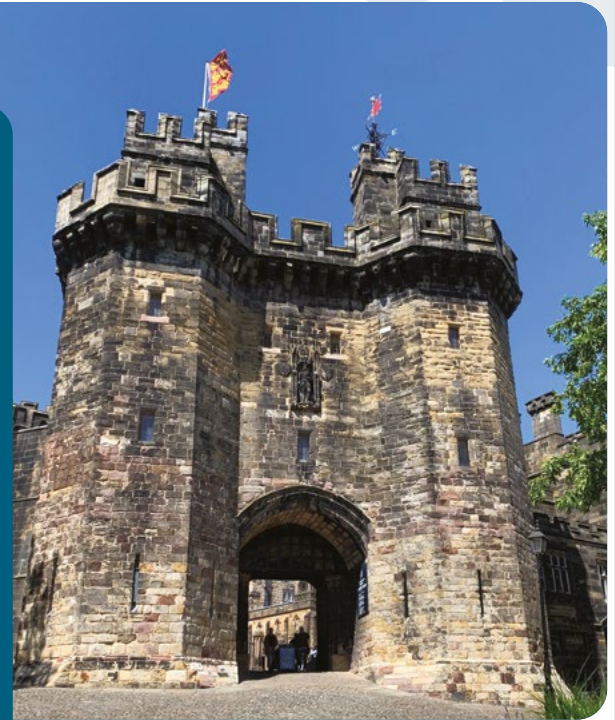


## Lancaster Castle

### Guided tour operation

Lancaster Castle is one of Lancashire's key historic landmarks attracting over 200,000 visitors a year through its iconic gates. It is owned by the serving monarch, HM King Charles III, through the Duchy of Lancaster. A Grade I listed building, it was used as a court and prison for hundreds of years and includes a medieval castle keep. Lancashire County Museum Service lease the courtyard clocktower as a ticket office and gift shop and hold a licence to operate paid guided tours. Our tours run all year round with visitors accompanied by a castle guide able to explore what lies behind its walls and delve further into its past visiting the prison areas and courts. In addition to the tours there are school visits. The tours have been awarded various accolades including Visit England's Best Told Story.

The civil courtroom, known as the Shire Hall, is one of the most iconic rooms in the north of England and contains an impressive collection of over 650 shields on display representing the arms of every English monarch from Richard the Lionheart, the Constables of Lancaster Castle and High Sheriffs of Lancashire. The Castle site also houses a café and Lancashire Police Museum; an Accredited Museum housed in former A-wing of Lancaster Prison.

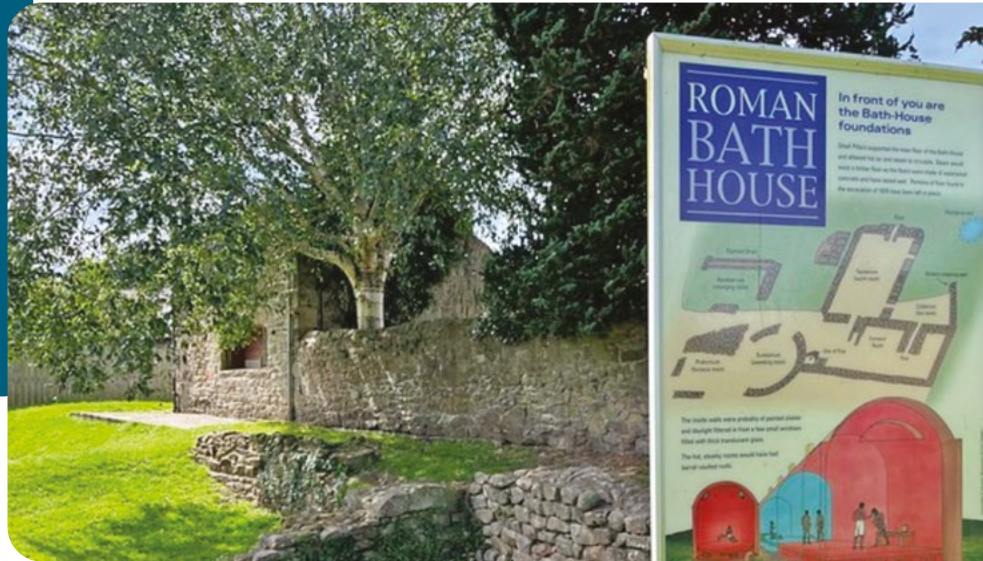




## Ribchester Roman Bathhouse

Scheduled Ancient Monument

The bathhouse at Ribchester (known to the Romans as Bremetennacum) was built about AD 100. It was designed to serve the needs of the soldiers garrisoned in the nearby fort and later for the local civilian population until c245AD. Initially discovered in 1837, various excavations continued until 1978. The Museum Service holds the archaeological items discovered during excavation. Today, the remains of the ruined Bath house are visible and there are information boards explaining the site. This is a free to access site, open dawn to dusk, and it is a key stopping off point for walkers as it sits on the route of the Ribble Way Long-Distance Path.





# Cultural Services Strategic Objectives

This strategy will demonstrate how Lancashire County Museum Service contributes to delivering the vision of Cultural Services and the County Council. Delivering on Stronger communities – Lancashire County Museum Service enrich people's lives across Lancashire by sharing Lancashire's stories providing connections to our communities which create a sense of shared heritage and civic pride. We help celebrate Lancashire as a great county in which to live and work and provide opportunities to upskill individuals and children through our learning and heritage programmes.

Cultural Services Vision – The people of Lancashire will lead happier, healthier, and enriched lives through culture, supporting our county to be a vibrant place to live and ensuring that innovation and creativity are at the heart of everything we do.

Lancashire County Museum Service will work to deliver the five strategic objectives set out in the Cultural Services Strategy, 2025–2028, which will help to meet the County Council's vision.

- Create lifelong learning opportunities to enrich lives and to benefit from cultural services.
- Improve the inclusivity of our cultural offers enabling everyone to engage as audience, participant, or creative producer.
- Empower people to lead healthier and fulfilled lives through access to high quality information, a wide range of activities and positive social interaction.
- Inspire young people through a cultural offer enriching their lives and creating opportunities for personal development.
- Ensure our collections are accessible, contributing to Civic Pride and a sense of belonging for all communities.

# Lancashire County Museum Service Strategic Goals

Lancashire County Museum Service has identified the following strategic goals which support the Council's vision and Cultural Services Strategy.

- **Sustain and Evolve Our Heritage Offer**

Improve financial sustainability and continuously develop the heritage offer across our sites to engage with local people, schools and young people, visitors, and tourists, maximising the value and impact of our historic places.

- **Develop People and Talent**

Strengthen volunteering, skills enhancement opportunities, placements and early career pathways to support talent development, knowledge transfer and the long-term sustainability of the museum workforce, and promote the skills needed to preserve our heritage.

- **Enrich Learning and Participation**

Develop learning, creativity and participation opportunities for all ages, which enhance individual's wellbeing, skills development, and help communities fulfil their potential.

- **Increase Engagement and Access**

Engage communities, partners and stakeholders to ensure collections and historic sites are relevant, accessible, and reflective of Lancashire's heritage and identity.

- **Civic Pride**

Preserve Lancashire's memory through well maintained collections providing community access, enhancing understanding of place and identity, and supporting existing networks with partners, volunteers, Friends of Lancashire Museums and the education sector.

- **Grow Audiences and Visibility**

Raise public awareness and visitor numbers by enhancing digital resources, strengthening the tourism offer and collaborating with heritage partners to promote Lancashire's stories.

# How we will measure our performance

We have established different ways of delivering on our goals and measuring our performance.

We will:

- Produce and report on annual business plans to ensure that strategy goals are delivered
- Contribute to the annual report for Cultural Services
- Contribute to the Council Plan reporting on visitor footfall, volunteering and collection access
- Have key performance indicators which are monitored quarterly and reviewed annually
- Maintain Arts Council England Accreditation of our museums
- Benchmark aspects of performance against national standards, other providers and the wider heritage sector
- Generate income and apply for grant funding to deliver programmes and projects to improve future sustainability
- Monitor our service delivery by using data and visitor feedback to improve our offer
- Evaluate annual performance against budgetary targets
- Continually review progress of strategy to ensure alignment of operational plans
- Report on our involvement in national and regional initiatives



# Statutory and legal basis for Lancashire County Museum Service

The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 and the Local Government Act 1972 extended the powers of local authorities to provide museums. However, museums are technically not a statutory service.

Lancashire County Museum Service was created in 1974 to ensure the history and heritage was collected, preserved and interpreted for its citizens. LCMS operates a collections policy and collection management strategies to ensure appropriate measures in relation to the overseeing of the county's diverse collections. The County of Lancashire Act of 1984 provides a statutory framework for the acquisition, retention and, where relevant, disposal of artefacts for the benefit of the people of Lancashire.

Arts Council England manages the Museum Accreditation Scheme, which sets nationally agreed standards for museums in the UK.

They also manage the Designation Scheme which identifies and celebrates outstanding collections. LCC is responsible for one Designated Collection on the Lancashire Textile Industry.

The Collections Trust, one of the Arts Council Investment Principal Organisations, oversees the SPECTRUM – the UK museum collections management standard which the museum service follows.

Lancashire County Museum Service is also a member of the Museums Association the professional body that oversees the Museum Code of Ethics.

The Treasure Act 1996 and Treasure Act 2023 deal with finds of treasure in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It obliges finders of objects which constitute 'treasure' to report their find to the Portable Antiquities Scheme, Finds Liaison Officers who liaise with local coroner, who determine whether the find constitutes treasure or not.

# Background papers and standards

Background papers and standards This strategy has been informed by and supports the message and ambitions of the following key documents:

- Let's create: Our Strategy 2020 – 2030, Arts Council England, 2020
- Lancashire County Council, Council Plan 2025–30
- Lancashire County Council Cultural Strategy 2024–28
- Lancashire County Council Digital Strategy 2025–29
- Lancashire County Council Growth Plan 2050
- Lancashire County Council, The Lancashire Way Education Strategy 2025-2028

CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) aims to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of the species. The Natural History Conservator provides advice to the public and institutions with regard to this agreement.

The Human Tissue Act 2004 (HTA 2004) with specific provision regarding the handling, display, storage and transfer of human remains in museums.

Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (AMAAA 1979) provides legal protection for nationally important archaeological sites. It makes it a criminal offence to damage, destroy, or use metal detectors on these designated sites without Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) from the Secretary of State.

All the museums are also housed in important historic properties listed by Historic England, which are subject to statutory controls. These assets are managed through five yearly inspection reports and conservation management plans in line with best practice and heritage guidance. The record of all monuments on the Schedule of Monuments is on the National Heritage List for England.





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