

“Preserving the past, informing the future”

National Meteorological Archive Collections Care and Conservation Procedure

1. Introduction:

The National Meteorological Archive (NMA) is a recognised place of deposit for public records and thus has a statutory requirement under the Public Records Act to hold, preserve and make available materials created by the Met Office and classed as public records. This collection is considered to represent the National Memory of the Weather. In addition the archive holds a wide variety of items and collections covering both UK and world weather which are considered to complement the public records. The NMA is supported and complemented by the National Meteorological Library (NML) which seeks to provide, in one location, a specialist library of published matter representing historic and ongoing global research and development in the field of meteorology.

2. Aims and Objectives:

Collections care is a fundamental duty for all archives. The NMA seeks to both preserve its collections in accordance with current published international standards and benchmarks and to implement best practice wherever possible. In particular this relates to the implementation of practices and procedures as set out in both BS EN16893:2018 and also the Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) ‘Benchmarks in Collections Care for Museums, Archives and Libraries Self Assessment Checklist’ (Benchmarks in Collections Care 3.0 published 2022).

Approaches to storage will be reviewed as new standards and guidelines become available but as a minimum will reach the Benchmarks in Collections Care ‘basic’ requirements.

The ongoing need to actively care for the library and archive collections is reflected in the following documents: Forward Plan, Archive Disaster Plan, Library Incident Management Plan, Collections Development Policy and Access Policy and is informed by the Collections Care and Conservation Strategy, Conservation and Preservation Priorities List, Benchmarks in Collections Care Report and the Condition Survey. Collections Care including both remedial and preventative conservation is funded from the NMLA budget.

In addition to maintaining an appropriate storage environment condition surveys will also identify and prioritise items and collections for conservation in order to prevent further deterioration and maintain access wherever possible. In the case of the most vulnerable items the archive will seek the best way to retain access to these collections whilst ensuring long term preservation of the original.

A Benchmarking Exercise was carried out in 2022 and this, alongside the Condition Survey have been used to develop this collections care strategy as outlined in the Conservation and Preservation Priorities list, Forward Plan and paragraphs below.

Collections Care is based on the following areas of priority. Measures taken are in line with available benchmarking and guidelines and are intended to care for the collections by ensuring their ongoing survival and maximise accessibility either to originals or surrogates.

Preservation / Preventative Conservation

This relates to the measures necessary to slow down or minimise deterioration of collections.

Buildings and Storage:

- Buildings will be maintained using maintenance, building management systems, environmental monitoring systems, security systems and protocols and appropriate fire and water ingress warning systems and evacuation procedures.
- The buildings occupied by NMA are owned by Devon County Council and they are responsible for inspecting buildings and undertaking repairs. Appropriate leases and SLAs are in place.
- NMA staff will work closely with Devon Heritage Service conservators to maintain appropriate environmental conditions within the areas used for the storage and provision of archival materials.

Environmental Monitoring:

- NMLA staff, in association with DHS conservators will monitor environments to maintain the following controls as laid out in BS 4971:2017 and BS EN16893:2018:
 - **Relative humidity (RH):** for general mixed media collections, 35-60% RH with less than a 10% fluctuation in any 24 hour period
 - **Temperature:** 13 – 23 degrees centigrade (annual average less than 18 degrees)
 - **Visible light:** 50 – 250 lux, depending on the light sensitivity of the item
 - **UV radiation:** less than 75 mw/lm (micro watts per lumen)
 - **Display case construction:** where appropriate, items on display will be

- o cased and the internal case environments tailored to suit the items within.
 - o **Storage:** where practicable, stored collections will be housed in acid free boxes to protect against dust.
 - o **Handling and reference:** there will be appropriate supervision of direct access to archive and collections and guidance given on safe handling of collection items to all staff, volunteers and customers.
- Act upon data collected from environmental monitoring systems to provide stable and appropriate storage and display environments.
 - Monitor, manage and eradicate pests

Housekeeping:

- Quarantine areas will be used with appropriate pest monitoring and action taken may include freezing items with identified problems at -30°C for 72 hours to eradicate pests before being introduced into stores
- Housekeeping activities are carried out at regular intervals using methods not detrimental to the collections. Chemical-based commercial cleaning products are avoided in favour of dry cleaning methods.

Handling and Use:

- Collections will be moved safely and with reference to any potential H&S issues that may impact staff.
- Risk assessments will be undertaken before moving particularly vulnerable collections.
- All items to be transported will be suitably packaged.
- Items will be handled under appropriate supervision and at all times promoting good practice.

Disaster Planning:

- Disaster plans will be kept up to date and will be regularly reviewed.

Remedial or Interventive Conservation

This relates to any treatment necessary to bring an item into a more acceptable condition or state in order to stabilise it or enhance some aspects of its cultural or scientific value.

- Conservation work will only be undertaken by an appropriately qualified person or under their supervision.
- All conservation work beyond basic cleaning will be handled by trained conservators

according to relevant standards and any work undertaken will be appropriately documented.

3. Supporting Documents

This policy is supported by a range of documents covering handling and preservation guidelines, emergency planning and collections conservation and care strategic planning:

1. Methodology underpinning Collections Care and Conservation Policy
2. Condition survey
3. Conservation and Preservation Priorities List – conservation / preservation / scanning
4. Benchmarks Survey and Report on Outcomes from 2015 Survey
5. Collections Care Guidelines
6. NMA Disaster Plan
7. NML Continuity Plan

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