

## **Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales**

### **Policy for Human Remains**

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales holds collections in trust for the people of Wales. We make our collections accessible to all in ways that will benefit present and future generations. Human remains provide a tangible physical insight into the lives, health and death of people who have lived in Wales. Human remains were once living people, accordingly, we will care for them in a culturally respectful manner while also making them available for research, learning and display.

1.2 This policy is one part of our Collections Management Framework, accordingly it operates alongside other related museum strategies and policies listed in our Collections Management Policy.

#### **2. Objective**

2.1 This policy sets out how the Museum will sensitively and respectfully acquire, care for and make accessible the human remains in our collection.

#### **3. Definition of Human Remains**

3.1 We use the term human remains to mean the bodies, and parts of bodies, of once living people from the species *Homo sapiens* (defined as individuals who fall within the range of anatomical forms known today and in the recent past) and any evolutionary earlier hominins with which modern humans today may share a common ancestor (e.g. *Homo neanderthalensis*). This includes osteological material (whole or part skeletons, individual bones, or fragments of bone or teeth), soft tissue including organs and skin, embryos, hair, nails and slide preparations of human tissue.

3.2 Human remains also include any of the above which may have been modified in some way by human skill and/or may be physically bound-up with other non-human materials to form an artefact composed of several materials. This definition includes artworks composed of human bodily fluids and soft tissue.

#### **4. Legal and Ethical Considerations**

4.1 Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales acknowledges that we will care for the human remains in our collections in accordance with current legislation (Human Tissue Act 2004) and best practice guidance (DCMS Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums, 2005).

4.2 We cannot legally own human remains except where these remains have been treated or altered through the application of skill. However, we recognize the ethical responsibilities invested in us through possession of such remains. We are

committed to treating all human remains in an ethical and socially responsible manner.

4.3 We hold human remains by virtue of the historic nature of the collection we care for. We believe in being open about the contents of the collection and in making information available to all enquirers.

## **5. Acquisition of Human Remains**

5.1 Any decision about whether or not to retain these permanently in the collection will be taken following full consultation with appropriate local communities and specialists. All acquisitions of human remains will be made with reference to the Museum's Collections Development Policy.

5.2 Archaeological human remains may be acquired from fieldwork projects. Such human remains may have scientific, ethical and religious importance in the U.K. We will only accept human remains in the event that the remains enter the Museum accompanied by a license obtained from the correct authority.

5.3 If the land is not subject to the legal effects of consecration, including disused burial grounds as defined by the Disused Burial Grounds Act (1981), we will only accept human remains accompanied by a license for their exhumation (including cremated remains) from the ground issued by the Ministry of Justice.

5.4 For some Christian remains, if the land is subject to the legal effects of consecration it comes under the jurisdiction of the Church in Wales. Any human remains acquired must be accompanied by a license demonstrating that permission to exhume and retain the human remains has been obtained through the Church in Wales' administration. For churches and churchyards a faculty issued by the Diocesan Chancellor will be required. For cathedrals and cathedral precincts permission is applied for through the specific cathedral authority.

5.5 We will only acquire human remains that fall within the definition of the Human Tissue Act which are less than 100 years since the death of the individual if accompanied by a formal statement of intent signed by the individual prior to their death.

## **6. Exhibition and Display**

6.1 Where human remains form part of an exhibition, either long or short term, we will display them in a culturally appropriate, sensitive and informative manner and will always accompanied by explanatory and contextual interpretation. Display of contested or identifiable human remains will only be made after due process of consultation with relevant cultural groups.

6.2 For the display of human remains where a display license is required under the terms of the Human Tissue Act, a license will be procured before the remains enter the Museum building.

## **7. Loans In**

7.1 We will treat all human remains that enter the Museum in the same way as we would our own collections.

7.2 Any inward loan of human remains will be subject to a process of due diligence ensuring that all exhumation or human tissue licenses are in place prior to the entry of the human remains to the Museum.

7.3 The conditions within the Museum's Policy on Inward Loans will also be applied.

## **8. Loans Out**

8.1 All requests for the loan of human remains will be subject to the terms of the conditions within the Museum's Policy on Outward Loans.

8.2 All requests to borrow human remains will be required to abide by the terms of this policy for Human Remains.

## **9. Storage**

9.1 All human remains over 100 years since death are stored in the Museum's dedicated human remains store.

9.2 All human remains less than 100 years since death are stored in a dedicated cabinet in accordance with the requirements of the Human Tissue Act, 2004.

9.3 Archaeological remains will be organized according to site and by context, where known. In some instances human bones may be marked with a contextual or accession number, but we will strive not to mark remains unless deemed absolutely necessary to avoid confusion during their study or display. Wherever possible, individual skeletons will be stored singly in a box. Where bones from individuals are mixed, e.g. in a Neolithic chambered tomb, then they will be stored by archaeological context. Each box will be labelled with its archaeological site name and skeleton or context information if known.

## **10. Research**

10.1 All requests for access to human remains for research purposes must be put in writing to the relevant Curator. All requests must explain the nature of the research and expected outcomes.

10.2 Any request for sampling or analysis of human remains (including DNA analysis) must be put in writing using the Museum's Sampling Application Form. All requests must follow the Museum's Policy for Sampling and Analysis (see Policy on Collections Access and Use). These will be assessed, as required, by the relevant subject curator, conservator, Keeper and may require approval by an independent advisor.

10.3 All researchers granted approval for access will be expected to follow the guidance provided by the person designated to supervise the visit and will be expected to treat all remains with full respect.

## **11. Repatriation, Reburial and Deaccession**

11.1 We will continue to be proactive in repatriating our foreign human remains, where appropriate to countries of origin. We will be open to requests for the repatriation of other human remains and will enter into full consultation with claimants.

11.2 Claims for repatriation and reburial will be determined on a case by case basis in accordance with the procedure outlined in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's document Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums. Where appropriate we will also secure independent advice from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Human Remains Committee.

11.3 All requests for repatriation, reburial and deaccession must be submitted in writing to the Director General, Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales. Final approval for transfer from the Museum's possession will be subject to the Museum's Collections Development Policy and will be subject to confirmation by the Board of Trustees of Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales.