

Policy paper

2015 to 2020 government policy: museums and galleries

Updated 1 June 2016

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This is a copy of a document that stated a policy of the 2010 to 2015 Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government. The previous URL of this page was

<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/maintainingworldleadingnationalmuseumsandgalleries-and-supporting-themuseumsector>

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/maintainingworldleading-nationalmuseumsandgalleries-and-supporting-themuseumsector>). Current policies can be found at the GOV.UK policies list (<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies>).

Issue

3 of the world's top 10 most visited museums are based in England, and around 50 million people visit our national museums and galleries each year.

Our national museums and galleries are truly world leading. They are important centres for scholarship and research, as well as being hugely popular visitor attractions, enriching people's lives and educating in equal measure.

Beyond our national museums, which are funded directly by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), England has a huge network of specialist and regional museums, run by charities, local authorities and educational establishments. Support to these museums is provided by Arts Council England, including funding for 21 Major Partner Museum networks across England. The Heritage Lottery Fund also provides around one third of its funding to museums and galleries for a range of projects including capital projects.

Actions

We are maintaining world leading museums and galleries, and supporting the wider museum sector, by:

- providing funding for national museums and galleries
- providing free public access to the permanent collections of national museums and galleries
- funding the Arts Council to provide support to regional museums
- continuing to fund 'capital improvements' (like renewing displays or interpretation) for museums and galleries, through the DCMS/Wolfson Fund

We are working to improve the collections and exhibitions in museums and galleries by:

- helping public collections acquire important items for public enjoyment through the [Acceptance in Lieu Scheme](#) and [Cultural Gifts Scheme](#)
- providing funding and setting policy for our export licensing system (<https://www.gov.uk/temporaryexport-licenceforculturalgoods>), which regulates the movement of art and cultural objects
- providing an alternative to commercial insurance which allows the public access to objects within the UK that might not otherwise be available, through the Government Indemnity Scheme (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/governmentindemnityscheme>)
- protecting objects on loan (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protectingculturalobjectsonloan>) from abroad for temporary exhibition in UK museums and galleries from court ordered seizure

We are helping to ensure potentially sensitive objects are handled appropriately by:

- providing advice to national museums and galleries, including on how they can prevent illicit trade in
- cultural objects
(http://www.culturalpropertyadvice.gov.uk/public_collections/illcit_trade), and how they can handle human remains
(http://www.culturalpropertyadvice.gov.uk/public_collections/human_remains) in their collections
- handling claims from people, or their heirs, who lost property during the Nazi era, which is now held in UK national collections
- providing statutory guidance on the criteria to be taken into consideration when making a decision about whether or not to grant an export licence
(http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/Statutory_Guidance_March_2015.pdf)

Background

The government introduced universal free entrance to national museums and galleries in December 2001. By 2015/16 visits to all national museums had risen by 128%, and to those institutions that used to charge an entrance fee, visits had risen by 184%. We restated our commitment to free entry in November 2015 as part of the [2015 Spending Review](#).

There were 47 million visits to national museums and galleries in the 2015/16 financial year, and many museums including the British Museum, National Portrait Gallery, and the Victoria and Albert Museum recorded their highest visitor figures ever.

Appendix 1: letting people donate items of cultural and historical importance to the state in return for tax reductions (Acceptance in Lieu Scheme)

This was a supporting detail page of the main policy document.

The Acceptance in Lieu (AiL) scheme lets you offer items of cultural and historical importance to the state in full or part payment of:

- inheritance tax
- capital transfer tax
- estate duty

The scheme is an important mechanism for acquiring significant artworks and cultural objects for public ownership. These are distributed to UK museums, galleries and public archives.

The scheme offers clear tax benefits to owners. Items are generally worth around 17% more if offered in lieu of tax than if sold on the open market at the same price. This is because tax must be paid on the selling price.

Management and responsibilities

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) funds Arts Council England (ACE) to administer the Acceptance in Lieu (AiL) scheme and Cultural Gift Scheme (<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/whatwedo/supportingmuseums/cultural-property/tax-incentives/acceptance-lieu/>).

DCMS is responsible for overseeing the policy and law which relates to AiL. It also :

- deals with all land cases, in partnership with the Arts Council and HM Revenue and Customs (ministerial approval is required for the acceptance of land and estates in lieu of inheritance tax)
- oversees the National Heritage Act 1980 Part II (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/17>), which is the law that allows the government to approve and accept property in lieu of tax, and sets out disposal arrangements and reporting

Appendix 2: providing funding for national museums and galleries

This was a supporting detail page of the main policy document.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) provides direct government funding for these national museums and galleries:

- [British Museum](#)
- [Imperial War Museums](#)
- [National Gallery](#)
- [Royal Museums Greenwich](#)
- [National Museums Liverpool](#)
- [Science Museum Group](#)
- [National Portrait Gallery](#)
- [Natural History Museum](#)
- [Royal Armouries](#)
- [Sir John Soane's Museum](#)
- [Tate](#)
- [Victoria and Albert Museum](#)
- [Wallace Collection](#)

DCMS also provides direct funding for the [Horniman Museum and Gardens](#) and the [Geffrye Museum](#) in London.

Funding

This direct government funding is called 'Grant In Aid' funding. Individual funding amounts are published in our [Spending Review Settlement Letters](#) (April - July 2015). National museums also have a wide range of other funding sources, from National Lottery funding to private and institutional philanthropy.

Management

We sponsor these institutions at 'arm's length' (indirectly): the government is not involved in their day to-day business operations. [Funding agreements 2008-11](#) set out how the museums and galleries meet our priorities and how their performance will be measured.

Each institution is run by an independent Board of Trustees, mostly appointed either by the Prime Minister or the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. These boards:

- preserve and add to the objects in their collections
- make sure collections are publicly exhibited and available for study
- promote the public's enjoyment of science, history, art or design through their collections

The national museums are also [exempt charities](#) and the Secretary of State acts as their Principal Regulator.

Other projects we fund

DCMS also:

- through [Arts Council England](#), funds the Major Partner Museums Network a programme to support England’s regional museums
- provides grant funding to the [National Coal Mining Museum for England](#) (through the Science Museum Group)
- with the [Wolfson Foundation](#), cofunds the [DCMS/Wolfson Museums and Galleries Improvement Fund](#), which provides grants for ‘capital projects’ in museums and galleries to improve displays, interpretation, public spaces, and access for visitors with disabilities.

Appendix 3: providing free public access to national museums and galleries

This was a supporting detail page of the main policy document.

We think it’s important that everyone has access to our national collections. So we provide funding to make sure that national museums and galleries provide free entry to their permanent collections.

This not only gives people the chance to experience beautiful, extraordinary and educational things, but also acts as a major attraction for tourists and other visitors, which is good for the economy.

7 out of the top 10 UK visitor attractions are government sponsored national museums:

Popularity	Museum/Gallery
1	British Museum
2	National Gallery

3	Natural History Museum
4	Tate Modern
5	Victoria and Albert Museum (South Kensington)
6	Science Museum (South Kensington)
7	National Portrait Gallery

(Source Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA), 2016)

Since universal free access was introduced in December 2001, visits to national museums and galleries in England that used to charge for entrance increased by 184% to 2015/16.

Further information

See more data about the [performance](#) of our national museums and galleries.

Appendix 4: funding the Arts Council to provide support to non-national museums

This was a supporting detail page of the main policy document.

Beyond our national museums, England has a diverse selection of high quality museums and galleries, which educate and delight local people and tourists alike.

Arts Council England (<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk>) is the national body which supports museums and galleries in England. It distributes both direct government funding and funds from the National Lottery, as well as providing advice and guidance, and running programmes to raise standards in museums and galleries.

Its main programmes include:

- running the Renaissance programme (<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/ourinvestment/funding-programmes/renaissance/>), which provides funding and support to regional museums

- running 2 schemes which help regional museums to improve and develop:
 - o the Accreditation Scheme, which allows museums to receive official accreditation if they meet a set of standards covering everything from collection management to visitor experience
 - o the Designation Scheme, which identifies and recognises collections of national or international importance in regional museums

The Arts Council makes funding decisions independently of ministers, according to a framework set by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Appendix 5: handling claims from people, or their heirs, whose property, lost during the Nazi era, is now held in UK national collections

This was a supporting detail page of the main policy document.

Government set up the Spoliation Advisory Panel in 2000. The Panel provides advice to claimants and UK institutions on what might be an appropriate course of action to take in resolving a claim. Where the Panel upholds a claim it may either recommend:

- the return of the object to the claimant
- the payment of compensation to the claimant
- an ex gratia payment to the claimant (which does not admit liability)
- the display alongside the object of an account of its history and provenance during and since the Nazi era, with special reference to the claimant's interest

Where the Panel recommends the return of an object held in a national collection, the approval of the Culture Secretary is required before the object can be returned. This is a requirement under the Holocaust (Return of Cultural Objects) Act 2009.

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport appoints the Panel.

Decisions

The panel considers both legal and nonlegal obligations, like the moral strength of the claimant's case, and whether the institution has any moral obligation.

Going through the panel is an alternative to litigation (going to court). Its recommendations are not legally binding for any party. But, if you accept the recommendation of the Panel, this is expected to be full and final settlement of the claim.

Spoliation Advisory Panel Reports

2012: Report of the Spoliation Advisory Panel in respect of 14 clocks and watches now in the possession of the British Museum, London

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reportofthespoliationadvisory-panelinrespectoffourteenlocksandwatchesnowinthe possessionofthebritishmuseumlondon>)

2010: Report of the Spoliation Advisory Panel in respect of an oil sketch by Sir Peter Paul Rubens, 'The Coronation of the Virgin', now in the possession of the Samuel Courtauld Trust (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reportofthespoliationadvisorypanelinrespectofanoilsketchby-sirpeterpaulrubensthecoronationofthevirginnowinthe possessionofthesamuelcourtauldtrust>)

2010: Report of the Spoliation Advisory Panel in respect of a renewed claim by the Metropolitan Chapter of Benevento for the return of the 'Beneventan Missal' now in the possession of the British Library

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reportofthespoliationadvisorypanelinrespectofarenewedclaim-bythemetropolitanchapterofbeneventoforthereturnofthebeneventanmissalnowinthe possessionofthe-britishlibrary>)

You can read reports of the Spoliation Advisory Panel made before 2010

(http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100512152838/http://www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/cultural_property/3296.aspx) by visiting the archived DCMS website.

Appendix 6: continuing to fund capital improvements to museums and galleries through the DCMS/Wolfson Museums and Galleries Improvement Fund

This was a supporting detail page of the main policy document.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the [Wolfson Foundation](#) have formed a partnership and created the DCMS/Wolfson Museums and Galleries Improvement Fund, which supports projects in English museums and galleries that improve the quality of:

- displays, and collection interpretation
- public spaces
- access and facilities for disabled visitors.

The DCMS/Wolfson Foundation [joint report](#) highlights achievements of this partnership fund from 2002-2010. During that period £28 million was awarded to museums and galleries.

In 2011 [another £8 million joint funding was announced](#) for 2011-15. The first of 2 rounds of grants was announced in [2012](#) and the second in [2014](#).

A third bidding round for a joint fund of £3 million was held in 2014, and the awards were announced on [27 February 2015](#).

[A new £4m round of funding has been announced for 2016-18](#) and applications for bids are open until 26th August 2016.

Appendix 7: providing funding and set policy for export licensing, which regulates the movement of art and cultural objects and enables us to retain ‘national treasures’ within the UK

This was a supporting detail page of the main policy document.

Export licensing is the scheme that regulates how art and cultural objects (anything from manuscripts and musical instruments to historically important ships) can be taken out of the UK. We have set rules, alongside international organisations and other governments, which help to prevent the illicit trade of cultural objects.

We also have a system that identifies particularly important cultural objects, or 'national treasures' and asks ministers to delay or 'bar' their export, which gives our museums and other UK buyers the chance to bid to buy objects before they leave the UK.

If you want to export cultural objects, either permanently or temporarily, out of the UK you must apply for an individual Export Licence if they are:

- over 50 years old
- above specified financial thresholds

You can get further guidance on export licensing from Arts Council England (ACE) (<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/whatwedo/supportingmuseums/culturalproperty/exportcontrols/exportlicensing/>), who issue export licences for cultural objects.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is responsible for setting the policy on export licensing. DCMS:

- legislates the export of cultural objects (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/246137/Export_Controls_on_Objects_of_Cultural_Interest_Statutory_Guidance_Nov05_1_.pdf), and sets how their export should be licensed
- produces the Secretary of State's annual report on the operation of export controls (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exportofobjectsofculturalinterest2011-12>)
- works with the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Cultural Objects (RCEWA) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/policyadvisorygroups/143>) to identify 'national treasures' which should be temporarily barred from export
- is the UK contact for export licensing in the European Union (EU) and participates in EU working groups and EU Committee meetings
- responds to requests from other countries under EU and UN laws for the return of unlawfully removed objects

Apply for a licence

- Temporary export licence for cultural goods (<https://www.gov.uk/temporaryexportlicenceforculturalgoods>)
- Export licence for cultural goods (<https://www.gov.uk/exportlicenceforculturalgoods>)

Other relevant licences

Standard individual export licence (<https://www.gov.uk/standardindividualexportlicences>)

Export and import licences for controlled goods

(<https://www.gov.uk/exportandimportlicencesforcontrolled-goodsandtradingwithcertaincountries>)