

C.I.R.C.A

(Catalogued, Interpreted, Researched, Conserved, Accessible)

Project Brief

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1. Background

1.1 Introduction to Doncaster Museum & Art Gallery

Doncaster Museum was first opened in 1900 in a small room in the old Guildhall. In 1909 it moved to the ground floor of Beechfield House with its 'stock' of 1006 museum objects. From 1955 the Museum ran a small zoo in the grounds of Beechfield and some of the occupants, suitably mounted, form a part of the current natural sciences collections. In 1962 the Beechfield premises were closed and in 1964 the replacement Museum & Art Gallery was opened on Chequer Road by the Borough Council - the first purpose built museum building to be entirely funded by a local authority since 1945. Doncaster Museum is home to a range of collections, including Natural Sciences, Archaeology, Industrial Social History, World Cultures, Decorative and Fine Arts.

Doncaster Museum Service is responsible for Doncaster Museum and Cusworth Hall Museum & Park, a Grade I listed Country House and social history museum 3 miles from the centre of Doncaster.

1.2 The Palaeontology Collection

The Palaeontology collection sits within the Earth Sciences collection. A basic inventory of the collection using M.O.D.E.S has generated 3989 records, although individual fossils probably total closer to 9000± since in some cases one record can constitute a box of related items numbering in excess of 50.

The historic core of the collection (largely of localised specimens) consists of a poorly documented and poorly understood founding collection, a significant element of which consists of fossils from the collections of H. Corbett and H. Culpin both senior members of Doncaster Microscopic and Scientific Society and key instigators in the establishment of Doncaster Museum. There is a sizeable collection, covering many of the major fossil bearing localities of the British Isles (largely excluding Scotland and Wales), the private collection of a notable late 19th Century collector from Leeds which is housed in two wooden cabinets and still includes original labels for almost all the specimens.

Up until the 1960s the rest of the collection appears to originate from local residents through donation. Prior to and after the opening of the new Museum and Art Gallery in 1964 there appears to have been a concentrated effort to build critical mass by accepting collections (often through the rationalisation process being undertaken in other Museums) from Brighouse Museum, Worksop Museum, Woodend Museum; Scarborough, Bridlington Museum, Lincoln Museum, Wakefield Museum, The Natural History Museum and the Dick Institute (from which 22 Eurypterid specimens were transferred) to name but a few. During the 1980s and 1990s the collection was added to by the donation of material of British origin belonging to Don Bramley (a museum

volunteer) alongside the occasional purchase of pieces such as the Dinosaur egg and Ichthyosaur (which current research has shown to be of significant scientific importance), probably purchased primarily for display and public engagement. This period saw the last major effort to grow the collection, after which it effectively became a closed collection with the loss of the Geology curator.

The majority of the collection consists of fossils from the Carboniferous and Jurassic and largely originate from Yorkshire, although there is a significant amount of material from bordering counties. The majority of Jurassic material seems to come from the Jurassic Coast around Whitby.

Alongside the formal collection is a relatively high quality collection (used by the Museum's Education Service), which appears to have been purchased in the 1980s by the then Curator of Geology, Anne Pennington George (who later became the Museum's Education Officer. However it is unclear how much of this collection was purchased solely for educational purposes and whether it contains any specimens from the formal collection.

1.3 C.I.R.C.A & Taking Stock

This project whilst having a much broader remit including research, publication and preparation for public and academic access is also designed to be part of a holistic collections review called 'Taking Stock'.

The objective of 'Taking Stock' is to review all of the Doncaster Museum Service collections to ensure the collections best serve the borough, by reflecting the heritage, culture and educational needs of its communities and representing the best use of public money.

This is being achieved through a curatorial assessment of all of the Museum Service collections to determine whether or not they would be better placed with another museum or public body. It will also deal with items not of a suitable quality for collecting, unnecessary duplications and past discrepancies in collecting in line with current professional museum standards. The decision process is supported and informed by a focus group and ultimately approved by an appointed Member of Doncaster Council's Cabinet.

Therefore this project includes a collection assessment process designed in line with 'Taking Stock'.

2. C.I.R.C.A Project Outline

2.1 Work Plan and Timescale

The table below summarises the work we would like to do and proposed activities and timescales:

Work Planned	Associated Activities	Timescale
Collections review	Creation of review methodology, identification of specimens for disposal (including transfer etc), identification of specimens for conservation treatment, identification of candidates for research and publication & identification of key specimens for display and educational uses	First six months of project.
Documentation	Identification of specimens, checking specimens against log books, accession registers & history files. Allocating temporary numbers where applicable or matching to existing accessions	Ongoing over the course of full 18 months of project. Will form part of the collections review process
Selection of specimens for research	Preliminary research to identify specimens significance and history	To be finalised at end of collection review (end of first 6 months)
Re-packing and organisation of collection	Design a reference system (for use by non specialist staff), select and purchase appropriate packaging, re-pack, mark and label specimens	To begin after collection review is complete and be tied into and governed by decisions on storage cabinets and siting of storage of collection (approx 6 months into project and to continue for life of project)
Storage arrangement of collection	Research, selection and purchase of storage cabinets	To be started at end of collections review and to inform and guide re-packing and organisation of collection as a whole. Solutions will be

		considered during the collections review and form part of the final stages of that review.
Conservation of specimens identified during review process	Work plan to determine which specimens are priorities (if all identified specimens cannot be dealt with), setting up of temporary storage area. Liaising with Lincoln University and the Museums' conservator to determine which specimens might be dealt with by trainee conservators at Lincoln University.	Should be undertaken under contract 3 (contract to deliver conservation work) after collections review is complete (month 6 onwards) in discussion with the Asst Manager (Conservation & Collections Care) and the work undertaken under contract 3 should be completed by the end of the project.
Purchase of reference material	Assessment of future display and interpretation needs and building a list of useful reference books and other reference materials (e.g. CDs, DVDs etc)	To be drawn up and discussed with museum management team at the start of the project (and informed by the collection assessment phase) and purchased at appropriate intervals through out the life of the project
Addition of information enabling display/educational use to database records	Should evaluate visitor feed back and successes/strengths of Fabulous Fossils and consider Service Policy documents & needs of curatorial and education team. Selection of specimens from collection to receive this second tier of information	Tied into ongoing documentation, but should begin after the collections review stage at end of first 6 months.
Identification of star specimens and key specimens for display and educational outreach	Selection of specimens informed by collections review	Should be an integral part of the collections review and should be completed within first 6 months (during review process)
Research for publication	Identifying key contacts and collections, carrying out research	To be informed by collections review process.

	visits/correspondences	
Preparation and submission for publication	Writing up for publication. Determining which journals to submit to and securing submissions	All papers to be submitted by the end of the project.

2.2 Milestones

Time Period	Milestone
0-18 months	Documentation/identification work
0-6 months	Collections Review, selection of objects for research and conservation, identification of star/key specimens and specimens for display and educational use.
6-18 months	Re-packing, storage
6-18 months	conservation of selected specimens
0-18 months	Purchase of reference material (books, DVDs, CDs etc)
6-18 Months	Creation of additional information (enabling display/educational use) to database records
6-18 months	Research and submission of articles for publication

2.3 Desired Outcome

The desired outcomes follow from the project aims and objectives set out in our outline proposal document, which were as follows:

1. Assessment of the Palaeontological collection (3989 Modes records which equates to approximately 9000+ individual specimens) to feed into following tasks
2. Identify items for disposal (dispersal) in line with the museum's *Acquisition and Disposal Policy 2006-2011* and the *Taking Stock* project. Complete disposal (Disposal as defined by the *Museum Association Disposal Toolkit, a guideline for museums*) process
3. Augmented documentation: Comprising of more detailed specimen identification and matching specimens to donor/provenance information
4. Conservation of items identified through assessment phase (undertaken under contract 3 for the conservation work and Lincoln University Conservation Students).

5. Re-packaging and storage of collections to meet Accreditation standards, improve storage and access.
6. Research and Publication of a selection of the most interesting/important specimens to increase academic and public access and awareness of the collection.
7. Highlighting and generating specialist information on specimens to facilitate curatorship by non specialist staff.

Set against these our desired outcomes are as follows:

1. The assessment/collections review will generate a flexible but robust methodology which will shape the collection to ensure that it matches the criteria of the Museums Service *Acquisition and Disposal Policy 2006-2011* and that it incorporates the desired outcomes of the museums collection review '*Taking Stock*', which are as follows:
 - A more focussed and relevant collection which the Museum Service is capable of caring for and which meets professional Best Practice standards
 - Improved access to the collections
 - Enhanced information about the current strengths and weaknesses of the collections that will lead to an informed and responsible future collecting strategy
 - Empowerment to achieve improved collections care

It will create the platform from which the following desired outcomes to be achieved:

2. To identify candidates for transfer to alternative institutions, or which are suitable for disposal (in line with the museum's *Acquisition and Disposal Policy 2006-2011*) and to provide recommendations for appropriate venues in conjunction with the Museum Associations '*Disposal Toolkit, Guidelines for Museums*'. To ensure that the collection meets the current and future needs of the Museum Service by complementing the objectives of the following museum policies or their successors: *Doncaster Museum Service Forward Plan 2006-2011*, *Doncaster Museum Service Audience Development and Access Strategy 2005-2010*, *Doncaster Museum Service Education and Learning Plan 2008-2012*. [These plans are currently being revised]. This will ensure that the collection is focused according to the core aims and objectives of the Museum Service and meets the needs of service users.
3. To have all specimens documented on Modes (the Museum Service's digital database currently being upgraded to MODES Complete) with at least the following information: Simple name, classified name, description, geological period/date, donor/provenance (where achievable), condition (brief description), location (in store) and an image. This will allow curatorial staff to know exactly what is in the collection, where gaps exist for future

collecting or loans and what is available for loan, exhibition or facilitating educational outputs.

4. To conserve the most important and vulnerable specimens and stabilise the collection to ensure its long term care. To ensure that the collection is in a state that allows the museum to effectively care for it according to available resources.
5. To create a well ordered and logically organised collection which is packaged/stored in a way that affords the specimens maximum protection; facilitates ease of access (reducing the need for over handling and facilitating regular conservation checks) and is stored in a way which makes access by non specialist staff achievable. To maximise the use of available space and to ensure the best method of storage is employed and the most suitable environment for the collection is created.
6. To achieve publication of the most important/interesting specimens in regional or national journals, to establish good relations with other institutions (with linked collections) and to raise the profile of the collection (and its research potential) within the academic community and the general public. To generate interest in the collection by museum visitors/service users and therefore increase the use of the collection.
7. To capture and record (by adding information to the collection database and incorporating key information onto labelling and packing) information which will allow the collection to be effectively curated by non specialist staff (i.e. staff without a geological or palaeontological expertise), enabling them to generate displays and facilitate research requests and public collections enquiries. The strengths of the collection, local and regional connections and star objects will be clearly identified and recorded.
8. An additional desired outcome is that under Contract 1, there will be the development of professional knowledge and skills for museum staff and contract staff as appropriate.

3 Project Management

3.1 Management structure

The Museums Officer (Human History) will act as Project Manager for this contract.

3.2 Contract description:

3.2.1 Contract Three: Conservation (including collections care advice & Specimen Preparation)

£10,585 fixed sum to provide project conservation collection care advice and preparation of specimens over a 12 month period starting no later than October 31st 2012 and completing no later than 31st October 2013

The Project Conservator(s) will be responsible for carrying out conservation & preparation work on specimens selected as part of the collections review process and for inputting into and advising on the collections care elements of the project such as the re-packing, organisation and storage of the collection. The contractor(s) will also be required to provide guidance relating to future use of the collections for audience engagement mechanisms such as display. In liaison with the Museum's Assistant Manager (Conservation & Collections Care) they will also input into and update relevant parts of the *Doncaster Museum Service Collection Care Plan 2010* relating to the Palaeontology collection.

Contract Requirements (as outlined in sections 2.1 – 2.3)

Overall objective: To conserve the most important and vulnerable specimens and stabilise the collection to ensure its long term care and to provide guidance on the conservation and collection care requirements for the use of the collection for public engagement such as display/loan/educational handling etc. To ensure that the collection is in a state that allows the museum to effectively care for it according to available resources. The contract requires that you deliver the following outlined requirements but that in doing so you liaise with appropriate museum and project staff as detailed:

- To liaise with the Assistant Manager (Conservation & Collections Care) and other project contract staff to assess the specimens flagged up as requiring conservation at the end of the review process and to agree a final list of specimens for conservation treatment.
- To liaise with the Assistant Manager (Conservation & Collections Care) and other Project contract staff to identify and prepare a suitable storage facility (within the museum service's existing buildings) for the long term storage of the collection.

- To liaise with the Assistant Manager (Conservation & Collections Care) to manage and oversee the population of the new storage facilities, which will largely be undertaken by other project contract staff.
- To liaise with the Assistant Manager (Conservation & Collections Care) and other Project contract staff to advise on and identify new storage cabinets and materials for packing and re storage of the collection and to prepare a detailed order for the Project Manager.
- To undertake the conservation/preparation of specimens identified and agreed for conservation treatment and/or specialist preparation for further research/publication and or display.
- To create conservation records for all prepared or conserved specimens and working with the Registrar ensure the transfer of all records onto MODES.
- To liaise with the Assistant Manager (Conservation & Collections Care) to draw up a list of specimens which can be conserved/treated by final year conservation students at Lincoln University.
- To input into and advise on the conservation requirements (e.g light, humidity, temperature, security, fixing/mounting techniques) of specimens identified as key to future exhibition/display and draw up guidance on this.
- To liaise with the Assistant Manager (Conservation & Collections Care) and input into the Museum Service's Acquisition and Disposal Policy and collection Care/management plans specifically in relation to the Geology/Palaeontology collections. Providing up to date guidance on such elements as handling, monitoring, loans, disposals, research requests requiring sampling/preparation etc.

Key Essential experience/skills:

- A degree (or equivalent) in historic object conservation
- At least six months experience of conservation in a museum environment or similar
- Experience of conserving/working with palaeontological collections/specimens.
- Knowledge of relevant COSHH and Health & Safety procedures and regulations
- Understanding of the effects of the environment on the museum objects
- Experience of packing and handling collections/objects

Desirable:

- Experience of setting up storage for palaeontological/geological collections
- A degree in and/or experience of working with palaeontology/geology collections

Working arrangements:

The museum has a modest conservation laboratory which may be used by the contractor(s) to undertake any work relating to the project. However we recommend that the contractor(s) contact Graham Key, Assistant Manager, Conservation and Collections Care as per below to discuss details of lab facilities and equipment and working practices:

Graham Key: Telephone: 01302 734292 or by e-mail:
Graham.Key@doncaster.gov.uk.

We accept that the contractor(s) may have appropriate facilities to work on our collections off site (from a business premise). If this is the preferred option then this MUST be stated and outlined in the contract submission document and proof of appropriate insurances, security and facilities as well as accreditation details MUST be provided. Details of how the movement and conservation of specimens will be handled MUST be submitted as part of the submission process.

4 Timescale:

The project started on 30th April 2012 and is due for completion on 31st October 2013. This contract is scheduled to cover the period 31st October 2012 – 31st October 2013.

It will be up to the contractor(s) in agreement with the Project Manager and other members of the project team to schedule work appropriate to the overall timescale and specific project milestones.

5 Project Activity Budget

Activity	Budget
Disposals (packaging and transportation)	£ 1,300
Conservation & packing materials	£ 5,000
storage cabinets	£ 12,000
Research visits	£ 3,000
Publication	£ 1,000
Literature (reference library)	£ 500

6 Submission/Application requirements:

Applications are invited to make a submission to deliver the Project Conservation role as outlined in section 3.2.1

We are looking for submissions up to but not beyond the amount specified for the advertised Project Conservation contract. Doncaster Museum Service will not be held responsible for any expense or losses incurred by the applicant(s) in the preparation and presentation of the quotation.

Submissions must answer the following questions (the importance of which are weighted as detailed below):

Reference	Question	Weight
Q1.	Please provide your understanding of the key requirements of this contract in no more than 300 words	10
Q2.	Please provide details of your previous experience of engaging and delivering similar services or undertaking similar projects for museum organisations	25
Q3.	Please tell us how you propose to address each of the requirements of the contract that you are applying for.	25
Q4.	Please outline the number of days you'd expect to spend on delivery and what proportion of this would be travelling to and from the museum	20
Q5.	Please provide details of your relevant specialist qualifications and experience in relation to the project post which you are applying for	20

An overall price is required which must include all expenses and details of any discounts offered (e.g. for early payment etc).

Any applicants wishing to view the collection should contact Laura Nugent, Collections Registrar on 01302 734293, email laura.nugent@doncaster.gov.uk.

Closing Date and time for applications: 5pm Friday 14th September 2012

Applications should be delivered as a hard copy or electronic copy via e-mail. As well as a submission document (answering the weighted questions outlined in the table above), applicants are also required to include the following:

- A brief covering Letter with full address and contact details
- Current CV (+ CVs of all proposed project staff, if submitting as a company or group of associates)
- Names and contact details of two referees

Applicants called for interview will be notified no later than 5pm Thursday 20th September 2012

Interviews will be held on Friday 28th September 2012

Submissions should be sent to:

Peter Robinson
Museum Officer (Human History)
Doncaster Museum & Art Gallery, Chequer Road, Doncaster, DN1 2AE,
Tel: 01302 734290 E-Mail: peter.robinson@doncaster.gov.uk