

museum
National Museum of Ireland
Ard-Mhúsaem na hÉireann

Collections Loans Policy

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National Museum of Ireland – Collections Loans Policy

NMI is committed to facilitating loans from its collections and values this process as a means to reach wider audiences and increase the scale of objects available to the public. As outlined in the NMI Strategic Plan (2019-2022), we aim to ‘increase our working partnerships with regional museums, universities, research centres and other cultural organisations in relation to loans from our collections’. For the purposes of this Policy, a loan is defined as *the temporary transfer of a museum heritage object (or objects) between institutions and/or individuals*. This policy covers all outgoing and incoming loans of museum heritage objects for exhibition, research, analysis and conservation purposes. Objects borrowed by NMI are described here as ‘loans inward’ and objects lent by NMI to other institutions are ‘loans outward’ for the purposes of this policy.

Legislative Basis

The NMI makes loans under powers conferred on the Board by Section 11 (2) of the National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997. This states that:

11. — (2) The Board shall have all such powers as it considers necessary or expedient for the performance of its functions under this Act including, but without prejudice to the foregoing, the following powers:

(d) to lend, subject to the provisions of this Act, museum heritage objects in the collection of the Museum,

(m) to acquire, borrow or accept a donation or bequest of museum heritage objects

Process

To protect the collections in the care of NMI, terms and conditions of loans are informed by good practice guidance produced by the Collections Trust (SPECTRUM). As such, loan requests are subject to a formal approval procedure. Details of all procedures will be made available on the NMI website.

Outward Loans – Exhibition

1 Applications and Conditions

- a) Loans of museum heritage objects will be considered by NMI, based on formal written applications on standard forms.
- b) Requests should be made a minimum of 12 months in advance to allow time to process the loan and ensure the suitability and stability of the object(s). This request period should be longer for loans of large numbers of objects.
- c) Applicant institutions must be open to the public for the duration of the loan and meet standards of care, security and access as agreed with NMI.

- d) The NMI must be satisfied that the proposed borrower can demonstrate that the objects requested form an essential part of their display, and the exhibition itself is intellectually valid and will provide public benefit.
- e) Loans are subject to completion of all written agreements and contracts.
- f) Loans are subject to satisfactory inspection by NMI of the venue, following submission of a standard Facilities Report that will detail security of buildings and cases, alarm systems, fire protection and emergency response.
- g) Loans are subject to insurance being in place on a 'nail to nail' basis from the point of object(s) leaving NMI premises until their return to NMI. The insurance valuation will be set by NMI.
- h) Loans are subject to records of all objects, including Condition Reports, being checked and signed by both parties at all points of exit and entry between the borrowing institution and NMI.
- i) NMI will appoint a member of staff to act as courier for loaned objects in transit.
- j) NMI will typically bill expenses incurred in loans to the borrower, although some or all of these may be waived, for exhibitions within Ireland, at the discretion of NMI.
- k) Written loan contracts will address copyright, intellectual property, photographic, filming rights and publication rights.
- l) Loans will be subject to correct environmental conditions and case design allowing for adequate lighting, humidity, temperature, and security controls that must be documented by the borrower.

2 Decision to Lend

- a) Applications will be judged by the Head of Collections & Learning, based on the written submission by the borrowing institution, and the internal reports by NMI staff.
- b) The Director of the NMI is responsible for approval once a final object list is drafted and a recommendation made by Head of Collections & Learning.
- c) The decision to lend museum heritage objects will include consideration of the safety, security, physical condition and degree of rarity of the objects, the value of the loan to the recipient, the facilities required to service the loan, and the resources of either the borrower or the NMI. Decisions will also take into account reasonable expectations of visitors to the NMI to view particular objects.
- d) Any decision to refuse a loan may include consideration of circumstances that would be damaging to the Museum's standing and reputation, or any exhibition which includes objects that are known to have been illegally or unethically acquired by the current holder

3 Management

- a) NMI will maintain a central register of loans, with files containing all documentation, reports, lists of objects, and signed contracts.

- b) All loan agreements entered into by the NMI will be of a defined duration. The maximum loan period is five years. This will be subject to regular inspection and review within that period as agreed in advance with the borrower. Extensions may be considered, and will be treated as a new application.

Outward Loans – Research

1 Applications and Conditions

- a) Loans of museum heritage objects will be considered by NMI, based on formal written applications on standard forms.
- b) Loans will be made to institutions only. Staff or researchers based at those institutions will complete loan contracts on behalf of those institutions.
- c) Loans may be subject to some or all of the standard conditions applying to Outward Loans – Exhibitions as detailed above at the discretion of NMI.
- d) Applications may be approved by the relevant Keeper on recommendation by a Curator.
- e) Museum Heritage Objects on loan for research may not be subject to any destructive sampling or investigation without formal written approval from NMI in advance (e.g. licence to alter), as detailed in the NMI **Research Policy** and in the NMI **Human Remains Policy**.

Inward Loans

NMI may borrow objects from individuals or from other institutions for purposes of exhibition, analysis, or research. Lenders may have their own terms, conditions and process for loans, which will be followed by NMI. In the absence of such systems, NMI will apply its Outward Loans procedures and standards.

- a) Inward Loans will be considered for approval by a Keeper, based on a formal written application by a Curator.
- b) NMI will maintain a central register of loans, with files containing all documentation, reports, lists of objects, and signed contracts.
- c) All loan agreements entered into by the NMI will be of a defined duration. The maximum loan period is five years. Extensions may be considered, and will be treated as a new application.
- d) Wherever possible, object transfers referred to historically as ‘permanent loans’ will be identified and either returned to the owner, or steps taken to permanently acquire or deaccession the object and transfer the title as appropriate.