



Terms of Reference: Collections and Interpretation Advisory Group

Agreed by CIAG September 2023.

Refer to Generic Role of Advisory Groups for context.

Purpose

The group's purpose is to advise the National Trust on **strategy, implementation and major and significant projects**, and to act as a source of **peer review** on all aspects of the Trust's curation and experiences work: how we care for and present our historic places, collections, and outdoor sites, as well as welcome everyone, facilitate experiences and engage and broaden access for audiences.

The remit of the Group encompasses advice on:

- curation, conservation, preservation and development of National Trust collections;
- outdoors and landscape places, including access to land and water to give benefit for people;
- presentation and interpretation using a wide range of approaches;
- public programmes, including exhibitions, external loans and work with contemporary creative practices;
- visitor experience, including public engagement and audience development;
- broader intellectual access, including digital and online content;
- research and publications, particularly in relation to the history and significance of the Trust's properties and collections and their conservation, presentation and interpretation.
- promotion of formal and informal learning;
- programming relating to diversity, inclusion and wider public benefit, including experiences facilitated with others beyond National Trust places;
- participation, partnership working and co-creation;
- resourcing, developing and sustaining cultural heritage experiences and activities;
- decoration, furnishing and display of historic interiors.

The group provides strategic and professional guidance to ensure the appropriate standards of conservation, curatorship, management, interpretation, engagement and design in all areas relating to the Trust's role as a guardian of, and facilitator of access to, cultural heritage. Its remit covers the Trust's interiors, outdoor spaces, collections, public programming, learning resources, includes properties which are not accredited museums and partnership activity.

Main Responsibilities

Strategy: The Group's remit is to:

- Advise on the development of policies and strategy related to the Trust's role as a museum and cultural heritage collections organisation – including collections, acquisitions, engagement, and intellectual access;
- Advise on the development of policies related to the Trust's role as a provider of days out to heritage and landscapes;
- Support Strategic Leads and/or other staff in the development of their thinking;
- Advise on interiors, collections, interpretation, learning, engagement, programming, partnership, and intellectual access priorities for the strategic planning processes of the Trust;
- Act as an external reference point and benchmark;
- Advise on matters of scholarship and research related to Trust properties and collections and activity to make them accessible;
- Advise on issues arising from internal and external trends and policies that affect the Trust's museums, collections, engagement, programming, partnership activity and access;
- Advise on learning, diversity, access and engagement matters relating to museums, collections and cultural heritage;
- Act as an external advocate and ambassador for the Trust's strategies.

Major/Significant Projects and Acquisitions

The Group's remit is to:

- Offer a valuable source of critical support, challenge and advice to staff working on major/significant projects and acquisitions related to our work as:
 - a museum authority - including the conservation, presentation and interpretation of our collections and interiors, engagement, programmes, partnerships and access.
 - an experiences provider – including work indoors and outdoors to give benefit to people through access to places.
- Support the Trust staff in giving advice to properties;
- Promote high standards of care, presentation and sustainability in our experiences indoors and outdoors, including museums and collections;
- Advise, where appropriate, on visitor experience, formal learning, community engagement, programming, partnerships, audience development and issues relating to access and diversity.
- Peer review
- Support the Trust in its efforts to maintain professional standards and capability within the area of museums, collections, engagement, experiences and access.
- Provide professional guidance to staff on operational "business as usual" issues, as well as strategy and projects.
- Act as internal and external champion for public benefit in the conservation, presentation, learning, engagement, programming, experiences and interpretation of Trust museums, outdoors places and collections.
- Provide an independent and authoritative perspective for the Executive Directors.

GROUP SKILLS & RECRUITMENT

Introduction

Our consultation with stakeholders and group members demonstrated a strong desire to:

- maintain a strong skillset for expertise with collections, interiors, conservation and interpretation;
- add new skill areas relevant to the future strategic direction of the Trust to ensure we can give benefit using these heritage assets;
- ensure a diversity of lived experience related to protected characteristics as described by equalities legislation;
- ensure a geographical distribution of members across England, Wales and Northern Ireland;
- undertake recruitment beyond the usual pool of contacts of the heritage sector.

The group will need the following skills.

- Community co-curation and participation working
- Curatorship of historic interiors and object collections
- Conservation of collections
- Experiences masterplanning
- Immersive, experiential storytelling
- Inclusive histories – for example:
 - Women's history
 - Working class and poor people's history
 - Disability history
 - LGBTQ+ history
 - Histories of colonialism, empire and diaspora
- Strategic and practice-based inclusion and partnership advice
- Collections management strategy
- Children and young people's learning and development (for both younger and older ages)
- Public programming
- Audience development
- Outdoors engagement