



Collections Information and Access Policy

Victoria and Albert Museum, 2013

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1 Purpose of Policy

1.1 This Policy is part of the V&A's Collections Management Policy framework, which consists of:

- Collections Development Policy, 2010
- Collections Information and Access Policy, 2013
- Collections Care and Conservation Policy 2013

It operates alongside the following V&A Policies:

- Buildings Conservation Policy, 2013
- Equality and Diversity Action Policy, 2013
- Sustainability Policy, 2011
- V&A – 10 Intellectual Property Principles, 2013

1.2 The purpose of the Collections Information and Access Policy is to ensure the Museum fulfils its responsibilities in relation to collections information and access, in line with the Museum's Strategic Plan and in proportion to resources available.

1.3 The V&A is an Accredited Museum. The Accreditation Scheme is administered by Arts Council England (ACE) which sets nationally agreed standards for UK Museums.

1.4 In line with the Accreditation Scheme, this policy details how the Museum will:

- improve accountability for collections and collections information.
- maintain at least minimum professional standards in documentation, collections information and access to collections.
- extend access to collections and collections information including facilitating physical, sensory and intellectual access on site and virtually and by lending and borrowing.
- strengthen the security of the collections through accurate collections information.

1.5 The Museum's strategy for the physical security of the collections, and electronic safeguards for the Digital Asset Management Systems¹, is set out in the V&A Security Strategy, 2012.

2. Policy Implementation

2.1 The Museum's policies and procedures are informed by relevant legal and ethical frameworks, alongside appropriate national and international standards, as set out in Appendix 1.

¹ The Museum's Digital Asset Management Systems, Index+ and Horizon, are used to record and manage collections information and associated digital assets.

2.2 Managers should ensure that the Collections Management Policy framework and supporting procedures/plans, as detailed below, are followed in the areas for which they are responsible.

- Business Continuity Plan
- Buildings Conservation Management Strategy, 2013
- Cataloguing and Digitisation Plan, 2013
- Collections Care and Conservation Plan, 2013
- Collections Care and Conservation Procedures
- Collections Management Procedures Manual
- Emergency Response Plan
- Environmental Policy, 1991
- Gallery Interpretation Strategy, 2012-2015
- Guide to Intellectual Property and Rights Management, 2013
- Integrated Pest Management Policy, 2005
- Learning Department Strategy, 2012-2015
- National Art Library Accessioning Procedures
- National Art Library Cataloguing Manual
- Research Plan, 2013
- Security Strategy, 2012

3 Statement of Authority, V&A Mission Statement and Strategic Objectives

3.1 Statement of Authority

3.1.1 The *National Heritage Act, 1983* established a Board of Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Under the Act the property in the items which form the Museum's collections was, (with certain exceptions), vested in the Board. As set out in Chapter 47 of the Act, Clause 2 (1), the Board shall:

- (a) care for, preserve and add to the items [objects] in their collections;
- (b) secure that the collection items are exhibited to the public;
- (c) secure that the collection items are available to persons seeking to inspect them in connection with study or research, and;
- (d) generally promote the public's enjoyment and understanding of art, craft and design, both by means of the Board's collections and by such other means as they consider appropriate.

Clause 2 (2) a: provide education, instruction and advice and carry out research,

Clause 2 (3): do such things as it may consider necessary or expedient:

- (a) for preserving, and increasing the utility of, their collections,
- (b) for securing the due administration of anything vested in or acquired by them.

3.1.2 The Board delegates the authority to the Director to take operational decisions and to implement the obligations laid down by the Act. The Director is answerable to Parliament as the Accounting Officer responsible for the proper expenditure of public money granted to the Museum.

3.2 V&A Mission Statement

To be the world's leading museum of art and design. To enrich peoples' lives and inspire individuals and everyone in the creative industries, through the promotion of knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of the designed world.

3.3 Strategic Objectives

We strive to make the V&A matter to more people and in that context we work to the following four strategic objectives:

- To provide all our visitors with the best quality experience and optimum access to our collections physically and digitally, and to inspire creativity in them all.
- To be acknowledged and respected internationally as the world's leading museum of art and design.
- To promote, support and contribute to the UK creative economy by leading the field in debate, inspiring designers and makers, commissioning excellent design and stimulating enjoyment and appreciation of art, design and performance.
- To operate with financial and organisational initiative and efficiency.

4 Documentation

4.1 Principles

- 4.1.1 The Museum's collections include both physical and digital collection items. Information about the collections and associated intellectual property is key to enabling access to the collections.
- 4.1.2 The Museum is committed to creating and maintaining good quality and up to date information about collection items, which conforms to appropriate national and international standards wherever possible.
- 4.1.3 This enables the Museum to account for and enable access to all items for which the Museum is legally responsible: collection items, loans to the V&A, items on deposit, unaccessioned and previously undocumented items. Documentation must be available for inspection by the Museum's auditors.
- 4.1.4 The Museum is committed to ensuring that the Digital Asset Management Systems are the primary tool for creating and managing collections information and items for which the Museum is legally responsible.
- 4.1.5 All staff responsible for recording collections documentation must receive training in the relevant data standards and appropriate Digital Asset Management Systems, to enable the accurate input and retrieval of collections information. All data shall be traceable through an audit trail as to who created or edited it.
- 4.1.6 The security of the Digital Asset Management Systems and back up procedures are set out in the Museum's Security Strategy, 2012. The Museum is committed to regular reviews of the

Digital Asset Management Systems to ensure they are fit for purpose and that collection information is appropriately safeguarded against potential future obsolescence of the systems.

4.2 Acquisitions

- 4.2.1 An accession record must be created for all items added to the V&A collections describing each item, or group of items, listing them by unique identifying number. The Keepers are responsible for the accession record of each collection item in the appropriate Digital Asset Management System.
- 4.2.2 A printed accessions record will be produced annually on archival quality paper which records the formal acceptance of items into the Museum's collections and is authorised by the acquiring Keeper.

4.3 Cataloguing

- 4.3.1 A catalogue record adhering to agreed Museum-wide data standards should be created as soon as possible after the item has been accessioned. The history of each collection item and a record of any activities associated with it must be kept. Appropriate indexes to catalogue records should be provided. The Keepers are responsible for the catalogue record of each collection item in the appropriate Digital Asset Management System.
- 4.3.2 Details of gaps and backlogs of documentation are maintained by each collection, where relevant. A plan to complete cataloguing gaps is in place and progressed as resources permit.
- 4.3.3 The Museum aims to create a digital image of each collection item or group of items. All new acquisitions should be photographed by a Museum photographer or have a 'record shot' taken by a member of staff. The image should be stored in the appropriate Digital Asset Management System. The exceptions are archives, books or other large documentary collections where a representative image may be taken.

4.4 Location Control and Audit

- 4.4.1 The Digital Asset Management Systems are the Museum's primary inventory systems. The Keepers are responsible for the inventory level record of each collection item.
- 4.4.2 The inventory level record should contain the legal status and an accurate and up to date location for each item that the Museum is legally responsible for. The inventory for museum objects and archive collections is recorded in Index+ (which retains a history of moves), a separate system is used for Library collections (which holds the current location).
- 4.4.3 Entry and exit documentation is maintained for all collection items, or group of items, and other items that the Museum is legally responsible for, recording the source of the item, the terms of receipt and the location of the item.

- 4.4.4 No item movement is complete until it is recorded on the appropriate Digital Asset Management System.
- 4.4.5 The Documentation and Collections Management section is responsible for carrying out Spot Checks and Audits to verify the physical presence of items in locations as recorded on the appropriate Digital Asset Management System. Specified areas of the collections are systematically audited at intervals and remedial action taken by the Keeper of the relevant collection following the identification of missing or wrongly-documented items.

5 Access

5.1 Principles

- 5.1.1 The Museum is committed to offering the widest and most appropriate forms of access to its collections, expertise, facilities and services. The Museum is actively working to overcome any physical, intellectual, cultural, attitudinal, digital and financial barriers, through integrating equality and diversity into everything that we do.
- 5.1.2 The V&A champions free access to collections and collections information, through some exhibitions and displays, loans, learning programme, publications, website and via our study rooms (where no intellectual property or other restrictions apply), in order to promote knowledge and unlock creativity.
- 5.1.3 The Museum presents a broad range of exhibitions and displays, which reflect many cultures and artistic practices. The V&A defines target audiences and develops interpretation, informed by evaluation, to suit these audiences.
- 5.1.4 The Museum delivers a wide range of learning programmes which are developed to suit different levels of prior knowledge, cultural and educational backgrounds, interests and learning styles.
- 5.1.5 The Museum will manage the competing demands of access and long term collection care in accordance with the Collections Care and Conservation Policy.

5.2 Galleries

- 5.2.1 Information about items on display in galleries is provided through labels, wall texts and other contextual and complementary information.
- 5.2.2 As galleries are refurbished electronic multimedia information services are provided, where appropriate, giving access to information about the items and themes within the galleries and access to information about other items.

5.3 Temporary Exhibitions

Temporary exhibitions allow items not normally on display in the galleries to be shown to the public. This also allows items to be displayed in different contexts and alongside items borrowed from other collections.

5.4 Reference Collections

- 5.4.1 The V&A collections consist of 'Display collections' and 'Reference collections'. Display collections are suitable for longer-term gallery display. Reference collections include works of art on paper and other organic objects such as lacquer, books and textiles, which can only be displayed for short periods for conservation reasons, as they are sensitive to light.
- 5.4.2 Collection items not on display can be viewed by making an appointment with the relevant collection, subject to resources and the condition of the collection item. Some items can be seen in dedicated study rooms (it is not necessary to make an appointment for those marked*). Reference collections are also used in handling sessions.
- Ceramics Study Room (South Kensington)
 - National Art Library (South Kensington)*
 - Prints and Drawings Study Room (South Kensington)*
 - South and South-East Asian Study Room (South Kensington)
 - Archive of Art & Design (Blythe House Archive & Library Reading Room)
 - Beatrix Potter Collections and Children's Book Collections (Blythe House Archive & Library Reading Room)
 - The Clothworkers' Centre for Textiles and Fashion Study and Conservation (Blythe House)
 - Theatre and Performance Collections (Blythe House Archive & Library Reading Room)
 - V&A Archive (Blythe House Archive & Library Reading Room)
 - Museum of Childhood Study Room (Bethnal Green)
- 5.4.3 Appropriate levels of access are monitored and approved by the Keeper and staff of the collection, who have the right to refuse or terminate access at their discretion in order to protect the collections.
- 5.4.4 Access to collections at the Museum of Childhood is monitored and controlled by the Director of the Museum of Childhood.
- 5.4.5 Facilities may be provided for close inspection of collection items, providing it is justified and the item is not placed at risk. Special arrangements will be considered for visitors with disabilities.

5.5 Information Services and Enquiries

- 5.5.1 The Museum provides online access to the collections and collections information through the Museum website and online collection catalogues, which are updated regularly with new information as it becomes available. It is the Museum's expectation that this form of access to information will be the first line of enquiry for visitors.
- 5.5.2 The V&A 'Search the Collections' site provides free access to collection records and images. Content is made freely available, where no rights or data restrictions apply, to third parties, subject to the Terms and Conditions of the site.
- 5.5.3 Images for commercial purposes which fall outside the terms and conditions of 'Search the Collections' may be supplied and licensed through V&A Images.

- 5.5.4 More detailed collections information is provided through catalogues (printed or unpublished) and through V&A collections registers and indexes.
- 5.5.5 The Museum will answer enquiries regarding its collections in order to supplement information provided elsewhere.
- 5.5.6 The Museum will ensure that all information is processed in accordance with relevant statutory requirements, including the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts.
- 5.5.7 The Museum provides a free service, subject to resources, whereby curatorial staff provide an opinion on items for which it has the relevant expertise.

6 Photography and filming

- 6.1 Visitors can take photographs or videos of V&A collections on display in galleries for personal use. Flash photography is permitted but visitors may not use a tripod, monopod or supplementary video lighting.
- 6.2 No unauthorised general filming is permitted in galleries for data protection and rights reasons.
- 6.3 Photography and video is not allowed in special exhibitions, selected galleries, the V&A shop or of items on loan to the V&A. Permission is required from the owner and copyright restrictions may apply.
- 6.4 Visitors to the National Art Library may make copies for personal use, e.g. research, for a non-commercial purpose or private study. The Library also provides a copying service on request. Copies may be made for commercial purposes by purchasing the appropriate licence through the Library.

7. Due Diligence

- 7.1 Guidelines issued by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) define due diligence as the necessary precaution that museums take to ensure that they acquire, borrow or lend only ethically acceptable items and reject items that may have been looted or illegally exported.
- 7.2 The Director of the V&A has overall responsibility for ensuring the appropriate due diligence procedures are carried out.
- 7.3 The application of due diligence procedures are assigned primarily to the collection curator or the exhibition curator(s). Where appropriate, further guidance and advice will be sought from additional curatorial and specialist consultants, such as colleagues from within the V&A, other national museums, academic institutions, and major auction houses as well as consulting art loss databases.
- 7.4 The Museum will not acquire or borrow any item unless it is satisfied that the owner/lender has full title and that they or any agent acting for them has full legal authority to enter into

an agreement with the Museum. The V&A will not proceed should there be any doubt over the legality of ownership, removal from the country of origin, or entry into the UK.

- 7.5 Records and documentation of due diligence are to be retained: all relevant correspondence, details of published information, signed loan agreements, lender's evidence, and photographic evidence is to be kept on permanent files, in accordance with Spectrum standards and under direction from the National Archives on stewardship of public records.

8. Indemnity and Insurance

8.1 V&A Collection items on V&A premises

Collection items are not covered by Government Indemnity Scheme (GIS) whilst on V&A premises or in transit for purposes other than loan and the Museum may not cover them by insurance. The Museum will therefore pay particular attention to risk management in all collections management activities.

8.2 V&A Collection items on Loan

- 8.2.1 Collection items lent for the public benefit to UK borrowers may be covered under the terms of GIS, provided that the Registrar is satisfied that standards of care, security and fire prevention will, as far as is reasonably practicable, ensure the safety of the objects on loan. This will be achieved by: ensuring that the security of the borrower is consistent with the V&A's security standards, consultation with the V&A's Designated Security Officer (DSO), Loan Agreement, the use of fine art agents and consultation with the ACE Security Advisor. Where these standards are met, borrowers will be asked to accept minimum liability for the loan, and may be required to insure against this. Items lent to other national museum bodies and government departments will be lent under the same conditions, but at the V&A's own risk.
- 8.2.2 Items lent to venues which do not qualify for GIS, or another country's indemnity scheme, will be covered by commercial insurance. It is the responsibility of the Registrar to ensure that any insurance or international indemnity provides the appropriate level of cover and that care, security and fire prevention standards are met.

8.3 Items on Loan to V&A

- 8.3.1 The Museum applies on an individual basis for GIS for items valued over the minimum specified, where these are eligible for such cover. In return, the Museum will take the same reasonable care of such items as it would of its own collections. In particular, the Head of Exhibitions and Loans will vet all transport arrangements in order for GIS to apply.
- 8.3.2 The Registrar is responsible for the annual reporting of contingent liabilities to the DCMS and for liaison with ACE regarding the interpretation of the GIS and any other matters related to loans.

9 Lending

9.1 Principles

- 9.1.1 Under the *National Heritage Act 1983*, the Board of Trustees may lend, subject to the provisions of the Act, any object the property which is vested in the Board. The Board may also lend items from restricted collections.
- 9.1.2 The conditions under which the Museum will lend items are stated in the V&A's standard Loan Agreement or Loan Hire Agreement for Touring Exhibitions.
- 9.1.3 The loan of any item with a valuation of £1,000,000 or over, or of a sensitive nature, or which forms part of a collection subject to restrictive conditions, requires the approval of the Board of Trustees on the recommendation of the Trustees' Collections Committee.²
- 9.1.4 The authorisation of the loan of individual items up to £1,000,000 in value is delegated by the Board of Trustees to the Director and by the Director to the Keepers. The Keeper's decision is informed by advice from departments responsible for the preparation of the items for loan on the condition of items and the availability of resources. The Collections Group is responsible for reviewing loan requests that are to be refused. Where an item is on display in a gallery, the Keeper in charge of that gallery is consulted.
- 9.1.5 The following criteria will be used to assess a loan request:
- the physical suitability of the item for transport and display;
 - the degree of risk surrounding the loan and the moderation to the Museum's satisfaction;
 - the effects of the loan on the interests of the V&A's own visiting public;
 - the resources required to make the item available;
 - the suitability of the borrowing institution;
 - any prior commitments for the item (e.g. planned exhibitions, research, learning, publication or conservation activities);
 - the status of the exhibition to which the item would be lent, the item's significance to the theme and purpose of the exhibition; and
 - the formal final loan request having been received with sufficient time to prepare the items. This is a minimum of 9 months for overseas borrowers, and 6 months for UK borrowers.
- 9.1.6 From time to time special restrictions may be placed on certain collections or categories of items, linked to V&A projects: for example, to preserve a newly-opened gallery as installed for a year after opening, or where items are inaccessible due to storage or gallery projects.
- 9.1.7 The Museum will normally expect the borrower to cover all the associated costs of lending.

² An Agreement made on 27 April 1998 between the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and the Board of Trustees requires that the Board carries out certain functions with regard to these objects on the Secretary of State's behalf. The Agreement enables the Board to "lend objects temporarily for exhibition elsewhere than on the Museum's premises".

These include conservation work, mounting, framing, photography, packing, transport, couriers and installation. Non-UK borrowers will be asked to pay an administration fee, calculated on the basis of the number of items requested.

9.1.8 The Museum will determine whether to courier items sent on loan according to the following considerations:

- the rarity, significance and fragility of the item
- any special handling or installation requirements
- the anticipated professionalism of staff at the venue
- the number of items in the consignment
- the value of the consignment.

9.1.9 The Registrar is responsible for the administration of loans, maintaining a central record of all lending and ensuring the conformity of arrangements to an agreed standard.

9.1.10 Photographic image/s of every item lent will be held by the Museum.

9.1.11 The Museum will assess the level of threat and vulnerability throughout the duration of the loan. In consultation with the V&A's DSO, the Museum will understand the level of risk that the Museum is prepared to tolerate and implement proportionate security controls to reduce the risk to an acceptable level.

9.2 Long-Term Lending

9.2.1 The Museum allows lending for longer periods as a means of making parts of its collections not on display more widely available to the public.

9.2.2 The loan will normally be reviewed every three years. Valuations will be updated and confirmation sought that the appropriate insurance or indemnity arrangements are in place and that the conditions of loan continue to be satisfied.

9.2.3 Borrowers will be asked to complete an annual audit and send a report to the Registrar confirming the location and valuation of all borrowed items.

9.3 Touring Exhibitions

9.3.1 A 'touring exhibition' is a complete exhibition, or a major part of one, initiated and prepared by the Museum and including significant information, in the form of label texts, information panels and catalogue entries, in addition to items from the collections and items borrowed from external lenders. Arrangements for such touring exhibitions are individually negotiated.

9.3.2 The administration and delivery of touring exhibitions is the responsibility of the Head of Exhibitions and Loans who will advise the Director in order to seek, as necessary, the agreement of the Board of Trustees, on the recommendation of the Trustees' Collections Committee.

9.3.3 The Director of the Museum of Childhood is responsible for the administration and delivery of Museum of Childhood touring exhibitions.

9.3.4 The Director of the Theatre and Performance Collections is responsible for the administration and delivery of Theatre and Performance display touring exhibitions

10 Borrowing

10.1 Under the *National Heritage Act 1983*, the Board of Trustees may borrow items from other public institutions or private individuals for the purposes of temporary exhibitions, displays, study, or for long-term display in galleries.

10.2 Authority for the acceptance of long-term loans is delegated by the Board to the Director and in turn to the Deputy Director (Collections) and Keepers who should be consulted about all loans other than those for exhibitions. It is the policy of the Museum to accept loans that will be used for temporary exhibitions or displays or display and study only.

10.3 All loans taken into the Museum are governed by specific terms and conditions included in a Loan Agreement that makes clear the respective responsibilities and rights of owner and Museum.

10.4 Responsibility for the overall administration of incoming loans, including those for temporary exhibition or displays, rests with the Head of Exhibitions and Loans. Detailed arrangements for receipt, registration and indemnity are the responsibility of the Registrar in consultation with the relevant collection or with the Exhibition Department as appropriate.

10.5 The exercise of judgement on the suitability of an item to be borrowed by the Museum for display or study rests in the first instance with the Keeper of the relevant collection. In the case of loans for temporary exhibitions or displays the exercise of judgement will rest with the curator of the temporary exhibition and Head of Exhibitions and Loans.

10.6 No item should be borrowed unless it is in a suitable condition to travel and be displayed or used for purposes as defined in the Act.

10.7 No conservation should normally be carried out on items borrowed for temporary exhibitions or displays unless agreed with the lender in writing in advance. In the event of unforeseen deterioration or emergency the permission of the owner must be obtained, preferably in writing, before any treatment is carried out.

10.8 A photograph must be taken of any incoming item on arrival at the Museum.

10.9 All long term loans are reviewed every three years and should be returned if it is no longer possible or appropriate for the objects to be on display or otherwise accessible to the public.

Appendix 1: Legal, Ethical and Standards Framework

The Museum's Collections Management Policy framework is informed by legislation, ethical codes and appropriate sectoral standards.

A. Legislation applying to all Collections Management Policies

- The National Heritage Act, 1983
- The Museums and Galleries Act, 1992 (as amended)
- The Public Records Acts, 1958, as amended 1967
- The Data Protection Act, 1998
- The Freedom of Information Act, 2000
- Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, UNESCO, 1970
- The Requirements of HM Customs & Revenue
- Copyright Act 1911 and 1956
- Copyright and Related Rights Regulations, 2003
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988
- Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act, 2003
- Disability Discrimination Act, 1995 (as amended)
- Equality Act, 2006
- Human Rights Act, 1998
- Race Relations Act, 1976
- Racial and Religious Hatred Act, 2006
- Sex Discrimination Act, 1975
- Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- The Environmental Information Regulations, 2004
- COSHH: Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations, 2002

B. Ethical codes applying to all Collections Management Policies

- Code of Ethics for Museums, ICOM, 2006 (including the ICOM 'Red List')
- Code of Ethics for Museums, Museums Association, 2008
- Combating Illicit Trade: Due Diligence Guidelines for Museums, Libraries and Archives on collecting and borrowing Cultural Material, DCMS, 2005
- UK Export Licensing for Cultural Goods – Procedures and guidance for exporters of works of art and other culture goods, DCMS, 1997
- Statement of Principles issued by the National Museum Directors Conference on spoliation of works of art during the Holocaust and World War II period, 1998;

C. Sectoral standards applying to all Collections Management Policies

- Spectrum: UK Museum Collections Management Standard

- PAS197:2009: Code of practice for cultural collections management, BSi and Collections Trust

D. Collections Information and Access Policy

D.1 Documentation and Cataloguing Standards

- Spectrum: UK Museum Collections Management Standard
- ISAD(g): General International Standard Archival Description, International Council on Archives, 2007
- Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules ('AACR', Joint Steering Committee, 2nd ed., 2002 revision): international library documentation standard. In process of supersession by Resource Description and Access ('RDA', 2010, revisions through 2013-)
- MARC ('machine-readable cataloguing') data standards (Library of Congress, 1999, revisions through 2013-)
- Art and Architecture Thesaurus, The J.Paul Getty Trust

D.2 Lending

- Loans between National and Non-national Museums – New standard and practical guidelines, National Museum Directors' Conference, 2003
- Display Case supplement, UK Registrars' Group
- Standard Facilities Report, UK Registrars' Group
- Standard Facilities Report Security Supplement, UK Registrars' Group
- Government Indemnity Scheme Guidelines for Transport, July 2012.

E. Collections Care and Conservation Policy

- PAS 198:2012 Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections
- Benchmarks in Collections Care for Museums, Archives and Libraries, 2007
- Statement of Principles issued by the National Museum Directors Conference on environmental conditions for lending, 2010
- 'Bizot' Group Agreement: Achieving sustainability for galleries and museums, 2013
- PD 5454:2012 Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials.
- Codes of Ethics: ICOM-CC /ICON
- Institute of Conservation's (ICON) Conservation Register 2013