

## Site Collections Development Policy

Name of Museum: English Heritage – Whitby Abbey Name of Governing Body: English Heritage Trust

Date on which this policy was approved by the Acquisitions, Loans and Disposals Committee: 12 December 2019

Policy review procedure: The Site Collections Development Policy is owned by the Senior Curator for the geographical area. It will be reviewed at least once every five years as part of a cyclical process managed through Registry.

Date at which this policy is due for review: December 2024

Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the Site Collections Development Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of the collections.

### 1. Management Arrangements and scope

- 1.1. This policy covers all the museum artefacts managed by English Heritage from, or associated with the site whether they are held on site, at another English Heritage site or store, or on loan to a third party. This policy does not cover artefacts associated with other English Heritage sites which are stored or displayed at this site.
- 1.2. The site and its collections form part of the National Collection of English Heritage.
- 1.3. Whitby Abbey is owned by The Strickland-Constable Estate and is managed by English Heritage under guardianship.

### 2. Relationships to other relevant policies/plans of the organisation

- 2.1. The national *Collections Development Policy* approved by the Board of Trustees on 9 November 2016, (together with any amendments to, or replacements for, the policy approved by Trustees), apply to the site. In the event of any disagreement between this site policy and the national policy the national policy will apply.
- 2.2. Without limitation to the above all the procedures, all ethical and legal considerations set out in the national policy apply to acquisitions, disposals and loans from or to the sites collection.
- 2.2. Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

### 3. History of the collections

- 3.1. Whitby Abbey is a nationally and internationally significant site on Whitby Headland, occupied in pre-history, originally founded as a monastery in 657 and destroyed by Danes circa 867. It was re-founded (in 1078 and again by 1109) as a

Benedictine Abbey and dissolved in 1539. The earliest part of the existing church ruins date from 1220, there are 14th century additions. Post medieval remains include the courtyard garden and Cholmley House which now holds the site museum.

- 3.2 The archaeological collections that English Heritage hold from Whitby Abbey and the wider Headland come from specific excavations at the site.

The Office of Works clearances and excavations from 1920 to 1925 located mainly within the church and the area to the north of the church within the modern boundary wall. English Heritage holds the majority of the stonework and ceramics from these excavations, including Anglo-Saxon crosses and medieval architectural stonework. (The collection was split in the 1920s and the inscribed Saxon stonework and most of the small finds went on long term loan to the British Museum before being purchased and gifted to Whitby Museum in 1999- 2000). The paper-based archive, held by The British Museum, from this period was transferred from the British Museum to English Heritage in 2017.

Small scale interventions: Brewster 1968, site of BBC mast and Johnson 1989, trial pits by west front, Well Court 1994 and a watching brief on Whitby Abbey Lodge in 1994 have added small quantities of artefacts to the English Heritage collections.

To date a small quantity of the finds, mainly those which have been placed on display in Whitby Abbey Museum, from HLF sponsored excavations by the former English Heritage CAS, now Historic England CfA from 1993-2017 from the guardianship area, the scheduled area and the wider headland have been deposited as permanent collections. The remainder of the archive is currently held at Fort Cumberland, Portsmouth whilst post-excavation analysis is conducted. Once complete it is intended that the material from these excavations is deposited as permanent collections with English Heritage.

- 3.3 There are a small quantity of (7) of works of art on paper representing keys views of the abbey from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century which were acquired by purchase in 2018-2019 for a new interpretation scheme at Whitby Abbey Museum.
- 3.4 There are two social history collection items – a 17<sup>th</sup> century book owned by an 18<sup>th</sup> century family member who lived at Cholmley House and a first edition book of Dracula signed by the author, both were acquired by purchase in 2017.

#### 4. An overview of the collections

- 4.1. There are 2661 records for the Whitby Abbey permanent collection, the majority is archaeological, and includes some bulk finds. The collections range in date from Prehistory to Roman to Anglo-Saxon, medieval and post medieval mainly representing the early Anglo-Saxon settlement of the site, development and richness of the medieval Abbey, and indicating its post-dissolution uses. The

Anglo-Saxon stonework forms a nationally important grouping, as do small finds such as Anglo-Saxon glass, jet crosses and a medieval chessman. There is substantial collection of diagnostic architectural stone from the medieval abbey. Associated archaeological paper-based archives are stored at Helmsley Archaeology Store.

- 4.2 There are seven works-on-paper and an archive from the 1920s-1950s and two books of social history interest.
- 4.3 There are no permanent collections on long term loan out, but some are currently held by Historic England as part of the post-excavation process.
- 4.4 There are significant collections on long term loan in displayed at Whitby Abbey Museum from three external organisations. From Whitby Museum there are 62 Anglo-Saxon and medieval artefacts excavated from Whitby Abbey. From North Yorkshire County Record Office, the 12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century Whitby Abbey cartulary (Abbot's Book), and from York Museums Trust, part of a 17<sup>th</sup> century armorial glass window.

## 5. Themes and priorities for future collecting

### 5.1. Archaeological material:

The geographic area of historic occupation on Whitby Headland is best defined by the line of the putative Anglo-Saxon boundary which is an area wider than the scheduled monument and includes land now owned or managed by a number of stakeholders. It is sensible to consider this area holistically as a collecting area.

The collecting policy for Whitby Abbey has mostly previously been restricted to archaeological material from within the current guardianship boundary and English Heritage managed area but does include material from the wider Headland. We will continue to acquire all future archaeological archives (artefactual and paper-based) from the guardianship area and English Heritage managed area, with a pre-deposition disposal policy for repetitive material.

We would also seek to collect, through negotiation, all known and future archaeological material from the entire scheduled monument area on the Whitby Headland, plus to the south and east of that area the line of the projected Anglian boundary with a 250m buffer zone as there are some areas yet to be identified. In addition to the north west of the scheduled area the boundary of St. Mary's Church, excepting human remains from within the St. Mary's Church boundary. A pre-deposition disposal policy would be applied for repetitive material. Area map appended.

### 5.2 Detached architectural material:

Detached architectural material which is diagnostic and non-repetitive will be collected.

### 5.3 Dispersed collections:

Whitby Museum holds 1659 archaeological finds from the guardianship area, and from two interventions on the wider Headland. English Heritage holds the associated paper-based archive, stone and ceramics of these archives as they were split in the 1920s. They are fully

- catalogued as 'associated objects' on the Heritage Object Management System. English Heritage would accept these collections if their future was otherwise in jeopardy. We would also collect known archaeological material currently held by other institutions and private individuals originating from the Headland area if it was to be offered to English Heritage.
- 5.4 Collections relating to former owners or occupiers:  
We would only seek to acquire collections relating to previous owners, occupiers or users of Cholmley House on establishment of firm provenance and that there is an intention to display on site or use within any form of interpretation (e.g. digital). For example, we would seek to acquire only key books from the original Cholmley library holdings, and key portraiture from the known house inventories.
- 5.5 Books:  
We would seek to acquire antiquarian books on the history of Whitby Abbey, with display potential. In particular:  
Lionel Charlton, 1779, 'The History of Whitby and of Whitby Abbey'.  
George Young, 1817, 'A History of Whitby, and Streoneshalh abbey; with a statistical survey of the vicinity to the distance of 25 miles'.  
J. C. Atkinson, 1882, 'A Handbook for Ancient Whitby and its Abbey.' Thomas H English, 1931, 'An Introduction to the Collecting and History of Whitby Prints.'
- 5.6 Prints, paintings and maps:  
We would seek to acquire prints, paintings and maps that show key views of Whitby Abbey and the Headland, in particular those with a detailed level of recording which aid our understanding of the monastic architecture and layout, and also the decline of the monument between 1539 and 1920, and also of Cholmley House.
- 5.7 Photographs and postcards:  
We would seek to acquire photographs and postcards that show key views of Whitby Abbey; in particular those which show detailed views of the architecture, excavations and monument repair as well as events held on the site.

## 6. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

- 6.1. A review of the architectural stonework collection was undertaken in 2018 and 40 stones with no research potential, either non-diagnostic or worn beyond identification were disposed. No further reviews of the permanent collection are planned as the whole collection has received recent detailed research and all are either of display quality, further research potential or add to the overall understanding of the site.

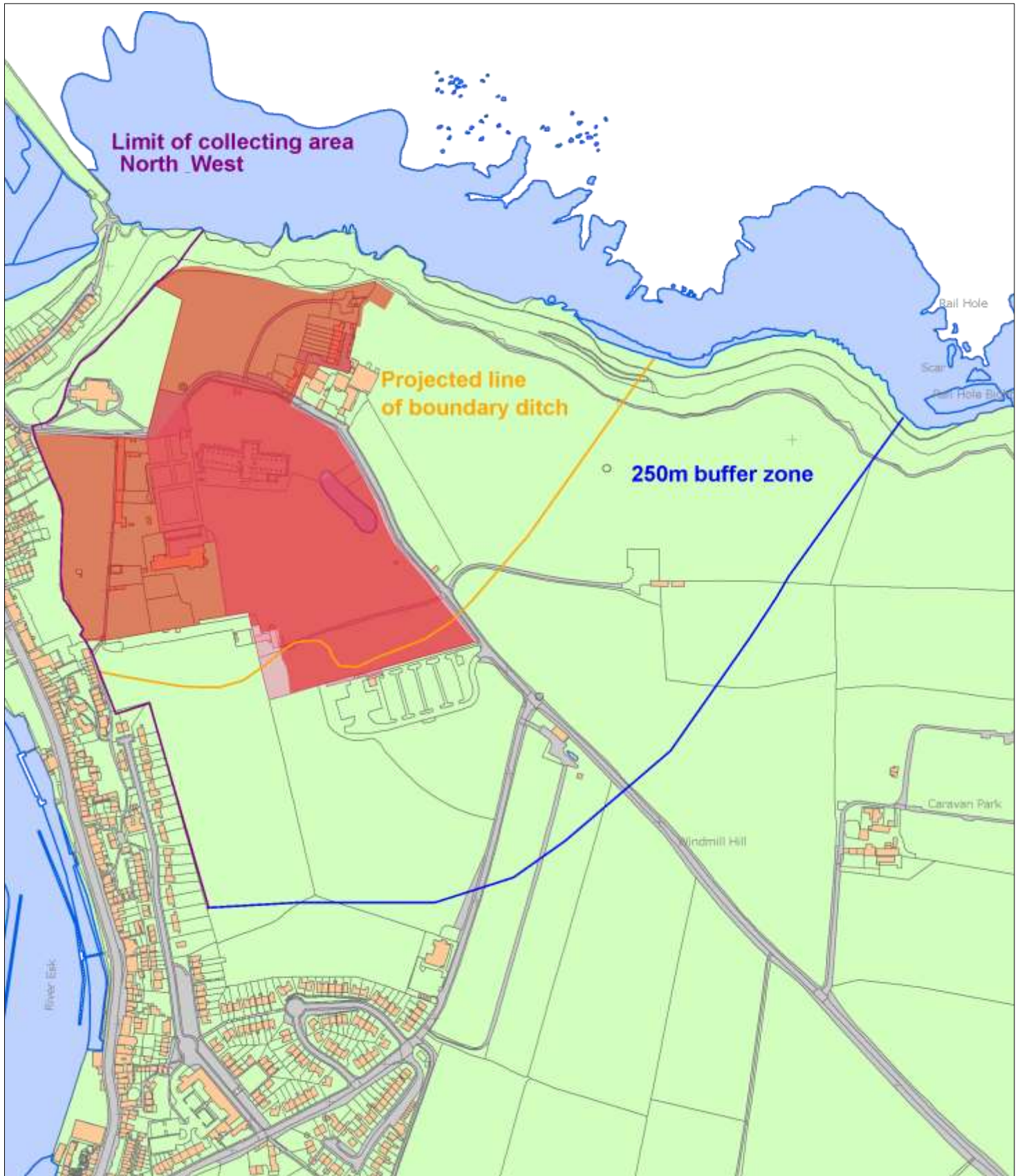
## 7. Collecting policies of other museums

- 7.1. English Heritage will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related subject areas or fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism in order to avoid

unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

- 7.2. Specific reference is made to the following museums and organisations:
- 7.2.1 The Historic England archive – with reference to archive material associated with the site.
  - 7.2.2 Whitby Museum holds the mostly Anglo-Saxon small finds and inscribed Anglo-Saxon stone from the 1920s excavations as well as the Black Horse Yard Midden antiquarian finds, and some Brewsters 1950 s headland excavations. No paper-based archive is held by them. The museum collects some archaeology from the Scarborough District Council area, but each acquisition is considered due to space constraints. Also, with reference to Whitby Literary and Philosophical Society Library at Whitby Museum regarding books, prints and photographs.
  - 7.2.3 Whitby Art Gallery, Pannett Park, with reference to paintings and prints of Whitby Abbey and the Headland.
  - 7.2.4 York Museums Trust, with reference to their county remit for archaeological collections.
  - 7.2.5 North Yorkshire County Record Office (North Yorkshire County Council) with reference to the Cholmley archives, including the Abbot's book
  - 7.2.6 Scarborough Museums Trust with reference to their collection development policy 2017-20 'Scarborough Museums Trust will continue to collect material excavated within the existing (2016) boundaries of the Borough of Scarborough provided that the conditions laid down in its 'Archaeological Depositions Procedure' have been met.....Larger depositions, .... those requiring specialist conditions not available at Scarborough Museums Trust, will be directed to an appropriate Accredited museum.' It has no current holdings from the Whitby Headland area.

# English Heritage collecting area



Map Scale 1:5,393

Map Centre 490578,511087

Date

17/12/2019

Pink = EH managed, not scheduled  
Orange = Scheduled, not EH managed  
Red = Scheduled & EH managed



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