

# Exhibition Policy April 2004

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### 1. Introduction

Cultural Services run seven registered museums. Wakefield Museum, Wakefield Art Gallery and Pontefract Museum programme between four and six temporary exhibitions a year. Castleford Museum Room, Clarke Hall and Wakefield Museum also change thematic displays every 5-10 years. Temporary exhibitions are not programmed at Sandal Castle or Pontefract Castle.

The exhibition programme is designed to provide access to stored collections, for the widest possible audience.

### 2. Summary

- (1) The bulk of our collections are in store, and temporary exhibitions provide the main form of access to them.
- (2) Temporary exhibitions create and sustain partnerships with community groups and other institutions.
- (3) Temporary exhibitions support the service's long-term objectives.
- (4) Each temporary exhibition is designed for a specific audience.
- (5) Some temporary exhibitions use venues other than museums, galleries and historic sites.
- (6) Planning for the temporary exhibition programme includes identifying and specifying the research and conservation requirements, identifying the audience and working within budget and staff constraints.

### 3. Purpose

Exhibitions:

- Enable the public to explore the vast diversity of the service's collections, especially those that are not on permanent display for lack of space.
- Enable visitors to discover more about themes only touched on in the permanent displays.
- Enable the public to see material on loan from other public bodies or from private collections.
- Enable the public to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment.
- Enable local groups and individuals to display their own material, inspired by the site or theme, with curatorial support.

- Enable change and variety for the visitor, thus promoting repeat visits.
- Recognise the interests of people who made, used, owned, collected or gave items in the collections.
- Enable staff to research, share and interpret information relating to collections, reflecting diverse views.
- Enable staff to consult and involve local communities, users and supporters.
- Help build audiences and partnerships for future projects such as the Waterfront Gallery and the Castleford Forum.

#### **4. Audience**

Each temporary exhibition is designed for a specific audience, eg. Key Stage Two school children, families, local historians, university students and enthusiasts. The target audience depends on the nature of the collections used and the requirements of the service's marketing and education policy and objectives. Over time, and in consultation with audiences in order to meet their needs, each venue provides a balance of exhibitions, thus catering for each of its target audiences.

Communities outside Pontefract and Wakefield are served by exhibition projects such as the Community Heritage Exhibitions (operating in libraries in Castleford, Featherstone, Havercroft, Kinsley, Knottingley and Normanton).

#### **5. Collections**

Our collections contain over 150,000 artefacts, covering archaeology, fine and decorative art, social history and Charles Waterton's natural history. Less than 5% are on permanent display. Some collections are kept for research only, and are unlikely to be displayed (eg. some archaeological deposits). Other items, whilst being appropriate for display, require research and/or conservation before they can be used.

A large percentage of the catalogued collections is both suitable and available for temporary exhibitions.

The exhibition programme also utilises collections loaned by other institutions, as well as individuals. These sometimes take the form of hired-in exhibitions.

#### **6. Planning and Resources**

The exhibition programme is agreed three times a year at an exhibition planning meeting. It is designed to use the service's limited staff and budgetary resources effectively, by programming no more than two in-house exhibitions per year per venue.

Most exhibitions will have a range of activities and outreach facilitated by both curatorial and education staff. In-house exhibitions [those produced by the service's staff from the service's collections] are considered for touring (both within the district and outside) during the planning stages. Some temporary exhibitions are sourced from other institutions.

We plan to develop a high-specification temporary exhibition gallery of around 400 square metres as part of the Waterfront Gallery, which is scheduled to open in 2008. This will enable the service to take larger scale, more ambitious exhibitions which require higher standards than we are currently available to meet at our existing venues.