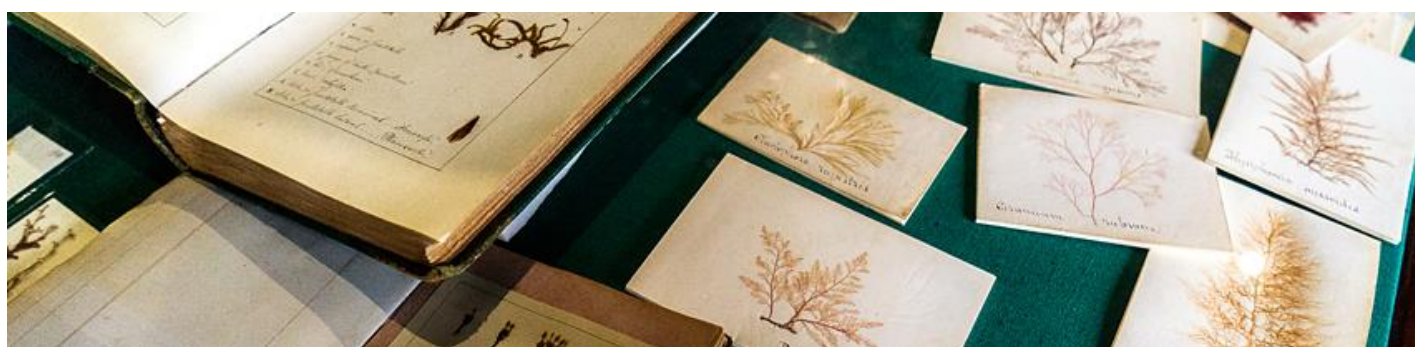


Keeping your museum and collection safer during the Covid-19 lockdown

The Home Office has confirmed that we are permitted to undertake necessary work to keep museum premises secure and to protect and preserve collections on-site when this work cannot be done from home.

Guidance has been published by Arts Council England (with contributions from the National Security Adviser (NSA) and GIS Environmental Adviser) and is applicable to all museums: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/protecting-cultural-objects/government-indemnity-scheme>



Our advice:

The main risks to museums and collections in the South West during the lockdown are:

- Flood
- Theft and vandalism
- Fire
- Pests
- Damp and mould
- Dust
- Light

These risks are present all the time, but in normal times we worry about them less because we are in the museum more often and feel able to react more quickly.

In this resource, there are some steps you can take to help protect your museum and collection. Any of them will help.

Your time is limited so concentrate on the areas you feel are the biggest risk or biggest priority for your museum. Only do what you feel safe and comfortable doing.

Top tips: Further reading

- See further resources relating to caring for your collection on our [resources page](#)
- Security guidance from Museum Galleries Scotland: <https://bit.ly/3c3g3GQ>
- Advice from the Institute of Conservation (ICON): <https://bit.ly/2RrxJEe>
- Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials (AICCM) guidance: <https://bit.ly/2xiQCIE>

If you cannot get access to your museum:

Things to consider		Details e.g phone numbers, named contacts etc.
Alarms	<p>If the museum is alarmed, do you know the contact details of the alarm company?</p> <p>Check that the company is still working and provide them with backup contacts in case the main contact is unavailable. If not, let your local police team know.</p>	
Keeping watch	<p>Is there a Neighbourhood Watch in the museum area? If so, can you get in touch with them so that they have at least 2 contact details for the museum?</p>	
	<p>Do you know people who live near the museum who could see it from their homes or walk past it on their daily exercise?</p> <p>If so, could they take photographs of the museum and call you if they notice any vandalism, damage or anything that causes them concern? Make sure they have at least 2 museum contacts in case one is unavailable.</p> <p>(Having photographs of the building will help you to see quickly if anything has changed and will provide useful evidence for insurance or the police if anything happens.)</p>	
	<p>If no-one you know lives near enough to the museum to be a helpful observer, are there any businesses nearby who could alert you if they see any cause for concern? Make sure they have at least 2 contacts.</p>	
Insurance	<p>Make sure that your insurance company knows the museum's circumstances and that you have their contact and policy details. Make sure the insurer has at least 2 museum contacts.</p>	
	<p>Keep a record of everything that is done to keep the museum secure, with names and dates. This will be very helpful with possible insurance claims.</p>	
Fire	<p>Contact your local Fire & Rescue Service Community Safety Team to let them know the museum's circumstances and make sure they have at least 2 museum contacts.</p>	
Emergency Plan	<p>Do you have a copy of your museum's Emergency Plan? If so, read through it so that you are familiar with it and can be ready to act if needed.</p>	

If you can gain access to your museum:

Discuss the visit beforehand with other museum people and agree what will be done – create a checklist to take with you and use some of the suggestions below as a guide:

Make sure you have:

- a well-charged phone
- a torch
- a notebook and pen
- If possible, have a camera (e.g. on your phone).
- Make sure you have any tools or information you may need for the tasks you hope to carry out. Tissues and a rubbish bag will be useful
- Make sure you know how to unset and reset the alarm if there is one.

Practice safe working at all times:

- Do not work alone, arrange for a colleague to be at the museum with you.
- Maintain a 2 metre distance from others at all times.
- When you arrive, check the outside of the museum as much as you can before you enter.
- Wash your hands when you arrive at and leave the museum and when you get home.
- Make sure no-one else is nearby when you open up.
- Lock the door once your team is inside and first walk through the museum together (but keep 2m apart) to make sure it is empty.

If you suspect someone unauthorised is in the building or you spot signs of damage such as broken windows or doors, leave immediately, lock the museum and wait in a safe place while you call the police.



CHECKLIST	
Open all the internal doors to allow airflow while you are in the building. This will help slow down mould growth. Close them before leaving.	
Photograph all the rooms in the museum so you will be able to see if anything changes.	
Check the building for leaks, damage, mould or stains. If you find anything, photograph and record it and decide what action can be taken (e.g. put bucket under minor leak, call emergency plumber if major leak).	
If possible, turn the water stopcock off provided this is not needed for running equipment.	
Check that all unnecessary electrical equipment (e.g. AV units, portable heaters and unused computers) is switched off and unplugged from the socket to reduce the risk of fire.	
Empty fridges and switch them off, leaving the door ajar.	
Check that any equipment which is needed for maintaining the collection is left on, such as air handling equipment, environmental monitoring systems or alarms. If the central heating can be set to maintain a low constant temperature (e.g. 5°C) this would be very helpful.	
If there is no electrical equipment needed in the building you may wish to turn all or part of the electricity off at the fuse board, provided this does not compromise any alarm system.	

CHECKLIST Cont.	✓
Check on any loan items to make sure they are not changing. Take photos which you can send to the lending organisation to reassure them, if appropriate, and let them know what steps you have taken to protect their objects.	
If there is no copy of the Emergency Plan off-site, you may wish to take one copy from the museum to be kept safe in a place where other museum people can access it.	
Empty any dehumidifiers. If they have not been filling and you don't feel they are needed you could turn them off and unplug them from the socket.	
Empty any rubbish bins and remove the rubbish. Remove any stored food or make sure it is in sealed containers (e.g. biscuit tins). Remove any unnecessary flammable materials (e.g. paints, oils and varnishes) and store them off-site if possible.	
Check the pest traps and record what you find. If you are not confident about identifying pests, you can photograph the traps (use the torch to provide enough light) or collect them and replace them with fresh traps. Take the collected traps (make sure you note where each was placed) for someone to identify or send them to the CDO for identification.	
If an object has a pest infestation, photograph the damage then isolate it in a box (or wrap it in tissue) and put it in a polythene bag. Label it clearly so people know an object is inside.	
If any objects have been left out of their cases or storage, put them back or cover them with a sheet of acid-free tissue. Make sure objects are protected from daylight. If possible lock vulnerable objects in more secure storage. Make a note of any object which you move and take a photo before and after you move it so that museum people will know that it is safe.	
Lock the cases, internal doors and cupboards. Make sure the keys are in a safe place and that other museum people will know where to get them. Do not leave a note in the museum explaining where to find the keys – send this information to museum people securely.	
Record everything you have done. Make sure all lights are off, windows locked and the museum is alarmed and locked before you leave.	

Finally, well done for caring about your collection. Try not to worry if you cannot do all (or any) of the steps listed. Most objects are used to being left on display or in storage for long periods and may benefit from a more stable, dark environment.

We will send out more information about planning for reopening and recovery.


For now, concentrate on staying healthy and looking after each other.

If you have any concerns about your collection, please contact our Conservation Development Officer, **Helena Jaeschke** at helena.jaeschke@exeter.gov.uk

South West Museum Development
Bristol Museum & Art Gallery
Queens Road, Bristol BS8 1RL

0117 922 4653

www.southwestmuseums.org.uk

 @swmuseums



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