



Environmental Policy

Document Control

Policy owner: Director

Approved by: Board of Trustees

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1. Purpose

The Natural Sciences Museum, Sheffield (“NSM”) recognises that environmental responsibility is integral to its charitable purposes, public role and long-term stewardship of collections, buildings, resources and reputation.

This policy sets out NSM’s commitment to protecting the environment, reducing adverse environmental impacts, using resources responsibly and embedding sustainability into decision-making across the museum.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Trustees;
- the Director;
- Heads of Department;
- staff;
- volunteers, interns and students;
- contractors and consultants working on behalf of NSM; and
- visitors and users of NSM sites, where relevant to environmental requirements such as waste disposal, energy use, events and procurement conditions.

It applies to all NSM activities, including:

- buildings and estate management;
- collections storage, care and display;
- exhibitions and events;
- procurement and contract management;
- travel and transport;
- energy and water use;
- waste and recycling;
- catering, retail and hospitality activity;
- research and learning activity; and
- digital and office operations.

3. Policy Statement

NSM is committed to:

- protecting the environment;
- complying with applicable environmental law and regulatory requirements;
- preventing pollution where reasonably practicable;
- reducing waste and increasing reuse and recycling;
- using energy, water and materials efficiently;
- considering environmental sustainability in procurement and operational decisions;
- supporting biodiversity and the responsible use of natural resources; and
- continually improving its environmental performance over time.

This reflects the broad approach taken by the Natural History Museum's published environmental and sustainability materials.

4. Governance and Authority

NSM's authority structure is:

Trustees → Director → Heads of Department → staff

4.1 Trustees

The Board of Trustees is responsible for overall oversight of environmental governance. The Trustees will:

- approve this policy and material amendments;
- consider significant environmental risks and opportunities affecting NSM;
- support long-term environmental stewardship as part of NSM's governance and strategy.

4.2 Director

The Director is responsible for implementing this policy across NSM and ensuring that appropriate systems, priorities and controls are in place.

4.3 Heads of Department

Heads of Department are responsible for applying this policy within their departments, ensuring that environmental considerations are reflected in planning, operations, projects and purchasing.

4.4 Staff and others

All staff and others acting on behalf of NSM must follow this policy, support its objectives and take reasonable steps to reduce avoidable environmental harm in the course of their work.

5. Core Principles

NSM will apply the following principles in its environmental management.

5.1 Legal compliance

NSM will comply with applicable environmental law, permit conditions, waste requirements and regulatory obligations relevant to its activities.

5.2 Prevention

NSM will seek to prevent pollution and reduce environmental harm before it occurs, rather than relying only on corrective action.

5.3 Proportionality

Environmental action will be proportionate to NSM's size, resources, buildings, operations and risks, while still seeking meaningful improvement.

5.4 Integration

Environmental considerations will be integrated into day-to-day decision-making, not treated as a separate or optional issue.

5.5 Continuous improvement

NSM will review its environmental performance and seek practical, evidence-based improvements over time.

6. Environmental Objectives

NSM will work, as far as reasonably practicable, to:

- reduce greenhouse gas emissions from its operations;
- improve energy efficiency;
- reduce avoidable waste;
- increase reuse, repair and recycling;
- reduce unnecessary consumption of paper, packaging and single-use items;
- conserve water;
- reduce environmentally harmful purchasing and encourage sustainable procurement;
- reduce adverse impacts from travel and transport;
- support environmentally responsible exhibitions, events and building projects; and
- promote awareness of environmental responsibility among staff, volunteers and visitors.

7. Buildings, Energy and Utilities

NSM will seek to manage its buildings and estate in ways that improve environmental performance while remaining appropriate for the care of collections, visitor safety and operational resilience.

This may include:

- improving energy efficiency in lighting, heating, cooling, ventilation and equipment;
- monitoring and managing energy and water use;
- maintaining buildings and plant to avoid waste and prevent unnecessary environmental damage;

- considering environmental performance in refurbishments, maintenance and capital works; and
- balancing environmental objectives with collections care, conservation and heritage-building constraints where relevant.

8. Waste, Recycling and Resource Use

NSM will minimise waste and manage it responsibly.

This includes, where practicable:

- reducing waste at source;
- reusing materials and equipment before replacement;
- segregating recyclable and non-recyclable waste appropriately;
- arranging lawful and responsible disposal through authorised waste contractors;
- maintaining appropriate records where required; and
- managing food waste, packaging waste and event waste responsibly.

Current workplace recycling rules in England require workplaces, including charities, to separate dry recyclable materials, food waste and non-recyclable waste before collection, subject to the legal framework and any applicable exemption. Businesses and other workplaces also have a legal waste duty of care to keep waste safe, ensure it is handled lawfully, and take reasonable steps to prevent harm.

9. Procurement and Purchasing

NSM will take environmental sustainability into account in procurement and purchasing decisions where relevant and proportionate.

This may include considering:

- whole-life cost and durability;
- repairability and reusability;
- packaging;
- recycled or lower-impact materials;
- energy and water efficiency;
- waste implications;
- supplier environmental practices; and
- opportunities to reduce unnecessary consumption.

NHM's responsible procurement materials explicitly include minimising environmental impacts and reflecting environmental sustainability in purchasing decisions.

10. Travel and Transport

NSM will seek to reduce the environmental impact of travel and transport associated with its activities.

This may include:

- prioritising remote meetings where appropriate;
- encouraging public transport, walking and cycling where practical;
- planning journeys efficiently;
- reducing unnecessary deliveries and transport movements; and
- considering environmental impacts in exhibition transport, collections movement and business travel.

Environmental choices in this area must still be balanced with safety, accessibility, operational need and collections care requirements.

11. Exhibitions, Events and Public Activity

NSM will seek to ensure that exhibitions, events, retail, catering and public programming are planned and delivered with environmental responsibility in mind.

This may include attention to:

- material selection and reuse;
- temporary build waste;
- energy use;
- food and drink service;
- refill and recycling arrangements;
- transport and logistics; and
- environmentally responsible supplier selection.

12. Collections and Environmental Responsibility

As a museum, NSM must balance environmental sustainability with its duty to preserve collections for the long term.

Where there is tension between ideal environmental conditions for collections and broader environmental goals, NSM will seek a balanced, evidence-based approach that protects collections while reducing unnecessary environmental impact.

13. Biodiversity and the Natural Environment

Where relevant to its estate, grounds or operations, NSM will seek to protect and enhance biodiversity and avoid unnecessary damage to the natural environment.

This may include:

- careful grounds management;
- consideration of habitat value;
- avoiding harmful pollution or disturbance; and
- supporting environmental understanding through NSM's work.

14. Contractors, Tenants and Suppliers

Where relevant, NSM will expect contractors, concessionaires, tenants and suppliers working on its premises or on its behalf to comply with applicable environmental requirements and to operate in ways consistent with this policy.

This may include requirements concerning:

- waste segregation and disposal;
- pollution prevention;
- use of materials;
- delivery and transport arrangements;
- energy and water use; and
- incident reporting.

15. Training, Awareness and Engagement

NSM will promote awareness of environmental responsibilities among staff and others working on its behalf.

This may include:

- induction or guidance on environmental expectations;
- departmental procedures for waste, energy and procurement;
- practical guidance for events, projects and contractors; and
- encouraging environmentally responsible day-to-day behaviour.

16. Monitoring and Review

NSM will monitor environmental performance in a way that is proportionate to its size and operations.

This may include reviewing:

- energy and water use;
- waste and recycling performance;
- significant environmental incidents or non-compliance;
- procurement and project impacts; and
- progress against internal environmental priorities.

17. Incident Reporting and Non-Compliance

Environmental incidents, breaches of procedure or suspected non-compliance with legal requirements must be reported promptly through the appropriate internal route.

Failure to comply with this policy may result in:

- corrective action;
- withdrawal of delegated authority;
- disciplinary action;
- contractor or supplier review; or
- referral to external authorities where required.

18. Review

This policy takes effect on 01/04/2026 and will be reviewed by 01/04/2029, or earlier if required by changes in law, operations, estate, collections needs or environmental risk.