The Natural History Museum Code of Ethics - January 2020

Introduction
The Museum is a world-class visitor attraction and leading science research centre. We use our unique collections and unrivalled expertise to tackle the biggest challenges facing the world today. We care for more than 80 million specimens spanning billions of years and welcome more than five million visitors annually. The British Museum Act 1963 defines a duty to care for the collections, keep them safe and make them available to the public.

The Natural History Museum is committed to the highest standards of ethical conduct in our activities. Ethics are an essential part of decision-making and of ensuring proper and transparent administration of the Museum.

This Code of Ethics underpins our mission and vision, core organisational values and strategic objectives:

Our vision is a future where both people and the planet thrive
Our mission is to create advocates for the planet

Our values:
- We are CONNECTED
- We encourage CREATIVITY
- We champion DIVERSITY
- We value EVIDENCE

Our strategy to 2031:
- Secure the future of our collection
- Engage and involve the widest possible audience
- Transform the study of natural history
- Develop our gardens and galleries
- Create a resilient and sustainable organisation

The entire NHM community, including staff, agency, contractors, consultants, volunteers, scientific associates and students are expected to act ethically and in accordance with the principles set out in this code when making decisions at all levels. In addition to our core values we subscribe to the Nolan Committee’s principles for public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

This code:

1. Sets out the key ethical principles to which the NHM is committed
2. Describes Museum governance and decision-making processes around complex ethical matters
3. Lists the key policy and procedural documents related to our ethical decision making

1. Ethical Principles

Responsibility and Integrity
- We run all our operations fairly and responsibly, acting in the public interest
- We seek efficiency, economy, and prudence in the administration of public resources
- We conduct all our activities in accordance with appropriate professional standards and practices
- We maintain the highest standards of integrity in the conduct of research and collecting
**Accountability and Transparency**
- We are consistent, fair, honest and transparent in our decision making
- We apply the highest standards of accountability and transparency to our funds

**Intellectual freedom**
- We maintain control of the content and integrity of our programmes, exhibitions and activities, without influence or interference

**Respect**
- We engage in meaningful and informed dialogue and foster collaboration, wherever possible
- We support freedom of speech and debate; respecting differing views
- We champion inclusivity and accessibility

**Sustainability**
- We act responsibly towards the natural world, considering the wider and future implications of our actions
- We seek long term sustainable solutions that take both present and future implications into consideration

These principles are predicated upon a commitment to operate under appropriate legal frameworks; within the boundaries defined by applicable laws and our statements of principle. We apply our principles alongside our organisational values: evidence, diversity, creative and connected.

The principles reflect relevant professional standards, sector and Government guidance, including: the Museum Association Code of Ethics for Museums, the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums and the ICOMNATHIST Code of Ethics for Natural History Museums.

## 2. Museum Governance

**Overall Governance**
The Board of Trustees is responsible for overseeing the management of the Museum. The Executive Board is responsible for running the Museum under the leadership of the Museum Director, who is appointed by the Board of Trustees. The Executive Board approves the Museum's policies, procedures, programmes and projects. It formulates and monitors the Museum's corporate plan, delegates decision-making responsibilities to other management groups where appropriate, and has collective responsibility for the entire Museum.
The Museum’s Executive Board is responsible for keeping the Code of Ethics under review for the Museum’s Board of Trustees.

Heads of Department and Managers are responsible for the implementation and communication of ethical policies and procedures; ensuring due diligence is undertaken on ethical issues; escalating ethical issues within the Museum through to the relevant board, ensuring appropriate training is undertaken on ethical issues; and keeping key policies and procedures in their area under review.

Escalation
If department-level processes cannot result in a decision on an ethically complex situation, the case may be escalated to the appropriate Head of Department, Group Director, the Museum’s Ethics Advisory Panel, Executive Board or the Board of Trustees. Ethics will be a standing item on the Executive Board Strategic monthly meeting agenda and any issues and recommendations from the Ethics Advisory Panel will be discussed here. In the case of particularly complex ethical issues, the Museum Executive Board will make a formal recommendation to the Board of Trustees for a decision and will ensure notification to the Museum Audit and Risk Committee.

Ethics Advisory Panel
The purpose of the Ethics Advisory Panel is to assist the Museum Executive Board in establishing and embedding an ethical framework for decision making within the organisation. The Panel will consider complex ethical issues via escalation from a Head of Department or Group Director based on a set of criteria and will escalate a list of issues and recommendations to Executive Board for decision. The Panel will provide strategic advice and challenge on approaches to ethical issues using the Museum’s Ethical Principles to underpin recommendations; ensuring compliance with professional and ethical standards and seeking appropriate external evidence or information to support any proposal or case brought to Executive Board.

3. Policies and Procedures

The following codes of practice, associated policies and procedures are in place:

i. People
   • Staff Handbook
   • Whistleblowing Policy

ii. Science: Collections and Research

Collections Policy Framework
   • Collections Development Policy
   • Collections Access and Information Policy
   • Collections Care Policy
   • Human Remains Policy
   • Collections Procedures
   • Due Diligence Guidance - Collections
   • Due Diligence Report (part of Immunity from Seizure approval from DCMS) - Collections
Research

Academic freedom is an important consideration in ethical matters relating to research. Staff must be honest, accountable and lawful in respect of their own research and of others working with them. Responsible ethical conduct is expected in all aspects of research.

- NHM Good Research Practice

iii. Consultancy and Commercial (third party relationships)

- Due Diligence
- Corporate Venue Hire process

iv. Fundraising and Gifts

The NHM seeks and encourages philanthropic funding and support from a range of sources, including individuals, companies, charitable trusts and foundations and statutory funders.

Fundraising
- Fundraising Promise
- Complaints Procedure
- Charity Partnerships Policy
- Code of Fundraising Practice

Gifts
- Gift Acceptance Policy
- Gift Acceptance Procedure

v. Finance, Procurement and Investments

Our internal financial and accounting controls are designed to ensure that we do not mislead investors, legislators, authorities or the public about financial aspects of the organisation.

It is Museum policy that everyone working on behalf of the Museum conduct business responsibly with integrity and without corrupt practices or acts of bribery to obtain an unfair advantage.

- Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy
- Conflicts of Interest Policy
- Gifts and Hospitality Policy

Procurement

Expenditure of Museum funds must be administered with the highest levels of probity and transparency with all parties responsible for securing the best value for money. To our best endeavours, the Museum ensures that our chosen suppliers also abide by standards of ethical conduct that satisfy our requirements and are in line with our Responsible Procurement Policy.
• Modern Slavery Statement
• Responsible Procurement Policy

Investments
The Museum’s Executive Board is responsible for the Museum’s investment policy

vi. Sustainability
We are committed to addressing our environmental impact and to seeking opportunities to improve our performance.

• Environmental Policy