

Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI)

Policy on the Release and Movement of Artefacts

South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands (SGSSI) has a unique heritage, which includes the remains of the former whaling stations and their historic buildings, wrecks and hulks, sealing artefacts, early expeditions and other sites of historic interest. There are important links to the history of exploitation, science and polar exploration, including Sir Ernest Shackleton.

We recognise the widespread interest in SGSSI's heritage. Our Strategy 2016-2020 sets out the Government's desire to make its heritage more accessible, enhance the visitor experience and encourage the return of artefacts previously removed without permission from South Georgia. The South Georgia Museum has an important role in showcasing and communicating SGSSI's heritage, which it does in situ and through occasional loans of artefacts for public exhibition abroad. While the Government's presumption is that SGSSI's heritage should remain in situ, we recognise the need to bring heritage to people who will be unable to visit South Georgia in person. In addition to loans through the museum the Government also receives direct expressions of interest from time to time for the display and/or ex-situ restoration of specific heritage items.

This policy document sets out the approach that the Government will take in reaching a decision on whether to:

- 1) Release an artefact for public exhibition abroad;
- 2) Permit the movement of artefacts within SGSSI;

Decisions will be made on a case by case basis, and in a proportionate manner, taking into account any recommendations made by GSGSSI's Heritage Advisory Panel (HAP).

Release of an artefact for public exhibition abroad

1. No heritage items will be released from SGSSI without the express permission of GSGSSI. As a general principle, permission for artefacts to be released from SGSSI will not be given, unless there is a very compelling case for doing so. GSGSSI will, as appropriate, seek advice from the Government's Heritage Advisory Panel in reaching a decision.
2. 'Release' will normally constitute a loan from GSGSSI for which an explicit loan agreement will need to be established between the relevant parties. If a transfer of ownership were to be considered, this would likely require agreement around a more rigorous set of conditions.
3. The Government's Heritage Advisory Panel will consider the merits of any proposal for the release of the artefact taking account of, among other things: the benefit to the object in conservation terms; the public benefit arising from the exhibition of the artefact; any loss of significance to the artefact caused by its release; any other implications arising as a result of temporary or permanent relocation including in respect of any change of ownership.

4. Generally, the release of the artefact will be for one or more of the following reasons, with a presumption being that any proposal for release will incorporate some element of public outreach:
 - a. to provide for the better public appreciation and understanding of the object through public display;
 - b. for its proper conservation which cannot (or will not) be achieved in its present location;
 - c. to advance the restoration of specific cultural heritage structures.

5. Where a request is made for release from SGSSI the proposer will need to fulfil the following criteria:
 - a. the proposer must represent a Government body, established museum, or other not-for-profit organisation with relevant heritage and public outreach objectives and have, where possible, wider public support. The proposer will be expected to adhere to internationally recognised standards, such as the ICOM (International Council of Museums) Code of Ethics;
 - b. the organisation must have a clear rationale to underpin any request for the release of an artefact such that a reasonable link between the organisation and that artefact can be evidenced;
 - c. the organisation must be able to demonstrate that it has, or can demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that it will have, financial commitments in place to underpin its proposed activities for the artefact including long-term financial sustainability. There should be no expectation of costs falling to GSGSSI or the South Georgia Museum. Where the financial commitments required are significant the proposal may benefit from more than one source of funding. An agreement on the transfer of ownership and/or of liabilities may be required;
 - d. the purpose of the release will be for the study, conservation or restoration of the artefact and / or for its public display, when this is not going to be achieved *in situ*. This may include the release of artefacts for restoration overseas and return to South Georgia for public exhibition;
 - e. the proposer must have in place a detailed project proposal which will need to incorporate (as necessary) the requirement for an Environmental Assessment covering the release of the artefact and the site from which it is being removed. (An Environmental Assessment will also apply to proposals for the movement of artefacts/fittings);

6. Any artefact released from SGSSI must be carefully catalogued and recorded, to defined criteria, and a record must be provided for inclusion within the GSGSSI archive.

Permit the movement of artefacts within SGSSI

1. No heritage items will be moved from one site to another without the express permission of GSGSSI. GSGSSI will, as appropriate, seek advice from the Heritage Advisory Panel in reaching a decision.

2. Generally, the movement of an artefact from one site to another will be for one or more of the following reasons:
 - a. to provide for the better public appreciation and understanding of the object;
 - b. to use it for public display in the Grytviken Museum or within the vicinity of the Grytviken whaling station;
 - c. for its proper conservation which cannot (or will not) be achieved in its present location;
 - d. to advance the restoration of specific cultural heritage structures through the movement and transfer of artefacts and fittings (not whole or large parts of buildings).
3. Any artefact moved between sites must be carefully catalogued and recorded, to defined criteria, and a record must be provided for inclusion within the GSGSSI archive.
4. If an object is identified as being a possible historic artefact, which is deemed to be in imminent risk of destruction or damage, then the Government Officers at King Edward Point must be contacted. Depending on the nature of the risk, recovery of the item may be permissible, providing prescribed guidelines are adhered to, to record and report the details of the artefact and its location.

General principles

Any public exhibition of an artefact will be required to acknowledge its SGSSI heritage and recognise the role of GSGSSI. Exhibitors may be requested to engage and involve GSGSSI directly in the development of the exhibition.

Before permission will be considered for the release of any artefact from South Georgia, or movement of artefacts within the Territory, all prerequisite conditions must be met to the satisfaction of the GSGSSI, which will also take into consideration the views of the HAP, and any other key SGSSI stakeholders identified by the GSGSSI or HAP during the course of the application assessment or any wider stakeholder consultation.

**Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands
August 2016**