

**CABINET**  
**6 January 2026**

---

**MUSEUM ACCREDITATION POLICIES 2025**

---

**Responsible Cabinet Member -**  
**Councillor Libby McCollom, Local Services Portfolio**

**Responsible Director -**  
**Dave Winstanley, Executive Director – Environment, Highways & Community Services**

---

**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval of a series of museum policies that will enable a submission to Arts Council England for ongoing museum accreditation.

**Summary**

2. Museum accreditation assists with ensuring good practice and identifies agreed standards, thereby encouraging development. The scheme also encourages all museums and galleries to achieve agreed standards on how they are run, how they manage their collections and the experiences of their users.
3. An accreditation return is due by 2 March 2026 and the submission must include a current Museum Governance Plan, Collections Management Framework and Access Policy and Plan approved by the museum's governing body. Remaining an accredited museum will ensure the museum remains eligible for external funding and loans from other museums.
4. This report seeks approval of the above documents to form part of the submission for accreditation renewal.

**Recommendations**

5. It is recommended that Cabinet approve:-
  - (a) Hopetown Darlington Museum Governance Plan 2025-2030,
  - (b) Hopetown Darlington Collections Management Framework 2025-2030
  - (c) Hopetown Darlington Access Policy and Plan 2025-2030

**Reasons**

6. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-

- (a) To provide evidence of effective and professional management of Darlington's Museum Service, so that the museum remains an accredited museum and entitled to future support from the Arts Council England (Central Government Body).
- (b) To be eligible for future funding from external bodies, e.g. Arts Council England, Museums Association and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- (c) To be eligible for future loans from other museums, e.g. Science Museums Group.
- (d) To ensure that the museum remains registered and complies with the standards and ethics as set out by the Museums Association.

**Dave Winstanley**

**Executive Director - Environment, Highways & Community Services**

**Background Papers**

- i. Accreditation Standard (November 2018)
- ii. How to meet the Standard (November 2024)
- iii. Head of Steam Forward Plan 2022-2024
- iv. Head of Steam Collections Management Framework 2022-2027
- v. Head of Steam Access Policy and Plan 2022-2024

Council Plan	History and heritage of Darlington is an important aspect of Darlington as a place, Hopetown Darlington being one of the key locations where Darlington's story is told.
Addressing inequalities	The content of this report has no impact on addressing inequalities.
Tackling Climate Change	There are no climate change impact implications in this report.
Efficient and effective use of resources	There is no impact on efficiency as a result of this report.
Health and Wellbeing	The content of this report does not impact on Health and Wellbeing.
S17 Crime and Disorder	The content of this report has no impact on Crime and Disorder
Wards Affected	Hopetown Darlington location is in Northgate Ward.
Groups Affected	No particular or individual groups are affected as a result of this report.
Budget and Policy Framework	There are no Budget and Policy Framework implications in this report.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers.

**MAIN REPORT**

**Information and Analysis**

7. The museum is due for renewal of its Museum Association accreditation, and a submission is required by 2 March 2026
8. Accreditation is the UK standard for museums and galleries. It defines good practice and identifies agreed standards, thereby encouraging development. It is a baseline quality standard that helps guide museums to be the best they can be, for current and future users.
9. One of the aims of the Accreditation Scheme is to encourage all museums and galleries to achieve agreed standards on how they are run, how they manage their collections and the experiences of their users.
10. To be Accredited, museums must (amongst other things) be committed to forward planning to improve the service for users and hold a long-term collection of artefacts.
11. To satisfy accreditation requirements there are three key documents:
  - a) The **Museum Governance Plan 2025-2030**. This outlines the strategic objectives of Hopetown Darlington for the period December 2025 to December 2030. **(Appendix 1)**
  - b) The **Collections Management Framework 2025-2030**. This includes the museum's policy for developing its collections, its documentation policy and its care and conservation policy. Accredited museums must manage collections effectively and make them and the information they hold about them available to everyone. **(Appendix 2)**
  - c) The **Access Policy and Plan 2025-2030**. This outlines the museum's commitment is to accessibility for all visitors. **(Appendix 3)**

### **Financial Implications**

12. If the museum does not achieve Accreditation they will no longer be eligible for future funding from external bodies, e.g. Arts Council England, Museums Association and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.