

SECTION 1

1.1 Description of Object/Objects



LCNGR 1995.3875. Flint axe head. Elliptical shaped stone axe head with central drilled hole; flared blade at 1 end, other is blunt. Old repaired break across central hole.

1.2 Reason For Disposal

In 1972 the object listed above was placed on long-term loan to Grantham Museum by Mrs Angela Hillier, nee Whysall. Subsequently Miss Whysall got married and moved to Buckinghamshire. As a result of this, museum staff have been unable to trace her when researching old loans. As part of the documentation work carried out in the early 1990s this item was allocated an accession number, and listed on MODES as an untraced find. In 2010 Mrs Hillier contacted the Museum and requested the return of the items that she loaned to the Museum. Although many of the items were recorded, the flint axe head proved more difficult to identify, and could not initially be identified. Mrs Hillier was asked to describe the axe head, which she did. On searching through our axe head collections, this axe head was identified as matching her description. A photograph was shown to Mrs Hillier and she confirmed that it looked familiar and matched her memory of the axe head. On searching through old paperwork relating to this axe head, the DN number 3437, that of Miss Whysall's loan, was found to have been noted in the file. This appears to confirm that this axe head was the one that formed part of her original loan.

The rest of the items from Mrs Hillier's loan were dealt with by the previous Disposal Panel, but the identity of the axe head had not, at that point, been established. As it seemed at that time unlikely that we would be able to identify it, the decision was taken to proceed with the rest of the material. However, since the axe head has now been identified, this item is outstanding from the loan and should now be disposed of so that it can be returned to Mrs Hillier along with the rest of her property. In common with the rest of the items from this loan, it is clear that the items were a loan and that there is no contention in the legal ownership of the objects. If this is the case, then the items do not legally belong to Lincolnshire County Council. In accordance with Museum Association Disposal guidelines and LCC's Acquisition and Disposal Policy, these items should be de-accessioned and returned to their legal owner. The disposal of this item falls within section 5.1.1 of Culture and Adult Education's Acquisition and Disposal Policy 2010 'Lincolnshire County Council will not acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that it can acquire a valid title to the item in question.'

1.3 Suggested Means of Disposal & Reason

De-accession the item and return it to its legal owner, as requested.

1.4 Impact Statement

As there is a very slight anomaly in the paperwork relating to these items (our copy is not annotated as a loan) there is a slight risk that their disposal may set a precedent for returning items where ownership is unclear. However, the lender has her copy of the paperwork which is annotated, and there is other circumstantial evidence that these items were indeed a loan which makes this a special case. In addition, the bad feeling that would be caused by a failure to return the items could potentially damage the reputation of LCC Heritage Service. The MA code of ethics recognises the need to 'Deal sensitively and promptly with requests for repatriation both within the UK and from abroad of items in the museum's collection (7.7). In addition, the item has not recently been on display is duplicated within the Heritage Service Collection. The MLA advice recognises that where items in the Museum collection are of limited public benefit for a curatorial reason then returning them to their owners may be acceptable. Therefore, even if the issue with the paperwork is taken into account, it may be considered that returning the items to Mrs Hillier would be acceptable.

If it is accepted that the item is on loan and does not legally belong to the Council, then failure to de-accession it would mean that it could not be returned to its legal owner as has been requested. Lincolnshire County Council records would be inaccurate and an item would be retained in custody which does not belong to the council.

The Benefits of de-accessioning the item and returning it to its legal owners are that the Council would be acting in-line with the policy and ethical guidelines, and the legal requirements of the Council in relation to its dealings with items that do not belong to the Council will be fulfilled, and potential conflict with the legal owner would be avoided.

1.5 Other Considerations

- There are no resource or cost implications. The lender's sister lives in Grantham and the lender has passed on her sister's contact details and has given the Museum written permission to deal with her sister and to return the item to her on her behalf. Therefore, her sister can collect the item from the Museum and there are no cost or resource implications to returning the item.
- The legal owner has contacted the Museum and requested the return of this item. Therefore the timeframe should be as soon as possible, as excessive delay could cause bad feeling between the Council and the lender.

1.6 Recommendation

To de-accession the axe head and return it to its legal owner would mean that the Council would be acting in-line with the policy and ethical guidelines, and an item which does not legally belong to the Council could be returned to its legal owner, thus freeing up storage space and avoiding potential conflict with the legal owner.

SECTION 2

(to be completed by Disposal Panel)

2.1 Panel Decision

Fully agree with Disposal Report Section 1 recommendation

Agree with Disposal Report Section 1 recommendation, with additional requirements/
comment (section 2.2)

Disagree with Disposal Report recommendation for reasons given below (section 2.2)

2.2 Additional Comments

Caveats/questions regarding disposal; reasons for disagreeing with recommendation; raise points requiring further clarification, for inclusion in Exec. Cllr. Report or resolution prior to submitting this report..

Signed: Jonathan Platt (Chair of Disposal Panel)

Date: 08/06/11

SECTION 3

(to be completed by Collections Officer)

3.1 Exec Report No _____

3.2 Exec Decision No _____

3.3 Action / Date Completed _____

Ensure a copy of the Authority deaccession/disposal form is attached to this sheet

3.4 Name, Contact Details & Status of Recipient

Accredited museum, private museum etc.

3.5 New Location and Number of Object

For future access, should enquiries come in.

3.6 Benefits Achieved for the Service/Object:

Short summary tying back to section 1.4