

Title of Report:	Accessioned Object Return Request
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	16 September 2025
For Decision or For Information	For Decision
To be discussed In Committee	NO

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Resilient, Healthy and Engaged Communities
Outcome	Council will work to develop and promote stable and cohesive communities across the Borough
Lead Officer	Head of Community & Culture Museum Services Development Manager

Estimated Timescale for Completion	
Date to be Completed	October 2025

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	N/A
Included in Current Year Estimates	N/A
Capital/Revenue	
Code	
Staffing Costs	

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	YES/NO
Legal Opinion Obtained	YES/NO

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date: n/a
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date: n/a
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to request that a helmet accessioned into Ballymoney Museum's collection as part of the Bert McCook donation is returned to its owner.

2.0 Background

In 2015 a collection of over 100 motorcycle road racers' helmets and a collection of tyres were donated to Ballymoney Museum. This collection belonged to the late Bert McCook and included helmets worn by famous riders, past and present.

As Ballymoney Museum is an Accredited Museum, these helmets were accepted into the collection following council entry procedures. The family signed an entry form officially donating the collection to the museum. Following this, the helmets were accessioned onto the Modes collection database.

The helmets form part of a permanent display in the Visitor Information Centre in Ballymoney Town Hall.

In late May 2025, Museum Services received a request to have one of these helmets returned to its owner, John Burrows, via his wife Rachel Burrows.

The Museum Services' Collections Development Policy has the following clause:

*"The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the **governing body** only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including public benefit, the implications for the museum's collections and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. Expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the museum will also be sought."*

Ballymoney Museum contacted Northern Ireland Museum's Council for advice. Their response can be found in **Annex A**. They recommended that,

"This decision should be made formally, with a report submitted to the appropriate Council Committee, including the recommendation of the senior museum professional. The Council's decision should be minuted and retained on file."

3.0 Proposal

Following the procedure, Museum Service staff propose, with permission, to return the helmet to Rachel and John Burrows.

Council do not hold the paperwork trail from Bert McCook with regards to how he acquired any of the helmets, Museum Services cannot therefore ascertain that Mr McCook legally owned the helmets and therefore if ownership of the helmet is confirmed, the helmet can be returned to their owner on request.

4.0 Recommendations

It is recommended to Council that the helmet is deaccessioned from Ballymoney Museum's collection and returned to its owner, Rachel and John Burrows.

ANNEX A



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1 July 2025

Sarah Calvin
Museum Services Development Manager
Causeway Coast and Glens

Dear Sarah

Re: Return of Accessioned Item

Thank you for your inquiry regarding the appropriate procedures for a request to return a motorcycle helmet. From your documentation, I can see that you have referred to both your Collections Development Policy and the Spectrum procedures for Deaccessioning and Disposal.

Given the nature of this request and the museum's Collections Development Policy procedures, I recommend that the decision to deaccession the item be taken by your Governing Body. As you are aware, museums rarely dispose of items, so it is essential that any such action follows established procedures to ensure transparency, accountability and helps to maintain public trust.

This decision should be made formally, with a report submitted to the appropriate Council Committee, including the recommendation of the senior museum professional. The Council's decision should be minuted and retained on file.

If the item is to be returned, please ensure that the relevant Spectrum procedures are followed and that your documentation system is updated accordingly. I also encourage you to inform the requester that the decision was made by Council and that all appropriate procedures were followed.

I hope this guidance is helpful. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any further questions.

Your sincerely,



Heather McGuicken
Director
Northern Ireland Museums Council

