

Essex Field Club Code of Ethics

The following code is based on the Museums Association Code of ethics for museums.

The Essex Field Club will make sound ethical judgements in all areas of its work in order to maintain the trust of our members, volunteers, audiences, local communities, donors, source communities, partner organisations, sponsors and funders.

This code supports the Essex Field Club in recognising and resolving ethical issues and conflicts. It sets out our key ethical principles and the supporting actions that we shall take to ensure an ethical approach to our activities.

Introduction

This code applies to Essex Field Club Council, to volunteers, consultants and those who work freelance. The Essex Field Club proactively champions ethical behaviour. All volunteers and Essex Field Club Council will adhere to its principles.

1 Public engagement and public benefit

We shall:

- actively engage and work in partnership with existing audiences and reach out to new and diverse audiences
- treat everyone equally, with honesty and respect
- provide and generate accurate information for and with the public
- support freedom of speech and debate
- use collections for public benefit – for learning, inspiration and enjoyment

Upholding the principle

We shall:

1.1 Provide public access to, and meaningful engagement with, other bodies, collections, and information about collections without discrimination.

1.2 Ensure editorial integrity in programming and interpretation. Resist attempts to influence interpretation or content by particular interest groups, including lenders, donors and funders.

1.3 Support free speech and freedom of expression. Respect the right of all to express different views within the Essex Field Club unless illegal to do so or inconsistent with the purpose of the Essex Field Club as an inclusive public space.

1.4 Ensure that information and research presented or generated by the Essex Field Club is accurate. Take steps to minimise or balance bias in research undertaken by the Essex Field Club.

1.5 Acknowledge publicly that the Essex Field Club benefits from all those who have contributed to the making, meaning and presence in the Essex Field Club of its collections.

1.6 Work in partnership with communities, audiences, potential audiences and supporters of the Essex Field Club.

1.7 Ensure that everyone has the opportunity for meaningful participation in the work of the Essex Field Club.

2 Stewardship of collections

We shall:

- maintain and develop collections for current and future generations
- acquire, care for, exhibit and loan collections with transparency and competency in order to generate knowledge and engage the public with collections
- treat the Essex Field Club collections as cultural, scientific or historic assets, not financial assets.

Upholding the principle

We shall

2.1 Preserve collections as a tangible link between the past, present and future. Balance the Essex Field Club's role in safeguarding items for the benefit of future audiences with its obligation to optimise access for present audiences.

2.2 Collect according to detailed, published and regularly reviewed policies that state clearly what, how and why the Essex Field Club collects.

2.3 Accept or acquire an item only if the Essex Field Club can provide adequate, continuing long-term care for the item and public access to it, without compromising standards of care and access relating to the existing collections.

2.4 Conduct due diligence to verify the ownership of any item prior to purchase or loan, and that the current holder is legitimately able to transfer title or to lend. Apply the same strict criteria to gifts and bequests.

2.5 Reject any item for purchase, loan or donation if there is any suspicion that it was wrongfully taken during a time of conflict, stolen, illicitly exported or illicitly traded.

2.6 Discuss expectations and clarify in writing the precise terms on which all parties are accepting transfer of title. Exercise sensitivity towards donors when accepting or declining gifts and bequests.

2.7 Deal sensitively and promptly with requests for repatriation both within the UK and from abroad.

2.8 Acknowledge that responsible disposal takes place as part of the Essex Field Club's long-term collections development policy and starts with a curatorial review. Ensure transparency and carry out any disposal openly, according to unambiguous, generally accepted procedures.

2.9 Recognise the principle that collections should not normally be regarded as financially negotiable assets and that financially motivated disposal risks damaging public confidence. Refuse to undertake disposal principally for financial reasons, except where it will significantly improve the long-term public benefit derived from the remaining collection. This will include demonstrating that:

- the item under consideration lies outside the Essex Field Club's established core collection as defined in the collections development policy
- extensive prior consultation with sector bodies and the public has been undertaken and considered
- it is not to generate short term revenue (for example to meet a budget deficit)
- it is as a last resort after other sources of funding have been thoroughly explored.

2.10 Refuse to mortgage collections or offer them as security for a loan. Ensure the financial viability of the Essex Field Club is not dependent on any monetary valuation placed on items in its collections. Resist placing a commercial value on the collections unless there is a compelling reason to do so, and for collections management purposes only.

3 Individual & institutional integrity

We shall

- act in the public interest in all areas of work
- uphold the highest level of institutional integrity and personal conduct at all times
- build respectful and transparent relationships with partner organisations, governing bodies, staff and volunteers to ensure public trust in the Essex Field Club's activities.

Upholding the principle

We shall

- 3.1 Avoid any private activity or pursuit of a personal interest that may conflict or be perceived to conflict with the public interest. Consider the effect of activities conducted in private life on the reputation of the Essex Field Club.
- 3.2 Avoid behaviour that could be construed as asserting personal ownership of collections.
- 3.3 Avoid all private activities that could be construed as trading or dealing in cultural property unless authorised in advance by the Essex Field Club Council.
- 3.4 Refuse to place a value on items belonging to the public.
- 3.5 Make clear when communicating personally or on behalf of another organisation that views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the Essex Field Club.
- 3.6 Carefully consider offers of financial support from commercial organisations and other sources in the UK and internationally and seek support from organisations whose ethical values are consistent with those of the Essex Field Club. Exercise due diligence in understanding the ethical standards of commercial partners with a view to maintaining public trust and integrity in all our activities.
- 3.7 Abide by a fair, consistent and transparent workforce policy for all those working in the Essex Field Club, including those in unpaid positions.
- 3.8 Be sensitive to the impact of the Essex Field Club and its visitors on natural and human environments. Make best use of resources, use energy and materials responsibly and minimise waste.

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