

# Become a Member of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest



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# Introduction

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The Reviewing Committee fulfils an important role in making recommendations to the Secretary of State to defer the grant of export licences, enabling national treasures to be saved for the UK. It is a non-statutory independent body and the Secretariat for the Committee is provided by Arts Council England.

For each case, there are three Independent Assessors, eminent experts in relation to the object in question, who are co-opted onto the Committee as voting members for that case only. The range of cases which come before the Reviewing Committee is very broad and can be seen from the most recent Annual Report, which was laid before Parliament in July 2025.

Each case is fascinating and generates a lively and expert debate. It is a very collegiate body of individuals committed to public service.



© Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art

## **Outgoing member of the Committee, Pippa Shirley, said:**

*'I will be very sad indeed to come to the end of my term on this Committee. It has been one of the most rewarding and fascinating experiences of my professional career, not only because of the exceptional significance and quality of the works of art and objects of cultural interest which come before us but because of the huge amount of scholarship and learning that informs every case, provided by the Expert Advisors, Applicants Representatives and Independent Assessors and my fellow Committee Members, all experts in their fields and the most passionate advocates. Serving on the Committee is truly an education thanks to the breadth of cases – in one day we might consider an iron-age brooch, an archival account of exploration in the new world, a sledge which formed part of an Antarctic expedition or a Renaissance painting. It is a privilege and a responsibility to contribute to the process which can ensure that these wonderful objects remain in the UK as part of the national heritage for the public to enjoy.'*

# The work of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest

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Objects are the beating heart of museums, libraries and archives. They attract visitors, inspire stories and create memorable moments. The Reviewing Committee plays a key role in identifying national treasures, providing a final opportunity for institutions and individuals to attempt to acquire these extraordinary items which go on to impact audiences of museums, galleries and libraries across the country.

The Committee is a non-statutory, independent advisory body. Their main role is to advise the Secretary of State on whether a cultural object, which is the subject of an export licence application, is of national importance under the 'Waverley criteria'. These are as follows:

History	Aesthetics	Scholarship
Is it closely connected with our history and national life?	Is it of outstanding aesthetic importance?	Is it of outstanding significance for the study of some particular branch of art, learning or history?

The Committee is advised in each case by three independent assessors who are experts in a relevant field and become temporary full members of the Committee for the case they join. If the Committee finds that an item meets at least one of the Waverley criteria, it will recommend to the Secretary of State that the decision on the export licence should be deferred for a specified period. This will allow institutions or individuals in the UK a chance to raise the money to purchase the item to enable it to remain in this country.

## Recent case examples

In 2024-25 the Committee considered 20 cases. Eighteen of these were recommended for deferral. To date, seven items were saved. These were:

- **A History of the Birds of Europe, H. E. Dresser - Manchester Museum**
- **Coin found in UK soil, a new Iron Age Ruler - British Museum**
- **The Delilah Project: working papers, Alan Turing - Kings College Cambridge**
- **A needlework sampler of Menai Bridge, Anglesey - Storiel, Bangor**
- **The Sutton Scotney Iron Age Brooch, donated to Hampshire Cultural Trust**
- **Early Anglo Saxon Gold and Garnet Panel - Pocklington District Heritage Trust**
- **Sculpture with Colour Barbara Hepworth - The Hepworth Wakefield**

In 2023-24 the Committee reported on 16 cases. Nine of these were recommended for deferral. Eleven items with a value of £8.1 million were acquired and are now on display in public collections.

These were:

- **38 Original Drawings of Flowers at Kew**  
- Mount Stuart Trust
- **Walrus Ivory carving of Deposition from the Cross - V&A**
- **The Old French New Testament, acquired by the Bodleian Library**
- **Recto: *Portrait of a Dead Child* by Samuel Cooper - The British Museum**
- ***The Crucifixion with the Virgin* by Fra Angelico - The Ashmolean**

Annual reports detailing the work of the Reviewing Committee can be found on the [Arts Council website](#).

### The impact

The activity of the Reviewing Committee has significant public impact. The objects saved for the nation demonstrate the breadth of material considered by the Committee and the range of public collections and audiences who benefit from their work.

The year 2022 marked the 70th anniversary of the Waverley Report (1952) which led to the founding of the Committee. This was an occasion to celebrate and communicate widely the work of the Committee and its public impact. The Reviewing Committee picked just seven of the hundreds of artefacts that have been kept in the UK to reveal the stories behind what can be achieved when museums and galleries acquire a national treasure into their collections. You can see the object histories here.



The Delilah Project: working papers, Alan Turing. Photo by Thomas Davies © King's College, Cambridge

## About DCMS

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport supports culture, arts, media, sport, tourism and civil society across every part of England — recognising the UK’s world-leading position in these areas and the importance of these sectors in contributing so much to our economy, way of life and our reputation around the world. The department champions sport for all at every level, supports our world-leading cultural and creative industries, and enhances the cohesiveness of our communities.

## About Arts Council England

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. By 2030, we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish, and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. Between 2023 and 2026 we will have invested over £467million of public money from Government, alongside an estimated £250 million each year from The National Lottery, to help ensure that people in every part of the country have access to culture and creativity in the places where they live.

Our Museums & Cultural Property team provides the Secretariat and administrative support for the Committee and hosts the latter’s webpages on its website.

Arts Council England passionately believes that our nation’s collections, held in organisations of many types and sizes across the country, are an unmatched cultural asset. It is essential that they are developed and cared for, celebrated and protected, so they can be enjoyed by as many people as possible. This is both a privilege and a challenge, which is why we provide standards, funding and advocacy and deliver schemes to help in meeting these responsibilities.

Where possible, we work to keep items of particular cultural significance in the UK. This includes reviewing items due for export and offering tax incentives for individuals and organisations that want to purchase cultural goods.



A needlework sampler of Menai Bridge, Anglesey by Mary Anne Hughes, age 11 © Storiell, Cyngor Gwynedd

# About the role and who we're looking for

We are looking to appoint a new member of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest.

## Terms of reference

The Committee consists of eight permanent members, seven of whom have expertise in one or more subject areas such as paintings, furniture, and manuscripts, and a Chair. Its terms of reference are as follows:

- to advise on the principles which should govern the control of export of objects of cultural interest under the Export Control Act 2002 and on the operation of the export control system generally;
- to advise the Secretary of State on all cases where refusal of an export licence for an object of cultural interest is suggested on grounds of national importance;
- to advise in cases where a special Exchequer grant is needed towards the purchase of an object that would otherwise be exported.

## Case consideration

The Expert Adviser (usually a director, senior keeper or curator in a national museum or gallery), submits a written statement as to why they believe the object's departure from the UK would be a misfortune because it satisfies one or more of the Waverley criteria.

The Applicant is also invited to submit a written statement giving reasons why, in their opinion, the object's departure from the UK would not be a misfortune.

Having carefully examined the object, the committee as a whole discuss the arguments put forward by all parties and take an objective view on its national importance in order to provide advice to the Secretary of State.



Two Women Wearing Cosmetic Patches on display in the Women's Library at Compton Hervey © Compton Hervey

## Role Description

The Committee sits for one day every month, except August. Members are expected to attend in person because, to be entitled to vote on a case, each Committee member must view the object in question. We currently meet at the Royal Society of Chemistry at Burlington House, Piccadilly. Normally, the object is brought to the meeting, but in special circumstances, the Committee may travel to view it before the case hearing takes place. These venues are typically in London and works can be viewed on the same day.

The workload varies monthly depending on the number of cases. There are usually no more than three cases per meeting, each lasting approximately one hour. Additionally, there is always a Policy meeting, and lunch is provided.

The papers for each meeting are provided a week in advance, and each Committee member is expected to read them carefully before attending the Committee meeting. They can require at least two hours for pre-reading. There is also an annual Advisory Council meeting—a group of stakeholders who advise the RCEWA on its policy and discuss the principles and operation of the export control system. Members include museum directors, curators, representatives from the art trade, and public funders such as the Art Fund, NHMF, and other heritage bodies. Committee members are expected to attend, as it is a valuable forum for receiving guidance and providing updates on significant matters that arose throughout the previous year. The Council also hosts informative sessions on topics such as provenance, binding offers, and other relevant subjects.

We are seeking a new Committee Member with expertise in the histories of cross-cultural collecting practices and/or the histories of Empire and Global Exchange.

Key responsibilities for members of the Reviewing Committee include:

- Acting as a credible advocate for the Committee and its mission.
- Discussing complex historical items with sensitivity, respect and an awareness of diverse perspectives.
- Objectively assessing cultural objects to reach evidence-based judgements on whether they meet the Waverley criteria.
- Promoting the importance of cultural collections to society, with a strong commitment to engaging communities outside of London and factoring UK-wide perspectives into all decision-making.

## Essential Criteria

The successful candidate must demonstrate:

- **Knowledge:** an understanding of UK public collections, material culture and the issues surrounding its care and protection.
- **Expertise:** Demonstrable knowledge in the histories of cross-cultural collecting practices and/or the histories of Empire and Global Exchange.
- **Judgement:** effective decision-making skills with the ability to critically analyse a wide range of information to make clear and objective evidence-based recommendations to support the delivery of the Committee's objectives.
- **Collaboration:** an openness to new ways of working, in the context of continuous improvement and an ongoing commitment to ensure the Committee works effectively and efficiently for all stakeholders.
- **Communication:** an ability to communicate effectively and professionally, valuing input from experts and colleagues at all levels.
- **Equality:** a demonstrable commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion; and improving opportunities for people throughout the UK.

**Time Commitment:** You will be expected to attend 11 Committee meetings per year, or as determined by the Committee. Some additional time will be required to study papers, and to attend events and other representational engagements. The total time commitment is likely to be approximately one day per month.

**Location:** Meetings are held in London. Whilst some discussions might be online, members of the RCEWA must view an object in person to be able to consider it against the Waverley criteria.

**Remuneration:** This post is unremunerated. However, Committee members' travel expenses, incurred through attending meetings, are paid in line with Arts Council policy.

Read more about the Reviewing Committee's activity.

## How to apply

In order to apply you will need to create an account or sign in. Once you are logged into your account, click on 'apply for this role' and follow the on-screen instructions. To apply, all candidates are required to provide:

- equality information
- information relating to any outside interests or reputational issues
- a Curriculum Vitae (C V)
- a supporting statement
- a short professional biography (150 words)



To discuss the Reviewing Committee role please contact the RCEWA team, ([rcewa@artscouncil.org.uk](mailto:rcewa@artscouncil.org.uk)).

If you have any questions about the appointments process, please contact the campaign manager, Jemima Thomason, ([jemima.thomason@dcms.gov.uk](mailto:jemima.thomason@dcms.gov.uk)) or the Public Appointments Mailbox ([publicappointments@dcms.gov.uk](mailto:publicappointments@dcms.gov.uk)).

*Portrait of Mai* by Sir Joshua Reynolds  
© The National Portrait Gallery, London

## Diversity and inclusion

We encourage applications from talented individuals from all backgrounds and across the whole of the United Kingdom. Boards of public bodies are most effective when they reflect the diversity of views of the society they serve.

We collect data about applicants' characteristics and backgrounds, including information about people's educational and professional backgrounds, so that we can make sure we are attracting a broad range of people to these roles and that our selection processes are fair for everyone. Without this information, it makes it difficult to see if our outreach is working, if the application process is having an unfair impact on certain groups and whether changes are making a positive difference.

When you submit your application, your responses are collected by the Cabinet Office and the government department(s) managing your application. The data is used to produce management information about the diversity of applicants. You can select 'prefer not to say' to any question you do not wish to answer.

## Disability confident

We are a member of the Government's Disability Confident scheme. We use the Disability Confident scheme symbol, along with other like-minded employers, to show our commitment to good practice in employing people with a disability. The scheme helps recruit and retain disabled people. As part of implementing the scheme, we guarantee an interview for anyone with a disability whose application meets the essential criteria for the role, set out in the advert, and who has asked that their application is considered under the scheme. Indicating that you wish your application to be considered under the scheme will in no way prejudice your application. By 'essential criteria', we mean that you must provide evidence which demonstrates that you meet the level of competence required under each of the essential criteria, as set out in the job-advert. When you apply you will have the opportunity to select if you would like your application considered under this scheme.



The Sutton Scotney Iron Age Brooch. The brooch was donated to Hampshire Cultural Trust for the museum collections owned by Hampshire County Council, by Costas Paraskevaides and Jethro Sverdloff, on behalf of ArtAncient Ltd.

## Reasonable adjustments

We are committed to making reasonable adjustments to make sure applicants with disabilities, physical or mental health conditions, or other needs are not substantially disadvantaged when applying for public appointments. This can include changing the recruitment process to enable people who wish to apply to do so.

Some examples of common changes are:

- ensuring that application forms are available in different or accessible formats;
- making adaptations to interview locations;
- allowing candidates to present their skills and experience in a different way;
- giving additional detailed information on the selection / interview process in advance to allow candidates time to prepare themselves;
- allowing support workers, for example sign language interpreters;
- making provision for support animals to attend.

When you apply you will have the opportunity to request reasonable adjustments to the application process.

**Further information is available in the online advert**