

## SERVICE UPDATE

<b><u>Name of Function:</u></b>	City Growth
<b><u>Date:</u></b>	27 <sup>th</sup> September 2022
<b><u>Title of Update:</u></b>	Service Update to COM/22/028 - Review of Items Recorded as 'Missing' from Art Gallery & Museums Collections
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### **UPDATE:**

On 22 February 2022, officers were instructed to response to provide a Service Update within two committee cycles outlining progress made with reconciling items recorded as 'missing' from the collections at Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums service (COM/22/028).

#### **1. Summary**

Since February 2022, the items recorded as missing has reduced by 93. Tables 1 and 2 below summarise the progress made to date.

Officers have focussed on physical audits of the stored collection, reviewing every item in specific locations (progress as in Tables 2.1 and 2.3).

19,262 of 150,000 items in the collection have been physically checked in stores over 30 weeks and 93 items previously recorded as missing have had their status updated. The number of items updated reflects the requirement for thorough, detailed checks and verification.

Since July 2021, a total of 339 items previously recorded as missing have been resolved, which include the 93 items since February 2022.

The status of 93 items previously recorded as missing is now resolved as follows:

- 86 items have been found and their status and location have been updated.
- Six items have been confirmed as having been recorded incorrectly and were duplicate records for objects already in the collection.
- One item has been confirmed as removed from our records and disposed of, likely due to earlier irreparable damage before digital records began.

As detailed in the report to Committee in February 2022, 92 items were lost through theft and are highly unlikely to be recovered.

**Table 1.1 Missing Items by Category February 2022**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Recorded Missing Feb 2022</b>	<b>Aggregate Value (£)</b>
Thefts	92	53,552
Historic Losses	713	106,461
Location to be confirmed	525	35,430
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,330</b>	<b>195,443</b>

**Table 1.2: Missing Items by Category September 2022**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Recorded Missing Sept 2022</b>	<b>Aggregate Value (£)</b>
Thefts	92	53,552
Historic Losses	699	103,760
Location to be confirmed	444	32,926
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,237</b>	<b>190,238</b>

## **2. Review of progress**

The Committee was provided with a work programme to undertake the reconciliation of missing items (Appendix 6 of COM/22/028). To date, officers have reviewed and checked the location of approximately 19,000 items. Progress is broadly as planned and more information is provided in tables 2.1 - 2.3 below.

The Committee noted the resource implications of accelerating the work required for the audits and the potential to lever in any additional funding to support this work. Additional support has been available through the Department for Work & Pensions Kickstart and Long-term Unemployed six-month intern schemes delivered by the Council. As these temporary positions come to an end, officers will seek funding to secure further additional resources.

Work to catalogue the institutional paper archive has been brought forward, and the physical audit of the collection continues. Both activities will assist in reconciling the remaining historical losses and missing items, or will confirm their status as no longer in the collection due to disposal, theft or transfer to another organisation.

Progress in identifying missing items is slow but steady, and highly variable:

- Where an item is found, and the location has been mis-recorded, the record is updated. Once identified through audit, resolution is swift.
- Where an item is found disassociated from its identification number or with the number partly obscured, research and review of historic documentation is required to confirm that an object record matches the object with no identification number. Where this cannot be done with a high level of certainty, the object is set aside until further research can be undertaken. This can often occur if the record of an object is sparse: such as “vase” instead of “earthenware ceramic, bulbous yellow vase, with incised decoration”. Once identified through audit, resolution is variable depending on information held.
- Where an item is recorded as an historic loss, extensive research is required to discover the whereabouts of the item, and prove ownership still resides with Aberdeen City Council. Satisfactory resolution may not be possible.
- Where an item is identified as being stolen, officers will update existing records on the Art Loss Register and continue to check auction catalogues in case items find their way back to the open market. The status of an item will be viewed as resolved if its status is confirmed as stolen.

To aid with the resolution of historic losses and items lost due to theft, officers have published digital “packages” of items missing in these categories.

- Historic Losses can be seen:  
<https://emuseum.aberdeencity.gov.uk/advancedsearch/Objects/portfolio%3Ahistoric%20loss>

An example of one of the records can be seen at:

<https://emuseum.aberdeencity.gov.uk/objects/1847/spring-in-the-trossachs>

Its status reads: “Location: Historic Loss - research into this object’s history and current status is ongoing”

- Stolen items can be seen:  
<https://emuseum.aberdeencity.gov.uk/advancedsearch/Objects/portfolio%3Astolen>

An example of one of the records can be seen at:

<https://emuseum.aberdeencity.gov.uk/objects/601/sugar-bowl>

Its status reads: “Location: Stolen - If you have any information relating to the current whereabouts of this work please get in touch”

Officers expect all collection records to be published by the end of December 2022 with a clear indication of their current status in the collection.

Officers will also participate in an Internal Audit review of collection management processes in October 2022 led by Chief Internal Auditor.

**Table 2.1:** Resolving of administrative errors

<b>Est. time frame (COMM/22/028, Appendix 6)</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Number of items to be reviewed</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Result (from February 2022)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
N/A	Unpacking following major moves	N/A	Ongoing	51 missing items found	Part of standard location control processes
Jan-Apr 2022	Treasure Hub - Metal store audit of coins & medals	6,000	Complete	six missing items found	
Feb 2022	Loans audit	38	Complete		Confirmed all current loans out from AAGM collections are accurately recorded
Feb-Mar 2022	Treasure Hub - Fine Art temporary numbers	186	Revised end Dec 2022	two missing items found to date Work package ongoing	Timescale impacted by staff sickness absence
Feb-May 2022	Maritime Museum - store	2,000	Complete	three missing items found	
Feb-Apr 2022	Torry store – Metal store	600	Revised end Sep 2022	19 missing items found to date	
Feb-Aug 2022	Torry store mezzanine	2,400	85% complete Revised end Sep 2022	Work package ongoing	
Feb-Nov 2022	Treasure Hub - Paper Store drawers	5,222	50% complete Revised end Dec 2022	five missing items found to date Work package ongoing	Timescale impacted by staff sickness absence



**Table 2.3:** Reconciling historic losses and missing items

<b>Est. time frame</b> (COMM/22/028, Appendix 6)	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Number of items to be reviewed</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Result</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Apr 2024 - Oct 2027	Catalogue institutional archive		28 bequest files have been catalogued covering 1920-1991 12 historic Accession Registers and stock books have been catalogued 300+ index cards have been catalogued and digitised	based on “business as usual” programme N/A until April 2024	Additional capacity has allowed this work package to be brought forward This allows object records to be matched to missing items to help with identification, recovery or reconciliation of items with temporary identification numbers
Apr 2024 – Jun 2026	Treasure Hub - Hub 9 store; costume store; paper store; metal store	90,000		Ditto N/A until April 2024	
Jul 2026 – Aug 2028	Torry collection store - main store	39,000	Started Jun 2022 1,782 items audited to date	Ditto N/A until July 2026	Additional capacity has allowed this work package to be brought forward Progress will be slow as the store contains very large items that require forklift to access
Sep - Nov 2028	Maritime Museum - displays	4,000		Ditto N/A until Sep 2028	