



British Museum Act 1963

1963 CHAPTER 24

An Act to alter the composition of the Trustees of the British Museum, to provide for the separation from the British Museum of the British Museum (Natural History), to make new provision with respect to the regulation of the two Museums and their collections in place of that made by the British Museum Act 1753 and enactments amending or supplementing that Act, and for purposes connected with the matters aforesaid.

[10th July 1963]

Commencement Information

II Act wholly in force at 30.9.1963 see [s. 13\(2\)](#) and [S.I. 1963/1546](#).

1

- (1) From the commencement of this Act, the body known as the Trustees of the British Museum shall continue to exist as a body corporate, with perpetual succession and a common seal, having the general management and control of the British Museum, but shall consist of twenty-five persons appointed as follows, that is to say—
 - (a) one appointed by Her Majesty;
 - (b) fifteen appointed by the Prime Minister;
 - (c) four appointed by the [^{F1}Lord President of the Council] on the nominations of the Presidents of the Royal Society, the Royal Academy, the British Academy and the Society of Antiquaries of London respectively; and
 - (d) five appointed by the Trustees of the British Museum.
- (2) The provisions of the First Schedule to this Act shall have effect with respect to the tenure of office and proceedings of the Trustees.

Textual Amendments

F1 Words substituted by virtue of [S.I. 1979/907](#), arts. 2(1), 11(3), [Sch. Pt. I](#); 1981/207, arts. 2(1), 5, Sch. 1 pt. I; 1983/879, arts. 2(1), 11, Sch. 1 Pt. I; 1984/1814, arts. 2(1), 7, Sch. 1 Pt. I and 1986/600, arts. 2(1), 7, Sch. 1 Pt. I

Status: Point in time view as at 01/06/2021.

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the British Museum Act 1963. (See end of Document for details)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C1** Functions of the Lord President of the Council under s. 1(1)(c) transferred (3.7.1992) to the Secretary of State by virtue of S.I. 1992/1311, art. 3(1), **Sch. 1 Pt.I**.

2 General Powers of Trustees.

The Trustees of the British Museum shall have power, subject to the restrictions imposed on them by virtue of any enactment (whether contained in this Act or not), to enter into contracts and other agreements, to acquire and hold land and other property, and to do all other things that appear to them necessary or expedient for the purpose of their functions.

3 Keeping and inspection of collections.

- (1) Subject to the provisions of this Act, it shall be the duty of the Trustees of the British Museum to keep the objects comprised in the collections of the Museum within the authorised repositories of the Museum, except in so far as they may consider it expedient to remove them temporarily for any purpose connected with the administration of the Museum and the care of its collections.
- (2) Where it appears to the Trustees that any such objects cannot conveniently be kept within the authorised repositories, they may store them at other premises in Great Britain if satisfied that they can be stored in those premises without detriment to the purposes of the Museum.
- (3) It shall be the duty of the Trustees to secure, so far as appears to them to be practicable, that the objects comprised in the collections of the Museum (including objects stored under the preceding subsection) are, when required for inspection by members of the public, made available in one or other of the authorised repositories under such conditions as the Trustees think fit to impose for preserving the safety of the collections and ensuring the proper administration of the Museum.
- (4) Objects vested in the Trustees as part of the collections of the Museum shall not be disposed of by them otherwise than under section 5 or 9 of this Act [^{F2}or section 6 of the Museums and Galleries Act 1992].

Textual Amendments

- F2** Words in s. 3(4) inserted (1.9.1992) by **Museums and Galleries Act 1992 (c. 44)**, s. 11(2), **Sch. 8 Pt. I para. 5(a)**; S.I. 1992/1874, **art.2**.

4 Lending of objects.

The Trustees of the British Museum may lend for public exhibition (whether in the United Kingdom or elsewhere) any object comprised in the collections of the Museum:

Provided that in deciding whether or not to lend any such object, and in determining the time for which, and the conditions subject to which, any such object is to be lent, the Trustees shall have regard to the interests of students and other persons visiting the Museum, to the physical condition and degree of rarity of the object in question, and to any risks to which it is likely to be exposed.

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5 Disposal of objects.

- (1) The Trustees of the British Museum may sell, exchange, give away or otherwise dispose of any object vested in them and comprised in their collections if—
 - (a) the object is a duplicate of another such object, or
 - (b) the object appears to the Trustees to have been made not earlier than the year 1850, and substantially consists of printed matter of which a copy made by photography or a process akin to photography is held by the Trustees, or
 - (c) in the opinion of the Trustees the object is unfit to be retained in the collections of the Museum and can be disposed of without detriment to the interests of students:

Provided that where an object has become vested in the Trustees by virtue of a gift or bequest the powers conferred by this subsection shall not be exercisable as respects that object in a manner inconsistent with any condition attached to the gift or bequest.

- (2) The Trustees may destroy or otherwise dispose of any object vested in them and comprised in their collections if satisfied that it has become useless for the purposes of the Museum by reason of damage, physical deterioration, or infestation by destructive organisms.
- (3) Money accruing to the Trustees by virtue of an exercise of the powers conferred by this section [^{F3}or section 6 of the Museums and Galleries Act 1992] shall be laid out by them in the purchase of objects to be added to the collections of the Museum.

Textual Amendments

- F3** Words in s. 5(3) inserted (1.9.1992) by [Museums and Galleries Act 1992 \(c. 44\)](#), s. 11(2), Sch. 8 Pt. I para. 5(b); [S.I. 1992/1874](#), [art.2](#).

6 Staff.

- (1) There shall be a Director of the British Museum, who shall be a person appointed by the Trustees with the approval of the Prime Minister and shall hold office on such terms and subject to such conditions as the [^{F4}Secretary of State] may direct, and who shall be responsible to the Trustees for the care of all property in their possession and for the general administration of the Museum.
- (2) The Trustees may, subject to the consent of the [^{F5}Minister for the Civil Service] as to numbers and conditions of service, appoint such other officers and servants as the Trustees think fit; and there shall be paid to the Director and to officers and servants so appointed such salaries, allowances and other remuneration as the [^{F4}Secretary of State] may determine.
- (3) ^{F6}

Textual Amendments

- F4** Words in s. 6 substituted (7.6.2011) by [The Transfer of Functions \(Museum and Other Staff\) Order 2011 \(S.I. 2011/1213\)](#), arts. 1(2), [4\(1\)\(b\)](#)
- F5** Words substituted by virtue of [S.I. 1968/1656](#), [arts. 2\(1\)\(e\)](#), 3(2)
- F6** S. 6(3) repealed by [Superannuation Act 1965 \(c. 74\)](#), [Sch. 11](#)

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Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C2** S. 6 transfer of functions (7.6.2011) by [The Transfer of Functions \(Museum and Other Staff\) Order 2011 \(S.I. 2011/1213\)](#), arts. 1(2), **2(b)** (with art. 3)

7 Reports by Trustees.

The Trustees of the British Museum shall within three years after the commencement of this Act and subsequently at intervals of not more than three years prepare and lay before each House of Parliament a report on the Museum.

8 Separation of Natural History Museum.

- (1) There shall be a body corporate, with perpetual succession and a common seal, known as the Trustees of the [^{F7}Natural History Museum] and hereafter in this Act referred to as “the Natural History Trustees”, which from the commencement of this Act shall have the general management and control of the [^{F7}the Natural History Museum]; and on that commencement the functions with respect to that Museum of the Trustees of the British Museum shall cease.
- (2) The Natural History Trustees shall consist of twelve persons appointed as follows, that is to say—
 - (a) eight appointed by the Prime Minister;
 - (b) one appointed [^{F8}by the Lord President of the Council on] the nomination of the President of the Royal Society ; and
 - (c) three appointed by the Natural History Trustees.
- (3) Sections 2 to 7 of this Act and the First Schedule thereto shall apply in relation to the [^{F7}Natural History Museum] and the Trustees thereof as they apply in relation to the British Museum and the Trustees thereof, but with the following adaptations, that is to say—
 - (a) section 4 shall apply as if, after the words “may lend for public exhibition” there were inserted the words “or research”;
 - (b) the First Schedule shall apply as if in paragraph 4 (which specifies the quorum at meetings) the word “four” were substituted for the word “six”.
- (4) The Second Schedule to this Act shall have effect in relation to transitional matters arising in consequence of the enactment of this section.

Textual Amendments

- F7** Words in s. 8(1)(3) substituted (1.9.1992) by [Museums and Galleries Act 1992 \(c. 44\)](#), s. 11(2), **Sch. 8 Pt. 1 para. 1(3)(a)**; S.I. 1992/1874, **art.2**
- F8** Words in s. 8(2)(b) substituted (25.11.1988) by [S.I. 1988/1836](#), **art. 2(1)(a)(2)(a)(3)** and expressed to be substituted (1.9.1992) by [Museums and Galleries Act 1992 \(c. 44\)](#), s. 11(2), **Sch. 8 Pt. 1 para. 2(1)(a)(2)**; S.I. 1992/1874, **art.2**

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C3** Functions of the Secretary of State under s. 8(2)(b) transferred to the Lord President of the Council (1.9.1992) by [Museums and Galleries Act 1992 \(c. 44\)](#), s. 11(2), **Sch. 8 Pt. 1 para.2(1)(2)**; S.I. 1992/1874, **art.2**

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9 Transfers to other institutions.

(1) Any movable property vested in the Trustees of either Museum may be transferred by them to the Trustees of the other Museum, ^{F9}

(2) ^{F10}

Textual Amendments

F9 Words in s. 9(1) repealed (1.9.1992) by Museums and Galleries Act 1992 (c. 44), s. 11(3), **Sch. 9**; S.I. 1992/1874, **art.2**.

F10 S. 9(2) repealed (1.9.1992) by Museums and Galleries Act 1992 (c. 44), s. 11(3), **Sch. 9**; S.I. 1992/1874, **art.2**.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C4 S. 9 extended by Museum of London Act 1965 (c. 17), s. 7(2)(c) and British Library Act 1972 (c. 54), **Sch. para. 11(6)**

10 Authorised repositories.

(1) The buildings for the time being occupying the sites described in Parts I and II of the Third Schedule to this Act shall be the authorised repositories for the collections of the British Museum and the [^{F11}Natural History Museum].

(2) [^{F12}The Lord President of the Council may], with the agreement of the Trustees concerned, by order amend the said Schedule by adding a reference to a further site, or deleting the reference to the whole or any part of a site, or altering the description of a site: and any such order shall be made by statutory instrument, and shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

(3) A building or site vested in the Trustees of either Museum, being an authorised repository or the site of an authorised repository, shall not be sold or otherwise disposed of by them.

Textual Amendments

F11 Words in s. 10(1) substituted (1.9.1992) by Museums and Galleries Act 1992 (c. 44), s. 11(2), **Sch. 8 Pt. I para. 1(3)(a)**; S.I. 1992/1874, **art.2**

F12 Words in s. 10(2) substituted (25.11.1998) by S.I. 1988/1836, **art. 2(2)(b)(3)**, and certain words expressed to be substituted (1.9.1992) by Museums and Galleries Act 1992 (c. 44), s. 11(2), **Sch. 8 Pt. I para. 2(1)(b)(2)**; S.I. 1992/1874, **art.2**.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C5 Functions of the Secretary of State under s. 10(2) transferred (1.9.1992) to the Lord President of the Council by virtue of Museums and Galleries Act 1992 (c. 44), s. 11(2), **Sch. 8 Pt. I para. 2(1)(2)**; S.I. 1992/1874, **art.2**.

11 Amendment of 57&58 Vict. c. 34.

The British Museum (Purchase of Land) Act 1894 (under which money was advanced for the purchase by the Trustees of the British Museum of certain property adjacent

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to Montagu House) shall be amended by the insertion of the following section after section 2—

“2A Disposal of property purchased.

The said property shall not be sold or otherwise disposed of without consent of the Treasury, and the net proceeds of any sale or other disposition thereof shall be paid into the Exchequer.”

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C6 The text of s. 11 is in the form in which it was originally enacted: it was not reproduced in Statutes in Force and does not reflect any amendments or repeals which may have been made prior to 1.2.1991.

12 ^{F13}

Textual Amendments

F13 S. 12 repealed (1.9.1992) by [Museums and Galleries Act 1992 \(c. 44\)](#), s. 11(3), [Sch. 9](#); S.I. 1992/1874, [art.2](#).

13 Short title, commencement, transitional provisions and repeals.

- (1) This Act may be cited as the British Museum Act 1963.
- (2) Subject to the following subsection, this Act shall come into operation on such day as the Treasury may by order made by statutory instrument appoint.
- (3) ^{F14}
- (4) ... ^{F15}
- (5) ^{F16}
- (6) Bylaws, ordinances, statutes or rules in force immediately before the commencement of this Act under section 14 or 15 of the ^{M1}British Museum Act 1753 shall not be invalidated by the repeal of that Act but shall have effect in relation to each Museum, with such modifications as may be necessary in consequence of the provisions of this Act, as if they were rules made by the Trustees of that Museum under paragraph 5 of the First Schedule to this Act.

Textual Amendments

- F14** S. 13(3) repealed by [Statute Law \(Repeals\) Act 1978 \(c. 45\)](#), [Sch. 1 Pt. XIII](#)
- F15** S. 13(4) repealed by [Superannuation Act 1965 \(c. 74\)](#), [Sch. 11](#)
- F16** S. 13(5) repealed by [Statute Law \(Repeals\) Act 1974 \(c. 22\)](#), [Sch. Pt. XI](#)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C7 30.9.1963 appointed under s. 13(2) by [S.I. 1963/1546](#)

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Marginal Citations

M1 1753 c. 22.

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SCHEDULES

FIRST SCHEDULE

Sections 1 and 8.

TENURE OF OFFICE AND PROCEEDINGS OF TRUSTEES

- 1 Each trustee shall hold office for such period as is specified in the instrument by which he is appointed, but that period shall not exceed ten years, or five years in the case of a person whose appointment takes effect at or within twelve months after the end of any period for which he was previously appointed a trustee of the Museum under this Act.
- 2 A trustee may resign his office by notice in writing served on the person or body who appointed him.
- 3 The functions of the Trustees may be exercised notwithstanding vacancies in their number.
- 4 The quorum at meetings of the Trustees shall be six.
- 5 The Trustees may make rules for regulating their proceedings and for other matters relevant to the exercise of their functions.

SECOND SCHEDULE

Section 8.

TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS AS TO SEPARATION OF NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

- 1 (1) The following property shall vest at the commencement of this Act in the Natural History Trustees, that is to say—
 - (a) the objects vested immediately before that commencement in the Trustees of the British Museum and comprised in the collections of the British Museum (Natural History); and
 - (b) the lands and buildings at Tring referred to in the ^{M2}British Museum Act 1938.
- (2) Such of the said objects as became vested in the Trustees of the British Museum by virtue of a gift or bequest shall be treated for the purposes of this Act as vested in the Natural History Trustees by virtue of a like gift or bequest.

Marginal Citations

M2 1938 c. 62.

2 ^{F17}

Status: Point in time view as at 01/06/2021.

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Textual Amendments

F17 Sch. 2 para. 2 repealed (1.9.1992) by Museums and Galleries Act 1992 (c. 44), s. 11(3), Sch. 9; S.I. 1992/1874, art.2.

3 ^{F18}

Textual Amendments

F18 Sch. 2 para. 3 repealed (1.9.1992) by Museums and Galleries Act 1992 (c. 44), s. 11(3), Sch. 9; S.I. 1992/1874, art.2.

4 Subject to the provisions of this Act, all matters and things having effect in relation to the British Museum (Natural History) immediately before the commencement of this Act shall continue as nearly as may be to have effect in relation to [^{F19}the Natural History Museum] thereafter.

Textual Amendments

F19 Words in para. 4 substituted (1.9.1992) by Museums and Galleries Act 1992 (c. 44), s. 11(2), Sch. 8 para. 1(3)(b); S.I. 1992/1874, art.2.

THIRD SCHEDULE

Section 10.

SITES OF AUTHORISED REPOSITORIES

PART I

BRITISH MUSEUM

1 So much of the site in London bounded by Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury Street, Bedford Square, Montague Place, Russell Square and Montague Street as was occupied at the commencement of this Act for the purposes of the British Museum.

2 ^{F20}

Textual Amendments

F20 Sch. 3 Pt. I paras. 2, 7 repealed by S.I. 1973/1126

^{F21}3

Textual Amendments

F21 Sch. 3 Pt. 1 para. 3 omitted (1.6.2021) by virtue of The British Museum (Authorised Repositories) Order 2021 (S.I. 2021/499), arts. 1, 2(a)

4 Nos. 38/56 inclusive (even numbers only) Orsman Road, London N.1.

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5 The former Post Office Savings Bank Building, Blythe Road, London W.14, together with the outbuildings in its grounds.

[^{F226} No. 23 Blythe Road, London W.14.]

Textual Amendments

F22 Sch. 3 Pt. I para. 6 added (1.6.1995) by [S.I. 1995/1224](#), [arts. 1, 2](#)

7 ^{F23}

Textual Amendments

F23 Sch. 3 Pt. I paras. 2, 7 repealed by [S.I. 1973/1126](#)

8 ^{F24}

Textual Amendments

F24 Sch. 3 Pt. I paras. 6, 8 fall by reason of the revocation by [S.I. 1984/1181](#), [art. 3 Sch.](#) of [S.I. 1970/1956](#), 1972/653 and 1979/1086 (which respectively added paras. 6 and 8 and amended para. 8)

[^{F259} The site in Shinfield lying to the east of Cutbush Lane East, known as the British Museum Archaeological Research Collection, Cutbush Lane East, Shinfield, Reading, RG2 9AA.]

Textual Amendments

F25 Sch. 3 Pt. I para. 9 inserted (1.6.2021) by [The British Museum \(Authorised Repositories\) Order 2021 \(S.I. 2021/499\)](#), [arts. 1, 2\(b\)](#)

PART II

BRITISH MUSEUM (NATURAL HISTORY)

[^{F261} The site in London bounded by Queen’s Gate, Cromwell Road, Exhibition Road, and the premises of the Science Museum^[^{F27}], but excluding the part of that site known as the “Central Boiler House” and located on the north side of the Natural History Museum“].]

Textual Amendments

F26 Sch. 3 Pt. II para. 1 substituted by [S.I. 1985/462](#), [art. 2](#)

F27 Words in Sch. THIRD Pt. II para. 1 inserted (10.7.2006) by [Natural History Museum \(Authorised Repositories\) Order 2006 \(S.I. 2006/1547\)](#), [arts. 1, 2](#)

[^{F282} The site in Tring lying to the east of Akeman Street and to the north of Park Street occupied at the commencement of this Act for the purposes of the British Museum (Natural History), but excluding —

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- (a) the part of that site known as the “Boiler Room” and located on the ground floor of the Rothschild Building at that site;
- (b) the part of that site known as the “Roof Plant Area” and located on the roof of the Ornithology building of that site.]

Textual Amendments

F28 Sch. 3 Pt II para. 2 substituted (1.8.2011) by [Natural History Museum \(Authorised Repositories\) Order 2011 \(S.I. 2011/1682\)](#), [arts. 1, 2\(1\)](#)

- ^{F29}[3 The site in Tring lying to the West of Akeman Street known as 67–69 Akeman Street.]

Textual Amendments

F29 Sch. 3 Pt. II paras. 3, 4 added by [S.I. 1982/1238](#), [art. 2](#)

- ^{F30}[4 The site in Wandsworth known as 75 Kimber Road, London SW18 4NX, but excluding—
- (a) the part of that site known as the “Boiler Room” and located on the ground floor of that site;
 - (b) the part of that site known as the “Plant Area” and located on the ground floor of that site;
 - (c) the part of that site known as the “Chiller Compound Area” and located on the roof of that site;
 - (d) the site known as 249 to 251 Merton Road, London SW18 5EB.]

Textual Amendments

F30 Sch. 3 Pt II para. 4 substituted (1.8.2011) by [Natural History Museum \(Authorised Repositories\) Order 2011 \(S.I. 2011/1682\)](#), [arts. 1, 2\(2\)](#)

- ^{F31}[5. The site in Keyworth known as British Geological Survey, Environmental Science Centre, Nicker Hill, Keyworth, Nottingham NG12 5GG bounded by Platt Lane to the west and Nicker Hill to the south.]

Textual Amendments

F31 Sch. 3 para. 5 inserted (21.2.2018) by [The Natural History Museum \(Authorised Repositories\) Order 2018 \(S.I. 2018/94\)](#), [arts. 1, 2](#)

^{F32}^{F32}FOURTH SCHEDULE

Textual Amendments

F32 Sch. 4 repealed by [Statute Law \(Repeals\) Act 1974 \(c. 22\)](#), [Sch. Pt. XI](#)

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