



Head of Conservation

Full-time and Permanent

Salary £52,406 - £60,809 per annum (pay award pending)

Plus generous benefits package

Hybrid / flexible working

About the role

As Head of Conservation, you will take on an exciting leadership position at the heart of our Collection Access and Care Directorate.

This is a pivotal position that reflects the increasing demands being made on the role of the conservator including the opportunities that multidisciplinary research provides. You will bring your own specialist conservation expertise while having operational responsibility for a busy team of seventeen.

We are looking for someone with proven, strong leadership and coaching skills to support continuous development of the team in delivering their goals. As a senior leader, you will play a pivotal role in contributing to Our People Vision of ‘... ensuring the National Galleries of Scotland is a great place to work, where our people thrive in a culture where we are trusted, empowered and engaged to achieve our true potential.’

To succeed you'll have an outstanding ability to work with many stakeholders, collaborating within and out with the department and across the professional network of conservation to achieve ambitious goals. You will work closely with colleagues across various disciplines including our learning, curatorial, collections management and collections information teams, to develop an integrated approach to conservation at the National Galleries of Scotland (NGS). We are committed to sustainability in all aspects of our work and your approach to conservation will have sustainable practice as its starting point.

You will play an important role in the development of our ambitious project to create a new National Collections Facility - [The Art Works](#) for NGS and our partners.

Conservation at the National Galleries of Scotland

We have developed an exciting strategy for the coming years with clear aims aligned to our purpose ‘We make art work for everyone.’ Conservation will sit at the heart of this strategy as a key enabling function to develop our national and international programmes and develop and engage audiences in new ways.

The conservation department includes specialist conservation expertise across paintings, frames, works on paper and photography, sculpture, installation, media and performance art and preventive conservation. A conservation technician team supports the conservators delivering a programme of non-interventive care including crate design, preparation of frames, and mount making. Developments in the field of sculpture conservation at NGS are at an early stage and methodologies for this emerging skill area are being

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formulated. There is a strong desire to develop further an integrated heritage science function relevant to the materials and range of the NGS collection and those works in its care.

The department is involved in the field of technical art history and continues to lead the way in Scotland in the field of IR-reflectography and micro fader technology. We are a founding member of the National Heritage Science Forum (www.heritagescienceforum.org.uk).

We regularly host interns from the UK and abroad, providing essential experience during conservation training and opportunities for learning once qualified. We also support an ongoing volunteer programme.

The department is a lively member of the Scottish conservation scene and has developed links with other cultural bodies including the National Museums of Scotland, National Records of Scotland, National Libraries of Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland, and the Scottish University sector. Through ARTIST ROOMS the department works closely with Tate.

The conservation team provide full support to the world-class NGS public programme – exhibitions, displays, national and international touring projects and development of the collection through acquisitions and long loans.

The difference you'll make

Reporting to the Director of Collection Access and Care, you will be a key member of both the Collection Access and Care senior team and the organisation's Extended Leadership Team. Working closely with the Director of Collection Access and Care you will ensure conservation achieves its ambitious goals for care research and collection access.

You will make a real difference by:

- Providing outstanding leadership and operational management for the conservation team, including the coaching and development of professional conservators.
- Ensuring the purpose of the conservation department is aligned with the organisation's vision and developing strategies to support this.
- Developing an integrated conservation approach that reflects the breadth and depth of our holdings and collecting criteria and is in line with national conservation standards.
- Contributing your specialist expertise to the conservation of works within your discipline.
- Working closely with the Director of Collection Care and Access, Head of Collections Management, and Head of Collection Information and Data Assets, to forge a directorate which works creatively and effectively to meet its targets of highly professional, sustainable collections care.
- Playing a key role in the delivery of [The Art Works](#) and shaping conservation at the galleries for the future. You'll contribute to the development of this project that will transform Scotland's ability to care for, provide access to, and experience its national collection. Located in the north of Edinburgh, The Art Works will house c 97% of the nation's collection of fine art and offers an extraordinary opportunity to make all our collection work for everyone. The Art Works is a strategic enabler for the organisation, and it will be transformative, underpinning local national and international impact.

- Overseeing the strategic positioning and planning of our conservation function, budget and resource management based on capacity and skill base understanding, including exploration of income generation, granting bodies and cost reduction opportunities.
- Having the ability to and being confident in making critical decisions and giving conservation advice with confidence, generally based on precedents but not exclusively, drawing on the specialist conservation knowledge of others within the team as appropriate.
- Being involved in submitting grant applications and seeking funding sources linked to posts and research activity.
- Acting as an ambassador for NGS conservation and reflecting our values.

It should be noted that a job description is not exhaustive list of activities and other duties may be required commensurate with the grade of the position.

Who we are looking for

You'll bring a rare combination of expertise, leadership, and curiosity to this role. Someone who inspires confidence, drives collaboration, and advances the practice of conservation at a national level.

We're looking for someone who can demonstrate:

- Proven conservation expertise:
 - You must have a relevant qualification and extensive experience in a conservation discipline. You'll bring and add significant expertise to the Directorate and to the organisation.
 - You'll also have an in-depth knowledge of contemporary principles and practice in conservation with knowledge of environmental and health and safety issues in the practice of conservation of fine art.
- A passion and curiosity for your conservation discipline, be it around a material or object type, environmental/preventive, or science, which will complement the team and add value to NGS, Scotland and the profession.
- Sector experience - you might come from the commercial, public or education sector, but you will have experience of working with museums and art galleries and have a tangible interest in art.
- Authority in the field. With your established network of contacts, you'll have access to best practice in Europe and beyond to help advise the organisation on how to look after the collection.
- You will be rigorous in your thinking and use evidence-based approaches to finding solutions. Your excellent organisational skills allow you to set effective prioritised work programmes.
- A proven track record in collaborative leadership and people management. You will enjoy sharing your knowledge and being a team player who thrives on collaboration and being part of multi-disciplinary forums.
- You are inquisitive and a problem solver with a real ability to work proactively to help you achieve NGS goals - someone who can manage, motivate, and develop a wide range of people. You see conservation as a dynamic and enabling profession that excites, challenges, and can open collections to the wider public.
- Experience in being involved in grant applications and seeking funding sources linked to posts and research activity.

We are National Galleries of Scotland

Our three Edinburgh galleries are the National, Modern and Portrait. We house and look after Scotland's amazing world-class art collection – one of the finest in the world. Step inside and explore treasures from Botticelli and Titian to the very best modern art to contemporary portraits of pop culture icons. And, as you'd expect, the world's greatest collection of Scottish art, our national collection. We also have an outstanding collection of Western art from the late Middle Ages to the present day, and an exceptional internationally significant photography collection.

As well as displaying our art at our three Edinburgh sites, we also share it through an active programme of partnership across Scotland, the rest of the UK and abroad, as well as online.

We conserve and research our collections and we are committed to reaching the widest possible audience through our ambitious plans. Visitor numbers to our sites in Edinburgh totalled an average of 2.5m visitors a year in the years prior to the global pandemic.

We're a space for thinking, dreaming, doing, and playing. Soak up the art. Meet friends in the cafés. Have a family picnic surrounded by the sculptures in the Modern grounds. Be inspired by our amazing art films. Choose your own experience. There is no one way to enjoy Scotland's national collection. We are yours to discover.

What's important to us

We make art work for everyone. That's our purpose and it drives everything we do. This is an exciting time for us, as we move forward with our engaging strategic vision: Art for Scotland: Inspiration for the World.

We're putting our audience at the heart of what we do. Matching Scotland's rich collection, our expertise, and creativity with the needs and wants of our visitors. Finding new ways to connect with more people and create an innovative, inclusive organisation that can meet the challenges of our ever-evolving world.

We're committed to looking at how we operate as well as how we engage our audiences. We will play our part in tackling the Climate Emergency, and we're embedding Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in the way we work. We want everyone to feel a sense of belonging and freedom to be themselves at work or at play with us.

What's on offer for you

Our colleagues will tell you great things about working here. We aim to ensure the National Galleries of Scotland is a great place to work, where our people thrive in a culture where we are trusted, empowered, and engaged to achieve our true potential. We offer a range of benefits to promote healthy working lifestyles for all our colleagues. Details specific to this role are:

Salary

£52,406 - £60,809 per annum (pay award pending). Starting salaries will normally be at the minimum rate depending on experience.

Hours

35 hours per week excluding a one-hour unpaid lunch break each day. We're also committed to supporting flexible working options for everyone which includes flexible working, working remotely and flexitime policies.

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Holidays

When you first join, you'll get 36.5 days holidays per year (including public and privilege holidays). After 5 years your annual leave will increase to 41.5 days.

Where you'll be based

You will be based at Modern One, 75 Belford Road, Edinburgh, EH4 3DR where free car parking is available onsite. However, you'll work across all of our Galleries based in the heart of Edinburgh - the National, Portrait, and Modern (One and Two) and at our off-site stores.

Pension

We are a [Civil Service Pension](#) employer. You get to choose if you want a defined benefit or stakeholder pension. The benefits of joining the scheme include [generous employer contributions](#) to your future pension, life assurance, and options to increase your pension. If you join the alpha Civil Service pension scheme our contribution will be 28.97% for this role.

Other benefits

Family friendly working policies, free or discounted entry to various visitor attractions, staff discount at our shops and cafés, Cycle to Work Scheme, wellbeing support and services including our Employee Assistance Programme.

The closing date for completed applications is 12 noon on Thursday, 27 November 2025.

Please note that the successful candidate will be subject to Basic Disclosure Scotland security clearance.