



Department
for Culture,
Media & Sport

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Dame Caroline Dinenage MP
Chair, Culture, Media and Sport Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

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Dear Dame Caroline,

I write to inform you of the decision taken by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, under the National Maritime Museum Act 1934 to agree to the deaccession and gifting of an item within the National Maritime Museum's (known by its brand name, Royal Museums Greenwich or "RMG") collection to Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust.

I have been advised by Royal Museum Greenwich and by DCMS officials that these disposals are routine in nature, that the items fall outside the museum's collection development policy and/or cannot be displayed or used for research by Royal Museums Greenwich, and/or that public accessibility is best served elsewhere.

I thereby gave my permission for the disposal of the following items from the collection:

- Ceremonial barge of the Navy Commissioners. 18th-century. 2,210mm x 14,160mm x 1,950mm. Valued at £400,000 (BAE0037)

We have determined the parliamentary timetable allows us to follow standard parliamentary procedure, with the publication of a Written Ministerial Statement and the laying of a Departmental Minute to update parliamentarians on the proposed gifting of the item noted above. These will be issued in both Houses on 10 March 2025.

We believe that this transfer of assets will allow for greater research in, public engagement with, and interest in the naval history of the United Kingdom. This gift also helps to foster partnerships between the DCMS-sponsored museums and those that operate at the regional and civil level, contributing to the shared national story and fostering community for all.

A copy of the Written Ministerial Statement and Departmental Minute are enclosed.

Yours sincerely,

Sir Chris Bryant MP
Minister for Creative Industries, Arts and Tourism



OFFICIAL

Department for Culture, Media, and Sport

Departmental Minute in relation to the gifting of the Ceremonial barge of the Navy Commissioners from National Maritime Museum Collection

Background and context

1. It is the normal practice when a government department (in this instance an arm's length body of the department) proposes to the disposal of, deaccession of, or gifting of an asset exceeding £300,000 for the department concerned to present to the House of Commons a minute giving particulars of the gift and explaining the circumstances; and to refrain from making the gift until fourteen parliamentary sitting days after the issue of the minute, except in cases of special urgency.
2. The National Maritime Museum, the organisation known by its brand name Royal Museums Greenwich (RMG), is seeking to dispose of a Navy Commissioner's barge via transfer by gift to another heritage body in the UK. The barge has been valued at £400,000.
3. The barge was donated to the museum in 1935. There is no likelihood of this barge being displayed at any of the RMG sites in the foreseeable future and it is also too large for RMG to store on any of its own sites and make it accessible in that way.
4. RMG's Board of Trustees has requested approval to dispose of the barge, which is not currently on display at the Museum. The Board considers the item appropriate for disposal as they:
 - fall outside the museum's Collection Development policy
 - cannot be displayed or used for research by RMG and
 - The Board believes public accessibility is best served elsewhere.
5. RMG intends to deaccession and transfer the barge to Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust. Such transfers and disposals are a routine part of museum business and reflect museums' ongoing review of their purpose (with changes to the collection reflecting that). The barge was held for nearly 100 years at Chatham and is historically relevant to the Commissioner's House there. There it can be stored appropriately and made accessible in a relevant context. Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust have confirmed their wish to acquire the barge and their willingness to transport, conserve and eventually display it.
6. The transfer has been agreed by the recipient but should for any reason this fall through, then the disposal will be reviewed and if necessary return for further approval.
7. A Written Ministerial Statement is being issued along with this Department Minute. The Department wrote to the Chairs of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and

the Departmental Select Committee in March 2025, informing them of the proposed course of action.

8. According to Managing Public Money Annex 4.12, Treasury approval is required for all gifts valued at more than £300,000, and any other gifts not covered by a department's or ALB's delegated authorities.
9. The Treasury has approved the proposal in principle. If, during the period of fourteen parliamentary sitting days beginning on the date on which this minute is laid before the House of Commons, a Member signifies an objection by giving notice of a Parliamentary Question or a Motion relating to the minute, or by otherwise raising the matter in the House, final approval of the gift will be withheld pending an examination of the objection.

Department for Culture, Media and Sport

10 March 2025

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Gifting of Navy Commissioners' barge by National Maritime Museum to Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust

The National Maritime Museum, the organisation known by its brand name Royal Museums Greenwich (RMG), is seeking to dispose of a Navy Commissioner's barge via transfer by gift to another heritage body in the UK.

The barge was donated to the museum in 1935. There is no likelihood of the barge being displayed at any of the RMG sites in the foreseeable future and it is too large to store on any of the sites and make it accessible. Public accessibility is therefore best served elsewhere. RMG intends to deaccession and transfer the barge to Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust. Such transfers and disposals are a routine part of museum business and reflect museums' ongoing review of their purpose (with changes to the collection reflecting that).

The barge has been valued at £400,000. It is the normal practice when a government department (in this instance an arm's length body of the department) proposes to make a gift of a value exceeding £300,000, for the department concerned to present to the House of Commons a minute giving particulars of the gift and explaining the circumstances; and to refrain from making the gift until fourteen parliamentary sitting days after the issue of the minute, except in cases of special urgency.

DCMS has written to the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, and Chair of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee, informing them of the proposed course of action.

The Treasury has approved the proposal in principle. If, during the period of fourteen parliamentary sitting days beginning on the date on which this minute was laid before the House of Commons, a Member signifies an objection by giving notice of a Parliamentary Question or a Motion relating to the minute, or by otherwise raising the matter in the House, final approval of the gift will be withheld pending an examination of the objection. I inform the House today of the Departmental Minute which sets out the detail of the decision, which has been laid in both Houses.

The transfer is expected to take place during the financial year 2025/26, subject to completion of the Departmental Minute process.

A copy of the Departmental Minute will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament.