

Sustainably caring for the nation's treasures at the National Collections Centre

Nestled within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the [National Collections Centre](#) plays a vital role in the Science Museum Group's sustainability and biodiversity activities.

Alongside museum storage facilities, this 545-acre site contains large open grasslands, 30 hectares of native woodlands and one of the UK's largest solar farms. More than a hundred bird and bat boxes together with log piles, hibernacula and empty beehives have been installed recently, with four acres of wildflower meadows due to be planted, providing new habitats and homes for reptiles, insects and other wildlife. In a further commitment to biodiversity, 1,000 native trees will be planted annually throughout this decade, joining 45,000 trees already planted by SMG at the site.

Staff offices at the National Collections Centre benefit from solar hot water, while green-roofed bike racks provide space for insects and plants as well as bicycle storage. Hemp and Lime have been combined to create a low-energy, humidity controlled [Hemcrete®](#) store – providing a carefully managed space for some of the most vulnerable objects in the collection.

A new collection management facility at the National Collections Centre will revolutionise public access to the Science Museum Group Collection, enabling the Group to continue our mission to inspire futures while providing an environmentally friendly, purpose-built home for the collection for the first time. The new facility will open for public tours, school and research visits from 2024.

Sustainability is at the heart of the new facility, which is the Group's most energy efficient building. A 'fabric first' design approach maximised the performance of the facility's building materials to improve energy efficiency while reducing energy needs, operational costs and carbon emissions. The sustainable choice of a highly insulated and airtight facility allows the environmental conditions needed for the collection to be maintained with minimal energy use.

Solar photovoltaic panels on the roof meet part of the site's electricity needs, with biomass boilers providing heating for dehumidification. Limiting access points to the building, the inclusion of a loading bay airlock and the use of intelligent LED lighting all further reduce the facility's energy demands.

Outside the new facility, dedicated electric car charging points will encourage more sustainable transport methods, complementing innovative hydrogen powered and electric vehicles already in use at the National Collections Centre. Recycled plastic road materials and grasscrete will provide sustainable surfaces for access roads and the service yard, aiding drainage and reducing carbon emissions.

Rainwater from Building ONE will be captured to create a large wetland area encircled by Clouts Wood, a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Discussions are underway with Wiltshire Wildlife Trust to incorporate this area into a wider nature reserve, further enhancing biodiversity in the local area.