

## Museums, visitor centres and the Jurassic Coast Collection

The Jurassic Coast Collection is a collaboration between academics, fossil collectors, museum/visitor centre staff and the Jurassic Coast Trust. By working together, the project seeks to build on the successes of the Jurassic Coast museum and visitor centre network, that continue to demonstrate exceptional practice in facilitating access to the palaeontology of the coastline by engaging and inspiring the local community and wider public audience.

Jurassic Coast museums hold extensive, key scientifically important fossil collections that provide some of the first records of the Site's palaeontological significance, dating back over 150 years. More recently, expansion of these historic buildings and the development of new facilities has improved the communal capacity to curate and conserve important local fossils in a more sustainable way. National and international museums, geological institutions and universities also play a vital role in the conservation and curation of fossils from the Jurassic Coast and it is our aim to work closely with these groups in the near future, during Phase 2 of the project.

The Jurassic Coast Trust remains keenly aware that the reach of fossils from the World Heritage Site extends further than UK Accredited museums. Other centres concerned with public engagement, education, and outreach, including heritage and visitor centres, share these stories directly with a diverse public audience. Involvement from these organisations, as delivery partners, is also desired.

### Outline of Objectives

The Jurassic Coast Collection project aspires to unite public, museum-based fossil collections with those in private ownership to define a remote collection of fossils, dispersed among key stakeholders, that demonstrate the Outstanding Universal Value of palaeontology on the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.

To achieve the ambitious aims of the Jurassic Coast Collection project, three key objectives have been proposed for **Phase 1** – please refer to the **Project Plan** for more details:

- **A top-level inventory of Jurassic Coast fossils**  
A review of important fossils found on the Jurassic Coast held both in existing local, national, and international museum collections as well as those in private ownership.
- **Statement of Significance**  
To communicate the importance, context and meaning of a dispersed collection of fossils from the World Heritage Site. This will be a key piece of evidence to express the Collection's current and potential access, engagement, and research value to the community it serves.

- **Context Statement**

To frame the Jurassic Coast Collection's role in the future of the World Heritage Site and how this relates to stakeholder groups. The Jurassic Coast Collection will demonstrate the OUV of Jurassic Coast palaeontology in the wider context of the World Heritage Site and global earth sciences.

It is important to consider that whilst these are existing museum tools, this is a geoheritage project applied to a World Heritage Site rather than an individual museum or private collection. The inventory seeks to collate existing information for a new purpose, one that describes the significance of Jurassic Coast fossils in the context of the World Heritage Convention.

### **What is the opportunity?**

The Jurassic Coast Collection is intended to support and create opportunities for its many stakeholder groups, as well as educate the wider community on the importance of Jurassic Coast palaeontology.

Participating museums will be able to use the Jurassic Coast Collection to develop their own projects, pursue funding, and identify opportunities to collaborate with other JCC partners. It will help identify priority areas for specimen acquisition and help promote further investment and support for the ongoing conservation and curation of the Site's incredible fossil heritage.

More widely, the raw data compiled during the creation of the Jurassic Coast Collection will provide a new and important resource to energise research and scientific study along the World Heritage Site and inspire coast wide public engagement programmes. It will also help The Jurassic Coast Trust address the uncertainties surrounding the potential for new facilities with a palaeontological focus along the length of the World Heritage Site.

It is hoped that the Jurassic Coast Collection can help meet the following specific strategic objectives of museums and visitor centres:

### ***Organisation sustainability***

- The Jurassic Coast Collection is in a key position to identify and categorise the strengths of existing museum palaeontological collections, and how they support World Heritage Status.
- An opportunity to participate in a dispersed collection with authentic and powerful scientific and heritage focused aims to elevate individual collections as part of the wider context.
- An opportunity to engage with the wider public audience through digital channels, including the redevelopment of the Fossil Finder Database thus improving global access to important fossils held in public collections.
- The Jurassic Coast Collection will support, develop, and invest in research projects with a number of collaborating academic institutes that will potentially lead to further scientific study of museum collections.
- Collaboration with private fossil collectors will encourage the potential loan and display of private fossil collections, in museums, to support new and exciting exhibits.

- A comprehensive inventory of Jurassic Coast fossils will identify priority specimens for acquisition and areas of under representation, potentially helping to refine and focus acquisition policies regarding local fossils.
- Further access to the Jurassic Coast Trust's geoheritage knowledge and experience.
- Create opportunities for joint programming with the Jurassic Coast Trust and other key stakeholders.

### ***Collection preservation***

- Improved dialogue with fossil collectors who wish to see their fossils displayed in local museums and may wish to donate or sell specimens.
- Potential for increased specialism by focusing fossil acquisition policies and interpretation.
- Potential to attract new volunteers with skillsets specific to curation and preservation of collections.
- Access to dedicated palaeontological advice from the Jurassic Coast Collection Development Officer and access to a network of geological curatorial expertise and subject specialists including active researchers and conservators from collaborating organisations.
- Potential for improved investment in specimen conservation including joint funding bids to support conservation resources and skills development.

### ***User experience and engagement***

- Improved public access to collections including remote access through an online platform.
- Global academic/research access to specimens held in public collections.
- Potential for striking new displays in collaboration with private collectors and national/international institutions.
- Visibility for stored or otherwise non-accessible collections through digital channels and special exhibitions.
- Increased public awareness for the Jurassic Coast museum and visitor centre network.

### **How to get involved**

The first step for any museum is simply to express an interest in participating in the project to the Jurassic Coast Collection Development Officer, Chris Reedman. We aim to follow a tailored approach for each museum we work with, in order to respond to specific capacity and needs.

Start a conversation with Chris by emailing him at:

Chris.reedman@jurassiccoast.org

## **How will data from the Jurassic Coast Collection be used?**

The Jurassic Coast Collection database will be a valuable resource to help attract support and funding for heritage projects along the length of the World Heritage Site. Specific security concerns regarding privately owned specimens are addressed in the '**Collector Engagement with the Jurassic Coast Collection**' document.

- **Sensitive data**  
Sensitive data, including the name and address of the finder, will not be made available to any party outside of the Jurassic Coast Trust organisation. The Jurassic Coast Trust will store all sensitive data as part of the Jurassic Coast Collection and its use in any project outcome will require the formal, written consent of all parties involved.
- **Non-sensitive data**  
Non-sensitive information regarding specimens in public collections, which will include a description of the fossil and the relevant Statement of Significance, will be made publicly available. The use of non-sensitive information by the Jurassic Coast Trust will not require consent.
- **Online or software-based access to the Jurassic Coast Collection**  
Specimens in public collections that are included in the Jurassic Coast Collection database will be made available to the wider public audience through an online platform or similar software.
- **Use in public engagement**  
In collaboration with organisations such as museums and visitor centres, the Jurassic Coast Trust will use non-sensitive data to develop and deliver engagement and outreach programmes. This will help promote the Jurassic Coast Collection and provide benefit to Jurassic Coast communities.

The database will be an important tool to promote support for the continued development of the Jurassic Coast Collection and it is intended that non-sensitive information will be used by the Jurassic Coast Trust in funding and grant applications. Jurassic Coast museums and visitor centres will be able to use the data to invite investment and are encouraged to do so in collaboration with other partners.

## **Guidelines for the promotion of access to the Jurassic Coast Collection**

- Copies of all scientific studies on Jurassic Coast Collection fossils will be made freely available to the Jurassic Coast Trust, the owner of the fossil and the original finder of the specimen.
- Researchers will be encouraged to produce open access publications on Jurassic Coast Collection fossils.
- Where publication of scientific research requires privately owned specimens to be deposited in public collections, it is preferable that such specimens are first made available to Jurassic Coast museums to more directly benefit the communities living along the World Heritage Site.

- It is desirable that all privately owned specimens in the Jurassic Coast Collection, within reason, are available for research.
- To maximise their positive impact and engagement potential, it is desirable that all specimens in the Jurassic Coast Collection, within reason, are available for loan for display in Jurassic Coast museums and visitor centres (to be negotiated on a case by case basis and to be approved by the organisation and legal owner of the fossil).