



## **Collective Vision conference**

4 November 2002

Workshop notes

### **Workshop 1**

#### **Building capacity in the sector**

- The nationals could play a greater role in the delivery of curatorial advice, but the point was made that expertise exists within the non-national sector.
- Need mechanisms that release the wide range of expertise, which exists around the country. Need to recognise the 'two way nature of exchange'.
- Does everyone mean the same thing by 'curatorial advice' ?- We need to be clear about different areas of advice and expertise, and where we consider strengths to lie.
- Participants referring to NMS - nationals not a homogenous group.
- Very significant that 63% of museums are in listed buildings. Therefore, Historic Scotland should provide greater support for resulting capital needs.
- Support for the principle of 'parity of esteem' in national, non-national museum relationships. Provision of advice should be formalised and not based on a 'grace and favour' approach.
- Should be written into job descriptions in the national and non-national museum sector that there is a requirement to build partnerships and network.

#### **Funding**

- Need core funding for core museum functions, education is one of those core functions.
- Innovative ideas on diversification are emerging from the independent museum sector, because they 'have to be creative to survive' - need to learn from them.
- Current difficulty of chasing after funding with strings attached - distracts museums from core functions and further drains capacity.
- On sustainability - we need to question new museum development and the role of

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LECs and planning bodies- were certain museums ever going to be sustainable in their current location?

- Difficulty in accessing HLF and other forms of funding because of staff and skill shortages. Process is complex and 'we don't have a grant-making officer like some Local Authorities'.
- Local Authorities in turn can't access HLF because of difficulties in finding matching funding.
- HLF needs to consider the need to 're-capitalise the product if museums are to remain exciting to the visitor'.
- There needs to be a 'development fund or trust' for Scottish museums, which would make use of endowments to enhance sustainability.
- Policies on free admission at the nationals and in local authorities make it even harder for independent museums to compete. Also means that there isn't equality of access geographically - some people only have an independent museum which is obliged to charge.

### Partnerships

- There was support for the development of cross-sectoral partnerships - particularly with the wider education sector, the example was given of the need to link into universities expertise in ICT.
- There was interest in the development of closer relationships between the museum, library and archives sectors, already happening at local authority level to a degree. This would lead to cost-savings, greater efficiency. See comments on a Resource for Scotland below.

### Learning

- Education authorities have to see museums as equal partners in the delivery of learning opportunities, not currently the case. The strength of a museum is that it is not the classroom, offers a unique and different outlook on learning.
- Curriculum at secondary school level is too prescriptive and does not allow students to engage with other forms of learning, hence difficulty in engaging young people over the age of 11.
- Severe lack of education staff limits the potential for museums to do more. More people needed to fulfil museums' potential for learning.
- Transport costs are one of the major barriers to engagement by school and other community groups.
- Link museums and lifelong learning at policy level in the provision of learning opportunities.
- There was a danger that grey policy areas following devolution might inhibit the adoption of the Learning and Access framework developed by Resource.

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### Local Authorities

- The role of Local Authorities was perceived to be critical, but if the LA does not prioritise culture where does that leave the museum? Should consider requiring LAs to ring-fence museums budgets.
- Why can't COSLA enforce the notion of adequate cultural provision? There needs to be some means to ensure consistency of provision across Local Authority areas.
- Sustainability issues in independent museums were attributed to local authorities by some- they too are 'locked' into perpetuating historic funding patterns and do not consider what the Audit says or what an area needs.

### Roles and structure

- There was a need for an intermediary organisation, described as 'an accountable NDPB'.
- However considerable support for SMC in this role and explicit repudiation of one speaker's perceived stance. "Doesn't the [strategic agency] already exist in the form of SMC?" 'SMC has provided a very good lead.'
- The idea that a membership body cannot question / make difficult decisions was described as 'nonsense'. 'If a body that elects its own Board cannot do that, who can?'
- Scottish Executive needs to be clear, accountable and transparent in its decision-making - Glasgow and 3 industrials funding decisions described as 'ad-hoc and unstrategic'.
- Vital that Scottish Executive 'listen' to the wider views of the museum sector, and respond positively to the current consultation. Action needed now - has been a long time coming.
- Need to clarify the role of Resource, consider a 'Resource for Scotland'.
- One person said that we should resist any moves to have more bureaucracy, additional support should go direct to local level.

### National Audit

- The National Audit is invaluable, but we have to ensure that it is updated and extended. It should consider the area of service provision in much greater depth.
- The standards framework should be expanded to cover areas such as visitor services, learning and access.

### Other

- One person thought that inadequate consideration was given to the role of research and scholarship in museums, 'underpins everything'.

## Workshop 2

Individuals expressed the following views:

### On SMC

- Great appreciation of SMC and a belief that SMC is well suited to take on an expanded role. He does not think that a policy development role need conflict with membership.
- A membership body has a vested interest. Can it make strategic decisions?
- SMC already makes difficult strategic decisions which affect the membership.
- Agreement with previous speaker and description of the talks from the morning of the conference as 'positioning' and not very helpful. Belief that NMS needs to be included in any strategic body. To be given the funding remit for part of the sector only is divisive.
- Ministers change their mind only when lobbied by the public. The sector should be engaging public support.

### On funding

- How can we build capacity without funding?
- (General agreement amongst group.)
- Government response to appeals to funding tends to be project based (SCF, designation) rather than core funding. This is not enough.
- Do not agree with Director of NMS's speech that we should not bring funding out as a top issue. It comes to the top because the rest cannot follow unless funding is quantified.
- Also 'turnstile' issue is not the issue for museums. How do we quantify the 'perceptual' value of museums and culture? Vast numbers of people are drawn to Edinburgh because of its profile as a city of culture but how many visitors actually get round to visiting the city's museums?
- The Audit was only 'allowed' to go so far. The low level of financial resources available to museums was not quantified by the Audit. Lack of funding is holding back museums - museums would be able to write an education policy in minutes if they knew they had the funding to implement it.

### On structure

- Working together is crucial. Share visitors rather than compete. This requires a change in attitude and thinking, e.g. developing a local and national partnership is difficult when local politics are different.
- Want fewer museums, more visitors.

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- Is sustainability about funding or about the value of service given by a museum? We need to redefine sustainability.
- What about cutting the number of museums?
- Political will, and community will, is for each town/village to have its own museum.
- Are partnerships workable?
- Again, politics makes this difficult, e.g. deep distrust between some large, city-based Local Authorities. Perhaps more scope between rural authorities?
- Partnerships on small scale projects are workable.
- We cannot deny community museums. We need larger cake rather than fewer museums.
- Sustainability issue is unfair on museums with collections of large objects and buildings, e.g. industrials.
- Museums do not make money.

### **On contribution to wider agendas**

- Museums need to be more aggressive about highlighting their contribution to other issues, such as health.
- How do we quantify such value?
- This is a double-edged sword. Do museums really do enough with local communities?
- Museums should not have to be selling themselves as tourist attractions. Preservation and education are the two key purposes of museums. (Child protection rules means that some museums can no longer support school visits - after years of running successful education services for schools.)
- We have not educated the public enough about what museums are doing.
- Museums do not promote themselves enough.
- What is missing? Why are we failing to capitalise on front-page news, such as Bruce's heart, the Stone of Destiny? See popularity of Time Team.
- We do not document evidence of success of learning and outreach. We don't measure sufficiently and don't promote results.
- How can we measure economic and social benefit of museums? E.g. how do we measure somebody receiving a geology degree ten years after being inspired by seeing a display on a museum visit?
- With education at the forefront of the political agenda why are museums missing the opportunity to make links, especially into areas that are already being measured for

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government use?

- (ex-teacher) undoubtedly a good idea but how do museums get themselves seen as contributors to the education agenda? What museums can offer is tiny compared with what else is on offer. Museums need to engage with the interest area of the education profession. But this can only be done with a sustained, continuous approach.
- (also ex-teacher) It is not that teachers do not want to be involved with museums. Teachers have no time to engage with what museums are doing.
- Potential for partnerships: museum expertise and curricular needs. Needs to be presented to schools in a structured way.
- These are old ideas. Museums have been doing this for years – chipping away.
- In that case, why do museums have a low profile? Because museums have been working individually, not collectively, in a structured fashion. Learning Teaching Scotland and museum sector partnership?
- The national priority of education is therefore extremely positive for museums...

### **Main issues for the action plan**

- emphasise the importance of museums in their own right
- core funding not project funding
- working together and cross-sectoral partnerships.

### **Workshop 3**

The following were the key points to emerge.

#### **Collections**

- The group noted that documentation backlog was the largest barrier to access and favoured a nationally co-ordinated solution to this.
- At the very least there should be co-ordination of individual collecting agreements, and possibly a national collections policy.

#### **Staff**

- There were 4 national representatives. NMS representatives in particular indicated that they were currently reactive in support: they want to be proactive. However, agreed this requires policy, structure and additional funding.
- The point was made that not all expertise resides with the nationals.
- There is a similar issue as between local authorities/independents. Under capacity within most local authorities (all except Glasgow?) affects their ability to assist independent museums.

#### **Partnerships**

- Partnerships should be geographic, not subject based. In one speaker's view the partnership between the 3 industrials has not worked. Some support for geographical partnerships particularly as this would encourage cross local authority partnerships.

#### **Scottish Executive**

- The Scottish Executive should be taking the lead in interdepartmental advocacy.
- The Scottish Executive representative also felt that the department should be able to provide interdepartmental information, providing museums enquiring with information about access to other funding opportunities.

#### **Local Authority**

- It was noted that under pressure, local authorities first instinct is to protect their own services, and the claims of independent museums are much less a priority.
- Unanimous support for ring fencing to local authorities.

#### **Buildings**

- Buildings are identified as the big issue. The cost of maintenance, including compliance with DDA, absorbs huge percentages of budget.
- Note that resource based accounting will put still more pressure on the public sector,

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both national and for local authority.

- Agreed this was not easy to solve. One of the points to get across is that buildings are an important part of the public consciousness of museums, and there needs to be more support for buildings as well as collections.
- But it was also recognised that an alternative may be on line instead of on site access.

### ICT

- Infrastructure. It was recognised there were considerable infrastructure needs. It was recognised that local authority museums were possibly more behind than independent museums.
- It was suggested that it would be relatively easy to 'bolt on' to the public library network.

### General

- Structures. There was some discussion of whether a new museum, archive and library agency might be desirable, in order to achieve critical mass. There was limited enthusiasm for this, although certainly recognition that user expectations and technology platforms are arguments in favour of a museum, archive and library grouping.

## Workshop 4

Views of individual participants recorded:

### On roles and structures

- It is “pathetic” to hear extent of dissent about size, structure and shape of national body.
- The membership issue is interesting.
- *Some debate about level of interest in Executive and how open minded they are.*
- Complaint about “intellectual Hadrians wall” and the need to resolve this (i.e. to clarify the role of Resource) in the light of the devolution settlement.
- It was a mistake for Gordon Rintoul in his speech to leave the nationals out of the national agency.
- Nobody can deny we have a dispersed national collection but the question is how to manage this through a national agency - if the nationals are not a part of it.
- If money was pumped into the national agency it would have to take rational decisions across the different institutions.

*Some impatience about the role of Resource in Scotland.*

- Resource role is region-wide in relation to specific initiatives but there is confusion when it comes to funding from the DCMS.
- Would be helpful to have one source of contact besides SMC.
- Not enough equalities organisations are involved.
- Worried that a membership body will have small agendas and pleas for hardship which could compromise objectivity.
- There is an argument for a membership structure but handling funding doesn't cut easily with this.
- Not criticising SMC, but what have they been able to deliver? They've not been able to defend / protect the sector (which is understandable) and therefore, suggest something new is needed.
- Why not take advantage of not needing a regulator, as other public services have? A light touch is sufficient.
- If we go down route that is based on collections, this implies NMS is central and yet there is a strong feeling that they are not the right ones for this role.
- A national museums agency has to have developmental and pastoral / care role for smaller bodies; therefore, tends to move away from view that NMS should take this role.

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- There is a role for hubs / partnerships based on thematic areas to supplement the work of the national agency; both could work in a complementary way.
- Community Planning could have relevance to museums and the new structure (i.e. hubs operating under Community Planning with local authorities having a steering role).
- Registration and professional qualifications should remain UK-wide.
- People tend to neglect the role of the Regional Agencies in favour of hubs.
- The Regional Agencies aren't membership-based but they do have executive functions and the museum voice is fed into this.

## Recommendations

- New Strategic Agency:
  - to include NMS / NGS
  - to have additional funding
  - membership role not favoured as agency not considered compatible with a membership agency
  - to retain some UK structures (i.e. Registration, etc.).

## On funding

- Current funding structures are inadequate.
- There is an increased reliance on short-term funding to supplement core funding requirements.
- Lack of resources hamper attempts to work in partnership (case studies would highlight this problem).
- Some museums should amalgamate.
- Need solid research to prove the function of museums.
- Bridget McConnell in her speech suggested funding for a Best Value (BV) review of museums, is this required?
- The Executive Strategic Finance Review of the voluntary sector should clarify core costs (will question about whether BV is a good idea) – this review will impact more on museums than Best Value.
- There's been no mention of the critical shortage of curators, we're all concentrating on the glamorous aspects (i.e. learning and social inclusion).
- The same goes for documentation, there's no point in concentrating on flashy ICT

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work when basic documentation problems still exist.

- Capacity is an issue.

*[Agreement]*

- Core funding is crucial.
- Conservation of collections is primary and essential and hasn't been mentioned.
- Core funding is key problem and we need to say it.

*[Agreement]*

- If we don't have core funding don't have sustainability.
- National agency should press local authorities on the funding they put into museums. At present local authority (LA) contribution is essential but patchy.
- It is hard for councils to reach out to other organisations as they have to look after their own.
- Is the Statutory Requirement placed on LAs enough?
- Museums services are small players within LAs and they need to protect themselves / their budgets.
- Applying benchmarking (CHNTO did an interesting exercise) can disadvantage some as the process doesn't recognise different service priorities.

### **Recommendations**

- Core funding required.
- Local authorities to continue to have a critical role.

### **On wider agendas**

- Flabbergasted that museums are still having to debate their role; the education sector is much clearer on this front. Schools are concerned with the experience and not the issue of the national collections and the 'How Good is Your School' document is the bane of our lives but is a useful tool for measuring & clarifying roles and functions.
- The museum role is about individual right to access culture, but there is a turf war and this is a scandal.
- We're failing to do the job we should be doing for individuals.
- Museums are one of the main motors for the economy and tourism.
- Museums have an enormous role to explore contemporary social problems and to

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provide social cohesion.

- We have a multicultural history which belongs to everyone.
- The UK has a falling population and we will be more dependent on drawing in more people, therefore we have to provide an appropriate climate for this, museums have an important role to play in pursuing these principles.
- We should undertake all this work but without losing track of collections.
- We should be pitching more for outreach work, to expand minds and expose people to really top class exhibitions (i.e. from abroad) – this would bring museums into the centre of public thinking.
- The price of taking on additional/glamorous/sexy work can be to further neglect core collections.
- The only way to have impact is to talk the language and agenda of the Executive (i.e. PIs) the Audit is a good start.
- Should look at what are doing to fulfil the National Cultural Strategy (NCS).
- Executive produced 5 national priorities and we should demonstrate how we address these.
- Shouldn't hide away from collections and management, but can address these as well as learning and social inclusion.
- Questions time and space which exists in museums for visitors to relax / browse.
- Questions opportunities which exist to engage in culture in museums (i.e. scope given to study collections and talk to specialists).
- Should take the opportunity represented by the NCS.
- We do wonderful things but don't blow own trumpet.
- Museums are selling themselves short because the cash equivalent of volunteering work is not awarded to museums.
- Museums should emphasise how volunteering involves
  - citizenship
  - participation
  - social investment (i.e. promotes the democratic process).
- Museums do this work better than most.
- Douglas Ostler (HMI) offered to set up an Intermediary Committee between HMI and museums but no-one took advantage of this.

## **Recommendations**

- to continue to progress priorities in the National Cultural Strategy
- to generate an evidence base for activities and impacts
- to deliver the 5 key priorities for government outlined by the Scottish Executive.

## **On professional issues**

- Huge issue of capacity and access to resources in relation to ICT.
- Should have a Centre for Excellence in museums similar to clinical excellence centres – to establish best practice and take museum thinking forward.
- This has not been accepted by medical profession.
- It would be run by the agency.
- Resource is doing a feasibility study for a Centre for Collections Management and I can't see why it couldn't be UK-wide.
- The agency couldn't simultaneously tackle everything but could use the expertise across the country to have smaller groups to tackle particular issues.
- 'Renaissance in the Regions' is looking to set up subject-specific networks.
- Research is very important as museum professionals have unique expertise.
- Are we deluding ourselves that research isn't being done and that there was a golden age of research?
- The emphasis on service delivery has led to more exhibitions and therefore more research but at great personal cost.
- This research isn't adding value to others as there isn't the time to disseminate it.
- It is a big issue that we have stopped collecting.
- Collecting is very very patchy and what is happening is funded by specific schemes.
- There are very few applications for grants to collect from museums.
- The need for a Collection Endowment Fund is increasingly pressing.
- The SAC has set up a fund for collecting contemporary works.

## **Recommendations**

- to create a Centre for Museum Excellence
- to promote skills and capacity building
- to establish (contemporary) collecting resources
- to promote research and networks
- ICT.

## Workshop 5

### On funding / roles and structures

- The organisation that funds us does not prioritise the museum as part of its wider activities - this means that the funding is likely to reduce. This is also a barrier to Registration. The museum has decided that the only way to address its problems of staffing and lack of resources is to concentrate on volunteer recruitment.
- Is there an inconsistency of message in trying to bring museums with such overwhelming differences (local authority/independent) together?
- There are differences between the local authority and independent museum sectors in terms of the projects with which they were involved. Independent museums did not aspire to the same standards as local authority museums and that frequently independent museums seemed unable to deliver in areas such as education and access. This indicates that there are real differences in need between the two types of museum.
- Agree in part with this, but independent museum sector has often led the way for museums in creative thinking. Independent museums often have, for example, good interpretation and inclusion policies – springing from a good community base. Independent museums have a lot to offer the sector.

*The speaker cited the example of her museum, which does have an Education Officer, where the Local Authority museums service does not.*

- It is not good enough to look at partnerships within the sector – what is required is formation of partnerships with other sectors, including education and social work.
- Surprised by the statistics on numbers of Education Officers – there should be more.
- Education projects frequently do happen in museums without education officers. For example, we run a very successful schools programme without any dedicated education staff.
- Because the independent sector is so audience-focused it is able to demonstrate good business practice, such as accountability, information management and informed decision-making.
- The language the speakers and participants are using indicates that there is a desire to bring the sector together. There are common themes that should be exploited – conservation, working together and working in a free market economy. Try not to do too much. Agree the priorities and concentrate on them.

### On partnerships

- In the case of local authority museums services, was the position and status held by museums services within the authority a reason for the lack of strong partnerships? It had appeared, from the discussions, that there was no common strategy across Scotland. This issue hadn't been addressed in the National Audit. Learning and education shouldn't be confused. There was a clear learning role for museums.

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- Low profile within the authority was certainly the situation when the museums service is part of a larger department, such as the Education and Leisure Services Division. In these cases museums are small players and have great problems fitting in and finding a role.
- A possible solution might be to work in clusters – on a larger scale than at present – which would result in more effective services. Groups should be formed - there is strength in numbers - and museums services should concentrate on finding allies within the sector.
- Agree that it is important to show how museums fit in with the wider aims of the local authority.
- Agree with these sentiments, but forming partnerships is hard work and requires increased resources.
- Partnerships require a common language and plenty of time and professional space to develop. He stressed that partnerships were a long-term solution that require time and effort. He also noted that the letter from the minister only gave the example of National Museum and non-national museum partnerships – was this too narrow? How did this fit with the ideas of community education?

### **On role of the nationals**

- What in fact do non-national museums want from the nationals?
- Advice?
- Wondered if this might not be considered by many museums to be a bit patronising?
- Others noted that advice could be in the areas of collections expertise, that the advisory role should be more formalised and that there should be dedicated staff to carry out this role.
- Non-national museums would continue to need an advisory resource in several areas, including collections care.

### **On hubs**

- The hub model is a sensible approach, but investment would be required. Rather than a single “hub”, perhaps a regional approach should be considered. On the whole a “hub” or “regions” model would result in a stronger voice for museums in Scotland.
- HLF could not be a possible source of revenue funding for this model. Also the museums sector would need to come up with such a body; that it was not a role that HLF could take on.

### **On SMC**

- SMC should continue to be the body advocating on behalf of small museums.

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- While SMC undoubtedly has the best knowledge of the museums sector in Scotland, this does not make them the best lobbying body. A new strategic museums body would be better. Real concerns about how it should be set up, who would be on it etc.
- Any new body would require the full support and confidence of the sector – that there are clear role and governance issues.
- Setting up an entirely “new” body might not be the way to go. Any new body would have such a weight of expectation on its shoulders that it would struggle to succeed. The SAC has come in for a great deal of criticism, for example.
- The SAC has a far higher profile than SMC.
- This might be simply because SMC has not been perceived as having a key role in lobbying for the sector. Might this be the problem?
- The high profile of SAC is due to its funding role – as administrator of government funding it is able to offer revenue funding to organisations. It also has a far larger budget than SMC.
- The SAC profile is high because it administers arts lottery funding.
- The evidence of recent months suggests that the Scottish Executive is averse to the idea of setting up new quangos – setting up a new strategic museums body might therefore be an unlikely next step for the Executive to take.

### **On lobbying and advocacy for the sector**

- There are many good projects and a lot of good examples of work that museums are doing all over Scotland. Could we not use these examples as a guide to others, with the suggestion that other organisations could “clone” examples of good practice?
- Agreed that it was important to use examples of good practice as a guide but didn't like the suggestion of “cloning”. Who should coordinate such work?
- It is difficult to access funding for projects that are not “innovative”, but simply good practice. This was a funding issue that had to be addressed.
- A plea for risk taking in supporting projects.
- For the sector to move on, things need to change. There is a dichotomy: on the one hand museums are expected to be innovative and changing, on the other they are expected to remain the same in their care and management of collections.
- Why don't organisations work together on a “national” basis; for example, why couldn't museums be more involved in national celebrations and events?
- Probably the greatest barrier to participation and involvement in national events was the extremely long lead-in time that is required - this would be unlikely to fit into the planning round of many museums.

### Summary of discussion

- There was a need for a greater “voice” for independent museums (at local authority and national levels). There was also a need for increased understanding and respect for what they have done and can do, in the areas of creativity, business strength and community involvement.
- The low status of museums services within local authorities is a barrier to forming partnerships and needs to be addressed.
- Education is more than schools; there needs to be a shared vision of learning and the sectors need common themes and language.
- Partnerships should be seen as a goal – they are a long-term solution requiring investment (all forms).
- The role of the nationals
  - there should be a more formalised “contract” for advice and guidance
  - the nationals should provide advice in the area of collections expertise
  - there should be dedicated staff to provide this service.
- Issues surrounding the role of any new museum body for Scotland:
  - governance and representation?
  - how could it meet the high and varied expectations of the sector?
  - who should lead it?
  - it should aim to promote and share excellence.

## Workshop 6

### Roles and structures

Why have we got so many different bodies? Should we not have one agency like the New Zealand model?

Director of NMS dismissed it.

I'd be concerned about that model – what is the present structure within the **Scottish Executive** and what is its capacity? They seem unable to respond quickly.

What about galleries? They're not really mentioned in the National Audit and what about **NGS**? Fine art is a big part of it.

**NGS** is a much smaller body, budgetary wise etc. Fine art collections are not as widely reflected across the museum sector as the rest of collections.

Look at what **Resource** has done – are we rejecting Resource's model and if so why? Archives are big items in collections and the archive departments in Scotland in some cases are doing similar work in Scotland.

Visitors don't care if treasures are held in local authority, national or independent museums, they care if the collections are accessible. Archives are a big collection so there are cross-domain issues that need to be on the agenda. What about **Resource**? What about the call for a new body to represent museums and archives etc.

**Resource** is absent in Scotland. SMC is in point of origin no more than one of the AMC's – a historical problem. England and Wales have Resource to advise Government, Scotland has not yet taken that decision. People are talking about a strategic body, people are deciding if we should have a Scottish Resource when we don't know if Resource is what we need!

But **Resource** covers Scotland does it not?

A **Resource** representative was in Scotland and looked in envy at **SMC**'s membership. The sector is so disenchanted with Resource as they are unclear as to what Resource is there for. They looked upon the SMC role as having advantages as SMC got involved in representing the sector on e.g. the SCF. Do people feel strongly that no matter what that this representation should go or are there advantages in this?

Being a membership body is a real strength, funding is a red herring, it would be a shame to lose this strength.

**SMC** in the last 4 years has made a huge shift in strategic direction by shedding a lot of member closeness that it did have so perhaps you can't have both. The **Museums Association** in England and Wales has a very strong membership body and a relationship with Westminster but they never had such a relationship in Scotland. SMC is a product of circumstance as it was filling in a vacuum.

We shouldn't automatically assume a membership body cannot make hard decisions.

At least with one model (from Bridget McConnell's presentation) **independents** were excluded and are at huge risk. Bridget's presentation seemed to have a separate agenda to get Glasgow's museums into the act, ignoring the independent sector and the

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contribution they make.

For the **local authorities** and **nationals**, partnerships must not be bits of imperialism culture. You can't ignore local history, local expertise.

Independent museums see **Local Authorities** as a means of support, the Scottish Executive mentions funding for the Local Authorities and it's never mentioned that these funds are often targeted and independents don't realise that. Local Authorities have money coming in for certain agendas, which must be a problem for independents.

There is disparity as some **Local Authorities** are open and some are not – it's not a level playing field.

The **national museums** have strong curatorial expertise but there is a fundamental difference in the type of support that they are offering e.g. telephone advice and providing direct developmental support. We must not confuse the types of support that the sector needs.

We need joined up thinking. It was always in **SMC's** remit to make links with other organisations to find out how they can help museums but now Scottish Executive are looking at a strategic body. It doesn't matter who runs it, what it's called etc as long as it's properly resourced and helps museums help themselves.

It would be better to look at existing organisations and look at their strengths and weaknesses – build on the strengths and eliminate the weaknesses – if that's **SMC** then fine. The National Audit took 2 years, consideration will take longer. We don't want upheaval of the museums world. Let's build on the strengths and get things moving quickly.

I'm worried that the audit looks at the weak dying and the strong getting stronger, it would be a tragedy if we lost lots of museums and ended up with a bunch of clones.

We haven't decided if we want **SMC** if another body but we require someone who will take this up, SMC have always been nice and helpful but they along with all other organisations SE etc are slow verging on incompetent.

### Funding

There is an attraction in defining Local Authority support. What are the various patterns of funding that need reformed? Where are the inequities and should the nationals be given money to deliver services? Should the Scottish Executive be following collections or pushing money into social inclusion etc?

There is scope for different ways – just now we have small amounts of money and the tail wagging the dog. An approach may be to have a certain specialist service provided by the nationals e.g. conservation but responsibility would have to be taken on for training in many areas e.g. delivery of education programmes.

There may be advantages of the nationals providing volunteers with skills that can help them. How many people have managed to extract some help from the nationals? (On a show of hands, under half were raised.)

How many independents get round to worrying about conservation? I don't think that giving money to the nationals for conservation is the answer.

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It's arranging deckchairs.

What should be at the core when it comes to funding museums to be sustainable?  
Education? Collections?

Registration has defined core.

Education is hardly in registration. The sector has to identify what it needs for core funding. For example with regards HLF – where do we stand with additionality?

In independents there are more problems. Our trust runs a fully registered museum with no staff in a B listed building so it receives no grants from Historic Scotland. Both myself and my colleague paid our own costs to attend today and there is no one coming through to take over from us. We make a modest surplus of £2k a year but our building needed re-roofed at £3.5k. We survive as long as we don't do anything too crucial, our total income is £12-£13k a year and expenses £10-£11k. Our insurance costs are 30% of our total income. We do not get a penny in cash or in kind from our Local Authority so we are hanging on by the skin of our teeth. There is no recognition from the Scottish Executive or the museum sector about the important contribution people like us make. I can identify with Stewart Brymer of Dundee Industrial Heritage.

The irony in Dundee is that the city has appropriated Discovery for it's own identity.

But they don't own it. There is a degree of superficiality in e.g. Registration as we are skimming the surface. The nationals can afford to allocate lots of people to ensure standards - we have one person. We are due a visit to check registration – I have no resources to check compliance.

There is insufficient funding, full stop. Collections are extremely important but for independents it's often the public front which is just as important or you can't survive. There's no funding for this anymore.

Whereas in my experience funding has almost always been for access and front end rather than conservation.

We go round in circles, chasing fund for access, ICT etc, but you keep losing direction as you follow the targeted money.

I've not got the energy to do that – there is a lack of understanding about museums and what they do. Not all museums deserve to survive. There was cross-party support on emergency funding of the type given to the industrials. The minister for this sector was badly prepared and delivered a pre-written speech full of jargon containing nothing.

Not all independents deserve to survive but there's a problem with lack of standards / criteria.

Doubts expressed about Registration.

There is lots of funding coming from the Scottish Executive which the museum sector can't target. Museums have to link into it but we cannot as we are not seen as a sector to be involved.

My museum has had no difficulty in getting capital costs but we don't get support for revenue costs, it's the same with ICT where running it is the problem.

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There's no forward thinking, I have sympathy for HLF, how do you differentiate?

Consequent running costs the problem when you create something.

HLF should and will say where's the sustainability.

Getting capital is not the problem, revenue is.

HLF's basic priority is conservation and access, one big problem is funding capital projects and then they can't be sustained. HLF is addressing this at the moment. Infrastructure, such as for access, policies, training etc is needed to show sustainability. Revenue funding is extremely difficult to come by, during its consultation for new strategic change, HLF asked if it should give revenue funding and the answer was no. HLF will try to fund projects to enable organisations to deliver add-on services if they have the necessary infrastructure in place, but such projects would have a limited time.

It's easy to convince yourself that we all have excellent infrastructures but the infrastructures are worn to shreds, project funding by infrastructure means we struggle.

It serves no real purpose to give us a computer when you need to provide ongoing training and support. For independents, VAT exemption should be extended beyond the nationals as this would make a big difference. The Scottish Executive could help with this.

### **Contributing to wider agendas**

If we had the right structure, right funding, support etc we have to give something back. We do have an important role in contributing to wider agendas. Part of our problem is the lack of joined-up thinking so we have to chase the support to focus the contribution. How can we best focus our attention and demonstrate the value we already give?

More promotion for the Scottish Executive and SMC on what heritage can actually do. People working in social work, health, etc all know how arts can help them but in heritage it's very rare. How can we spread the word about what heritage can do for personal development, community involvement etc?

A project for recovered drug users in a museum has been successful, but getting funding took a year. SMC gave us money and now results are coming in people are saying that they didn't know what museums could do.

The Museums Association reports successful projects that museums do.

- In Scotland?

Yes, it does seem to be noticed that it's going on.

Beyond the pages of the Museums Journal there's not much change. This could come at a cost of other things – why are we doing this when we have collections not documented and falling apart etc. How can the sector tap into sources of support whilst maintaining its own voice? Is it dependent on the Scottish Executive giving it a clear role?

Social education highlights the fact that museums are 'luxury items', we don't have the

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importance of social work etc so it's easy for the Scottish Executive to give money to them.

Hypothecating – would it be a good to get a percentage of money for cultural provision within budgets?

My Local Authority decided not to go for Cultural Championship money so has cut off another avenue of funding.

Cultural Co-ordinators won't have the knowledge of museums.

SMC has put a sum of money aside for Cultural Co-ordinators to work specifically with museums.

## Workshop 7

### Roles of Scottish Executive and 'new' agency

- Would like to get the Scottish Executive more involved. They rely on SMC as a vehicle.
- They are not sufficiently directive.
- The consultation is about change and they have to get involved in change - it would be inappropriate to leave it to SMC.
- There should be an all-embracing museums organisation but it must include the nationals. We should look to SAC and Sport Scotland as examples. (General agreement.)
- The voice of the Local Authorities was not heard in this morning in the sessions – you can't really count Glasgow.
- We are a fractured sector and until there is a single agency we will remain so. But I hope we aren't considering a national museums service.
- Perhaps a Resource?
- Not in Scotland because of the poor fit with libraries and archives. Here we have stronger links with the built heritage, and more opportunities for partnership working with regards buildings.

### Role of the nationals

- Nationals should have a new remit, but cannot stay outside the remit of the strategic body. It would be wholly inadequate for them to be on the board of the new agency. The agency would not be strategic otherwise. (General agreement.) You can't have a situation where Glasgow are in and the nationals not. What about parity, isn't that supposed to be important?
- The distributed national collection means that funding cannot just go to the nationals.
- The argument about parity of funding is not between Glasgow and the Nationals but between the nationals and other Local Authorities. We cannot move forward until this matter is addressed.
- We need to avoid duplication [of effort and expertise].
- NGS want to do more loaning exhibitions but it would need to be funded.

### Role of Local Authorities

- It was stated earlier [by Bridget McConnell] that the Local Authorities are never going to surrender control – any comments?
- If left just to the Local Authorities then partnerships and regionalisation cannot

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happen. Not because the sector does not want it but because getting them to work together at the highest level is impossible.

- So what would make this happen? Defining adequacy?
- This is impossible in the context of the current GAE. Local outcome agreements would help though. There should be agreements with the Scottish Executive, but not strict service level agreements. In England core funding is linked to local outcome agreements. (General agreement.)

### **Role of SMC**

- Do people agree that you can't have a strategic agency that is also a membership organisation?
- It is not impossible but it is more difficult. It seems that membership is the argument for a 'new' agency. But the Scottish Parliament itself is an example of a strategic membership body.
- What about the role of Resource?
- What would be lost from SMC's role is exactly what is being bemoaned down south as lost from Resource. SMC's policy and advocacy role is very good but there needs to be a more strategic role. There is a question though of what a development agency would really do. It might work better here if the remit included built heritage. There would be no point in following the Resource model.
- The membership question is a red herring. What is needed is a strategic voice. (General agreement.)
- Might a reduced SMC fulfil the role the ATBs do for VisitScotland?
- What is the role of Resource in Scotland? It seems all they are committed to is the Registration Scheme.

### **Funding, funding partnerships and contribution to wider agendas**

- Stewart Brymer this morning was the only one who asked for money and he got the loudest applause. Doesn't that say something?
- The real threat is museums failing to deliver under the wider social agenda.
- Partnering organisations see part of their role as informing funders of how to deliver in this way. They need assistance to do this. Sustainability depends on advocacy.
- The National Audit was valuable in that it showed up the costs of running a museum service before it can deliver all the other things. Is this what needs to be sustained?
- National collections need core funding to manage them. Core funds are needed to address the distributed nature of collections.
- The government are not going to fund something so invisible. We need to be

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smarter when applying for funding.

- In universities it is common practice to add in a percentage for managing the overheads. Maybe we should tackle HLF to accept this approach?
- We haven't generally succeeded in getting the message of the cost of managing collections across so far, although now the National Audit has made this point. More advocacy is needed.
- SCVO are an example of an organisation that knows about the benefits and opportunities of partnerships. Also, English environment conservation organisations have managed to secure funding by putting people at the heart of their activities and as a result are now getting noticed.
- Bridget McConnell earlier asked for £7m – a Barnet formula translation perhaps of Renaissance in the Region's £70m?
- Scottish Executive must fund for sustainability. There is danger in one-off projects.
- There are capacity issues in applying for project funding – small organisations are penalised.
- A Strategic Change Fund budget ten times greater than now and permanent would really be strategic.
- The sector needs to change and to be prepared to modernise. That is the real challenge. There is real potential for other local authorities working with Glasgow, for example.
- The SCF was top-sliced for sustainability funding for the 3 independents. Do we want strategic funding and/or sustainability funding?
- It isn't just three of the industrials that need sustainability funding.
- In Local Authority museums, we don't get the opportunity to be strategic or to set up partnerships. We can't just drop the core activities.
- What about the lack of capacity in museums for creating partnerships?
- There are some obvious partners. We generally know them and work with them already.
- A good example is a particular Local Authority working with Youthlink which came about as the result of chasing consortium funding. Partnerships are a good way of getting money and they can work.
- Another example is a Local Authority where most activity in the museum service is led by SAC funding. They have the money so our activities follow it.
- There is an issue of having the time to do all this while at the same time keeping all the rest going.
- Strategic bodies are well placed to stimulate creative partnerships.

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- SAC's funding can be the tail wagging the dog. We need the sleight of hand routes to achieve core goals like collections care so we don't get carried away following funding.
- It can be hard to work in partnership even within your own authority.
- Where the Arts lobby has succeeded is they have been able to lead. In museums it has been left to people on the ground to take the lead. This is a role for a strategic agency.
- This identifies two key training requirements of the strategic agency: partnership working and contract culture.
- The problem is choosing which partners. There are real capacity issues for museums to do this.
- Yes, it is a case of having no time.
- For museums it is not possible to just drop the role of being a custodian of heritage to just partner.
- Capacity is so low that there is no capacity to generate capacity. (General agreement.)
- Yes, when ever my organisation arranges an event it gets fully booked straight away but we haven't the capacity to do more. (General agreement.)
- Can we just agree what we mean by building capacity? We generally agreed it isn't just posts, it is getting organised, being smarter, it is about making resources go further, being more efficient and effective.
- In museums we lose out because people feel stuck between choices.
- What about the community planning agenda?
- There is money available for community planning but you have to be smart to take the opportunities.
- It is sad to see lots of museum staff doing great things that meet the purpose of a museum but it all goes unrecognised.

### **Professional issues**

- Who has the right to collect into the distributed national collection if someone else pays? Should such collecting be controlled? General agreement – yes it must.
- We certainly need to address the legacy of unilateral collecting which is why we need a national framework. Some collections are not sustainable.
- There is duplicate collecting in the nationals too. This must also be controlled.
- Collecting is a key driver so we must control it.

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- But we must not lose local differences at the same time.
- If there was one source of money – which will only be achieved through a national strategic body – we could get a handle on this and take the necessary overview.
- We need to get a handle on new museums strategically. (General agreement.) Otherwise some museums will fail, not strategically.

### **PIs and standards**

- Registration is not working efficiently as a standards driver.
- Should we look at using local outcome agreements then?
- No. These only work broadly. We need a mix of formal indicators and informal standards. Registration does not currently achieve this balance.
- Should the National Audit standards be expanded then?
- Yes –you can't report without measurable standards. Registration is just rubber-stamping.
- Yes, in Local Authorities notice is taken to improve when the service is seen to be below basic.
- We need one set of standards for all, though, including the nationals.

### **Summing up**

#### Key issues

- need for a strategic agency
- potential for local outcome agreements in PIs
- national collecting policy
- sufficient funding for the strategic agency must at least match SAC's.

#### Issues it was difficult to discuss

- sustainability
- partnerships.

## Workshop 8

Main discussion points.

### Funding

- Need for increased core funding in order to undertake basic role of museum; in most cases the amount available has been reducing over the past 5-10 years. (In 1986 Miles recommended that setting up a new museum required a minimum of £100K and 2 curators – now many services further behind than this).
- Should funding be based on national significance –or relevance to government's agenda? Top 20 from National Audit could not fully fulfil; pursuit of excellence is exclusive, museums should be about inclusion; local identity is also important.
- Local authorities need incentives to fund independent museums.
- Competition from other bodies for scarce resources – requires a clearer definition of what improvements additional funding could make.
- SCF – should be extended and expanded.

### Roles and structures

- New national umbrella body? – no takes time, creates problems and uncertainties.
- Scottish Museums and Galleries Commission – is there a better way?
- SMC – it is democratic, socially inclusive – got us to this Conference; a membership body can make strategic decisions and also difficult decisions.
- Scottish Museums, Libraries and Archives Council – are we ready for this?

### Professional issues

- Knowledge management – museums are a unique source of knowledge which is underused by the community; it is vital to get this recognised by the public.
- Documentation backlog – it's not enough to say there is a backlog; there is a need to educate the wider public why funding for this area is essential; and related to this – need to educate the public about the relevance of museums.
- Lack of curatorial capacity - ? outreach from nationals.
- ICT – concern about following model of peoples network – although libraries got initial funding for equipment; no funding for additional staff resources, maintenance costs or renewal of equipment.

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### **Wider agenda**

- Social Inclusion – need to increase audiences; reach new sections of the community; access is not just about wheelchair access – intellectual access through improving labels which can be done without major extra expenditure (+ plug for publication); marketing should be directed at what public (families) would be interested in.
- Volunteers – there can be added social value for the individual as well as the value to the museum.
- Cultural values – museums need to position themselves higher within tourism sector – not just as a loss leader.
- Economic values are more important to SE than cultural values – need to play on this.
- Education – educational potential of museums is undervalued; difficulty of transport costs.

### **Suggested mechanisms**

- New body – not in agreement to set a completely new body rather should build on the strengths of SMC; some of the remit of Resource should be passed to SMC and a new Policy unit within SMC should be set up; new body should include NMS and NGS.
- SMC should be given the remit and cash to set up regional/subject partnerships also to include nationals.
- Need to develop cross-sectoral partnerships, particularly with education.
- Need to establish a National Documentation Strategy - also involve Resource?
- Need to develop a research project to define economic value – as extension to Audit.

## **Workshop 9**

Participants expressed views on the following issues.

### **On the role of SMC or other centralised agency, and taking a regional approach**

Not enamoured of the idea of a central body, whether it was NMS or SMC.

The trouble with such agencies is that money goes into running them not to the organisations it mediates for, for example, sportscotland.

Need to agree first on the structure and roles of agencies. Otherwise we simply have the status quo. SMC needs to change from a membership body. Scottish Executive needs to advise on all of this. It will be difficult to achieve consensus, as there is much division.

There is an assumption too that only one agency is needed. Things could also be broken up in other areas.

Centralisation was a better choice. Regional partnerships and cross-cultural bodies would be a better solution.

There is too great a disparity in the sector – look at the differences between Dundee Industrial Heritage Trust and the NMS.

Independents do have many problems, but funding via the NMS would not be right.

It would be helpful if the Scottish Executive could be more explicit about what can be done. There should be a new agency, but not the SMC.

Is it necessary for us to have a centralised agency? Thus, for organisations like DIHT, should the funding come from a central source or a local one?

Regional councils do not cross boundaries, so partnerships are difficult. For example, at Wanlockhead two nearby councils do not work together when it comes to organising trips by schools. There is little or no dialogue between them.

Regional authorities perhaps need to be compelled to work together.

In turn, the local authorities are only able to assist independent museums after their own museums, and in some cases, this can mean no support is available.

There is no compulsion on local authorities to fund museums at all; they are not obliged to do so. It is simply up to the individual councils what they put into museums, and some do not make any provision for museums.

A new agency might better assist the distribution of funds to museums.

The current structure is very difficult to analyse.

Are regional partnerships seen as a stepping-stone? What happens to the national and independent museums?

A regional model driven by a central plan? Not sure what is best.

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Partnerships mean different things – they can be difficult at the most local level!

Requirements are needed before implementing change. Guidance and rules are needed. People need to be told what has to be done and how. The National Cultural Strategy has to tie in with other plans.

Compulsion is necessary to make sure that things do get done. Things getting done can be down to pot luck, or ad hoc, in the councils.

Regional partnerships would not solve everything. Aspiration and leadership are also required. What are the roles of the national bodies in all of this?

Leadership is needed in museums, but the big museums are paradigms that do not reflect the reality for a lot of museums. Independents might not fit into the regional partnership model. A network of partnerships might be a better idea.

We need to follow models that are workable and manageable.

Strong leadership is certainly required. They certainly exist, and are recognised as such, but they do not see it themselves.

Regionalisation is a good idea.

A national body of some sort is needed as a lot would be lost with the demise of SMC.

SMC has driven things to the point we are at now, but what would people like to see happen next?

Extra resources are required to make changes. Everything is stretched, however, and there is little room for manoeuvre.

We should make sure that the Scottish Executive does not drive the agenda. For example, with Renaissance in the Regions the museums sector drove the desire for change.

[There was broad agreement of this point].

Renaissance in the Regions did not deliver as much as was asked for. Further analysis needs to be drawn from the National Audit for our purposes.

### **On funding partnerships**

What about wider funding? Should museums receive money from the areas of tourism and education? How radical can change in regional policy be?

It is very difficult to work across the different sectors of interest. Stakeholders can be very territorial.

Cultural partnerships should be established first, then regional ones. Then applications for funds can be made. This type of working is not successful when planned centrally. (Example of Aberdeen cited).

Another example of this was an application for the SCF which involved a variety of partners and proved very difficult.

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This showed the difficulties of partnerships. The regional idea is a good one but many different questions would arise in practice. This could be a lengthy process, and there is a need for quick action.

Is there a role for SMC in any such partnerships?

Regional partnerships need to have a wider remit than just museums.

There is a role for SMC to advocate cross-cultural regional partnerships.

This would be wasteful. It is unlikely that the national organisations will take the lead on this; the process should start from the bottom, with the regions, and work upwards.

There is little time and resources to do this.

And that is where resources should come in.

Hypothecation should probably be used, although I am against it in principle.

What would be the remit for the regional partnerships?

The emphasis would be different from region to region.

A new structure would give museums a better chance.

Culture still requires a national structure and roles. Otherwise, it can be unprotected and fall into the hands of 'philistines'. There is a need for national protection of what fills into gaps left by a restructure.

So there is a role for a new agency. It could administer a fund like an enhanced Strategic Change Fund, and act as a guardian of national holdings.

So the new agency would have increased responsibility?

It would certainly have a role in national distribution and acquisition. However, it would be unrealistic to expect a national body to do everything.

All of this would make an interesting structure.

### **On the role of the nationals**

Scotland has been short-changed by the historic role of its national museums. It is not national to Scotland. Its role needs to be questioned, perhaps by looking at the way things are organised in, say, the Scandinavian countries or Holland. Some research on the various options have been carried out by SMC and others. Perhaps a longer debate is required?

We know how things work in these and other countries, but we have never opted to follow the two main options offered by these models. How could we achieve consensus on regional and national models? How will the Scottish Executive change things? Should we not build on what we have anyway – build on our own experience and know-how? At this stage, exponential change is not appropriate.

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The National Galleries of Scotland does not need to do more, but what it needs to establish first are dialogues. A Strategy Review is being carried at the NGS, and this being looked at. The National Audit did not carry out enough qualitative research, there are more complex problems than those raised by the National Audit.

There is a need for a discussion about quality.

The point about the National Museums was a good one. It was also a good idea to see a 'beefed-up' SCF. It would be good to see SMC members and the nationals working together.

It should be remembered too that the national museums are essentially a depository for objects from all over Scotland. The sites, where history happened, are important.

The national museums are a very important gateway to the rest of Scotland. They are the first point of contact with Scottish culture and history for many people.

But they do not provide any pointers to the regions, to other museums, or to collections outside their own. With regards to a restructured model, Scotland is very different to Scandinavia and others. One of our strengths is the uniqueness of our history and more should be made of it – regionally and locally.

The Mining Museum at Wanlockhead provides pointers to other museums.

SMC has good staff, and an effective board. It is essential that any new organisation responsible for the sector should be like this – lean and effective.

What we do not need is another regional tier of administration. If partnerships are set up, they need to be akin to regional Enterprise Agencies and draw their expertise from the constituent members. Regional partnerships are difficult to define.

### **On the process of change**

We have reached no agreement on what an agency should be or do. Perhaps the idea of one is part of SMC's agenda?

The challenge here is something non-divisive and achievable.

Change is very important, we need a stepping-stone to change.

Change has been talked about for some years.

*[There was wide agreement in the group on this point].*

This is the first real attempt at change since devolution.

Does Resource have a role in Scotland?

## Action Plan for Scotland's Museums

### Summary

- Scotland, with unique heritage, history and cultural resources, needs a unique solution.
  
- Regional cultural partnerships, across museums, culture, heritage and arts – integrated with community plans, education etc. Needs to be
  - non-bureaucratic
  - driven by local needs
  - flexible
  - framed by long-term strategy.
  
- National integration
  - standards
  - resources
  - redefine what is expected of nationals
  - funding for work between nationals and non-nationals
  - take advantage of change offered by devolution.
  
- Outstanding questions
  - What about the role of Resource in Scotland?
  - Should a new national body be an agency or a council?