



Falkirk Consultation Meeting

22 October 2002

Professional Issues

- **Documentation backlog.** There was seen to be a need for a central pool of expertise and an agreed methodology, as there was currently too much choice.
- **Buildings.** There was seen to be too many museums in buildings that have high maintenance costs and/or difficulty of conforming to DDA. There was real concern that some spaces would have to close, as they are unable to meet statutory requirements.
- **Building capacity.** Suggestions included increasing training, in skills, management but, more importantly, leadership. This was because of the perceived need to have more people higher up the Local Authority hierarchy with museum knowledge. Another identified need was in the area of specialist curatorial skills. A suggestion was that this could perhaps be met through additional resources within NMS.
- **Raising the profile of museums.** Participants identified a need to improve the public image of museums and the need for a cultural shift in public perception of how museums (and the staff working in them) are viewed. Also need to raise profile in SIPs and education; perception of museums as dull but worthy – need champions like David Beckham not Bamber Gascoigne
- **ICT.** This was seen to be an issue that went beyond documentation – there was a perceived need to develop web sites which are not just about access to collections, but also reflect the spirit of the museum. An issue for Local Authority museums was the problem of having to respond to “top down” demands.
- **Low pay.** Participants raised this as an issue, noting that it was difficult to attract high quality staff on the salaries offered by museums.
- **Better PIs.** Participants wanted improved PIs museums, not just ones based on visitor figures.

Contributing to wider agendas

- **Volunteering.** Participants felt that museums rely too much on volunteers and that there were issues surrounding management of volunteers.
- **Education.** There was seen to be a need to raise awareness within local education centres. Education was described as a core function of museums. Issues included a requirement for more education staff and assistance with transport for education visits to museums, especially in remote areas.
- **Developing audiences.** Issues raised included the need to share information and for common research.
- **Outreach into the community.** This was seen to be something that could be tackled through temporary exhibitions.

Funding

- **Free admissions.** This was seen as a way to raise visitor numbers.
- **Central core funding.** An increase in core funding for museums was needed, as it was seen to be important to move away from dependency on grants, admissions and special events. Participants wondered if museums could we learn from other fields (e.g. environment). A real issue for museums was the reduced ability of staff to carry out core functions, as they needed to constantly develop new projects in order to attract funding.
- **How to access funds.** Given the contribution that museums make to wider agendas, it was seen to be important that there should be access to funding from other departments within the Scottish Executive, such as Education.

Roles and structures

- **Structure of SMC.** Participants felt that SMC should not become part of the Scottish Executive. Nor was there any desire to see SMC as a department of NMS or merging with SAC.
- **Membership.** SMC should remain a membership organisation, as this was seen as a way of ensuring accountability; SMC should be more strategic and should lobby on behalf of the sector.
- **Hubs.** Participants were not in favour; museum at centre of hub might prosper but there was real concern that the spokes might wither and die.
- **The role of NMS.** Participants felt that, if properly resourced, NMS could provide specialist curatorial skills but perhaps other skills (for example marketing) could be provided by SMC.