



## Towards a National Framework

### The Consultation – process and outcomes

#### 1. Background

SMC is the representative body for Scotland's 342 local museums and galleries, including all local authority, university and regimental museums. SMC combines strategic leadership for the sector, developing national policies and initiatives with practical advice and services for members. SMC's mission is *to achieve the best possible museum and gallery provision in Scotland for the public benefit.*

The Scottish Executive has described SMC as its main 'advisor on non-national museum issues'. SMC fulfils many of the functions of a non-departmental public body in terms of strategic development, policy, research, and support services to the sector, such as training, information and advice. SMC administers the UK-wide Registration standards scheme for museums in Scotland on behalf of Resource. SMC is the primary channel for central government funding to the non-national museums in Scotland.

Our strong membership focus makes consultation with others not just desirable, but an essential part of the work we do. This response is therefore the culmination of a process of consultation with the membership and other partners, our experience gained through working with museums and knowledge gained through the findings of the National Audit of Scotland's Museums and Galleries.

Our consultation programme from July 2002 onwards involved

- consultation meetings in Aviemore, Dumfries, Falkirk and Perth
- a major conference in Edinburgh, held jointly with the Scottish Executive on 4 November 2002
- meetings where a presentation on the consultation was made by a member of SMC staff, followed by a formal discussion of issues
- informal meetings between SMC senior staff and interested bodies
- information updates via the SMC website.

We also contributed to and commented on the consultation carried out by the Education, Culture and Sport Committee of the Scottish Parliament (the full report is available on the Scottish Parliament website at [http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/official\\_report/cttee/educ-02/edp02-30.pdf](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/official_report/cttee/educ-02/edp02-30.pdf))

## **1.1 Building on themes**

The consultation was built around the themes described as issues for the sector by the Minister in his letter of 6 September: roles and structures, professional issues, the wider agenda and funding. For some, this was the first experience of being involved in such a significant consultation process. Anticipating this, SMC prepared a briefing note for members, which is included in this appendix.

In a consultation of this kind, views will often be contradictory, but we felt it important to represent the breadth of opinion and richness of ideas. In fact, there was remarkable consensus on many of the key issues, and this has greatly informed SMC's response. The views expressed in the reports from the meetings are those of individuals and organisations, not necessarily of SMC. As far as possible we have taken out the names of individual organisations to protect anonymity.

## **2. The consultation meetings**

Formal consultation with the membership was programmed into four meetings, three of which were dedicated to the consultation process. The key issues identified by the Minister in his letter of 6 September were used as the basis for the consultation.

We expected that the ideas coming out of the consultation meetings would grow and develop as the issues became more familiar to members and partners. This expectation was confirmed and as the consultation process continued the debate matured, with growth of ideas and crystallisation of key issues. However, each consultation meeting also resulted in new ideas and each had a particular focus too, reflecting the concerns of those members attending.

Discussions from the meetings are noted in this appendix.

### **2.1 Aviemore**

The SMC AGM was used as one of the first opportunities to consult with the membership on the issues facing museums. This meeting benefited from the input of Aidan Walsh, a museum consultant, who introduced delegates to the consultation process and guided them towards areas of discussion. Delegates were divided into four workshops, and all were asked to consider first the issues surrounding roles and structures. Further workshops addressed three areas: funding (2 groups), professional issues and wider agendas. The Walsh report, based on the workshops is attached.

The SMC AGM, more than any other SMC meeting, attracts representatives from the full range of museum organisations in our membership. At this event 14 Local Authorities, 11 Independent Trusts and 4 Universities were represented, by a total of 41 delegates. Of these, 6 delegates were also SMC Board members.

### **2.2 Falkirk**

The first dedicated consultation meeting was held in Falkirk on Tuesday 22 October. As at the AGM, participants were asked to discuss the four main issues highlighted by the Minister. Unlike the AGM, the majority of participants at this meeting, 13 of the total 19, were from the Local Authority sector. In total, 8 Local Authorities and 6 Independent Trusts were represented.

The participants found professional issues the easiest one to address, but all issues were discussed.

## **2.3 Dumfries**

The second dedicated consultation meeting was held in Dumfries on Thursday 14 November. As with the Falkirk meeting, participants discussed all of the issues raised by the Minister, but also other issues of great concern to museums. In contrast to the Falkirk meeting, the majority of participants at this meeting were from Independent Trusts. The Local Authority sector was also well represented, but again there were no participants from Regimental Trusts or Universities. In total, of the 25 delegates, 13 were representing 10 Independent Trusts and 10 were representing staff and elected members from 2 Local Authorities. There was also a single participant from a National Museum and a representative from a Friends group.

Discussion concentrated on the key issues of funding, roles and structures, barriers to access and professional issues, such as training.

## **2.4 Perth**

The third and final dedicated consultation meeting was held in Perth on Tuesday 26 November. As in the previous meetings, the issues raised by the Minister were all discussed; however, by this stage in the consultation process it was clear that the debate had moved on and that links were being made between the issues, resulting in a more coherent message and, in the case of one group, a proposed action plan.

Despite the fact that this meeting was one of the smaller ones, it was the one with the most balanced range of participants. Of the 14 participants, 5 were from Independent Trusts, 6 from Local Authorities, 2 from Universities and there was also a representative from Scottish Natural Heritage. In total, 3 Independent Trusts, 3 Local Authorities, 2 Universities and one partner organisation were represented at the meeting.

The mix of interests resulted in what was probably the most coherent, yet wide-ranging, discussion of the consultation process. The notes taken at the workshops reflect this thinking, with the issues discussed as a whole, rather than independently, as it became clearer that it was not possible to consider any of the major issues in isolation. As in previous meetings, a member of SMC Board or staff led the workshops, but the views expressed in the summary below are those of the participants.

## **3. The Collective Vision Conference**

The Conference provided the opportunity for other partners, stakeholders and interested bodies to join museum representatives and contribute to the consultation. The full list of delegates and notes from the conference are available.

Nine workshop sessions were held to discuss the four issues of funding, roles and structures, professional issues and wider agendas. In practice, the workshop sessions were most heavily focussed on the issue of roles and structures, as these had been the focus of the conference presentations prior to the workshop sessions. A summary of the points raised at each of the workshop sessions is attached.

## **4. Meetings with partner bodies and interest groups**

The partner bodies and special interest groups that were involved in these meetings included the Group for Education in Museums, the Curatorial Advisers Conference, COSLA's Culture and Arts and Leisure Group, the Scottish Association of Directors of

Leisure (VOCAL), and the Scottish Museums Federation.

Notes from the meetings, where available, are attached.

## **5. Meetings between SMC senior staff and interested bodies**

Informal meetings were held between the SMC Director and senior staff and several interested bodies, including the Museums Association, Resource and the Cultural Heritage Training Organisation.

## **6. Outcomes**

The consultation that SMC has undergone is extensive, involving members, partners, stakeholders and interested bodies. The process was carefully structured and planned to allow debate to mature and become more reflective as time passed. The transparency of the process (the whole of the consultation is reported on the SMC website, giving members the opportunity to input further) and our desire to be inclusive has resulted in a proposal that, we believe, truly reflects the concerns of the sector.

It is hard to calculate the numbers of individuals and organisations that may have contributed to and influenced a consultation of this kind. However, SMC has recorded the numbers of participants, and the organisations that they represent, at each of the consultation meetings. In addition, we have recorded all other organisations with whom we have met and consulted.

In total, we have had responses to the consultation from over 250 individuals, representing more than 100 organisations, ranging from partners, such as Scottish Natural Heritage to interested bodies, such as the Black Environment Network. The engagement and response from our member organisations has been phenomenal and ranged from large local authorities to the smallest Independent Trust. The full list of organisations consulted can be found in this appendix.