

## **Executive Summary**

### **From National Audit to National Framework**

The Scottish Executive recognition of museums as a sector is a significant and most welcome development. It represents a clear advance on historic government policy and reflects the more holistic approach to Scotland's cultural heritage which was set out in the National Cultural Strategy. This now needs to be reflected in policy, funding and structures appropriate to 21<sup>st</sup> century Scotland.

The consultation process made clear that, for museums, funding and development of regional capacity are the priorities for any Action Plan. There was support for an expanded role for the national institutions and debate about the need for a new intermediary organisation, but the overriding concern was the need for core funding for core functions. The primary barriers preventing museums from fulfilling their core functions are inadequate resources and inadequate capacity. This urgently needs to be addressed. These barriers are in turn preventing museums from contributing to the wider cultural, social, educational, and economic agenda.

In framing our response, the Scottish Museums Council (SMC) has therefore developed recommendations which are realistic, but which do not completely accept the current tight constraints on structures and funding. Our recommendations address the fragmentation of policy, expenditure and accountability, the chronic lack of core funding and the adverse effects of years of under-investment in the sector. The recommendations require fundamental rethinking of approaches to museum provision at all levels and present a programme which will provide Scotland with a museum sector far better equipped to implement the vision of the National Cultural Strategy and fulfil the high expectations of the public in a devolved Scotland.

### **Core Funding**

There is an over-riding need to ensure core funding for core museum functions, including learning. The role of local authorities is critical both in establishing good baseline provision for their own services and in recognising independent museums' contribution. The Scottish Executive should review grant aided expenditure (GAE) to local authorities in 2004-5, and consider ring-fencing funding streams to local authorities. To encourage consistency of provision, SMC should develop explicit models for core functions linked to the development of standards which make clear what is required by local authorities statutory obligation to "ensure adequate cultural facilities".

In addition, the Scottish Executive should identify resources from cross-departmental budgets for a targeted investment programme, administered by SMC, and outlined in the SMC response.

### **Regional Development**

A key recommendation is the creation of a regional support infrastructure, through the establishment of 8 Regional Development posts, based locally but working across local authority boundaries and linked to central strategic support at SMC. The aim of these posts is to address chronic under capacity in the non national museum sector by assisting museums to forge external partnerships with social inclusion partnerships, tourism bodies, learning providers, enterprise networks and to collaborate with other museums on joint funding applications and other initiatives including the development of regional networks.

## **Strategic Change Fund**

The Strategic Change Fund should be evaluated by December 2003. It may then be consolidated as part of the costed investment programme. Meanwhile, SMC should continue its proactive approach, encouraging innovative partnerships.

## **Buildings**

Urgent action is required from the Scottish Executive, Historic Scotland, SMC, local authorities and the Heritage Lottery Fund to identify and address the capital requirements of museums in listed buildings to ensure the widest possible access. Historic Scotland should identify a budget to meet the capital repair costs of museums in listed buildings, prioritising those museums where the building and collection together represent an outstanding cultural asset, which should be preserved in context. SMC should work with the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland on the development of design quality indicators for museum buildings, and with Historic Scotland to prepare guidance and advice on adapting historic buildings for museum use.

## **Emergency or stabilisation funding**

Until the Scottish Executive has established a coherent national framework, there will remain a short term imperative to fund independent museums in crisis. The Scottish Executive should, therefore, continue to fund the 3 industrials up to 2005, and should also commit a further £300,000 pa for other independent museums with important collections, in the same position. The Scottish Executive should evaluate by September 2004 and decide whether it will continue direct revenue funding for non national museums.

## **Building Capacity**

The quality, efficiency and effectiveness of both museums' core delivery and their wider contribution depend on an increase in capacity, particularly in the non-national museum sector. There are four dimensions to this:

- **Increasing staff numbers and developing new skills.** For non-national museums, an increase in the number of subject-specialist 'collection-less' curators, and in the number of education staff is the key to increasing access to museums. The Scottish Executive, SMC and museum employers need to ensure an effective Sector Skills Council (SSC) for cultural heritage in Scotland. Training and skills development needs to take account of the volunteer workforce, and offer equal opportunities to paid and unpaid staff. Programmes should be developed to address key training needs, for example in relation to museum leadership and governance.
- **Partnership.** There is considerable potential for more effective partnership between national and non-national museums, which should be based on a 'parity of esteem' and museum needs. For example, curatorial advice might be delivered through networks of national and non-national curators, and a Travelling Exhibition Fund could encourage greater access to Scotland's treasures. Partnership between museums and other bodies would be greatly enhanced by the appointment of Regional Development Officers.
- **Developing ICT.** Investment in ICT could transform collections management, the visitor experience and the promotion of museums to wide audiences. SMC should

lead on reviewing and implementing the ICT Strategy, which should secure the public role of SCRAN, and explore the provision of broad-band capacity for museums.

- **Raising standards.** SMC questions whether the Resource Registration scheme provides a necessary tool for measuring improvements in performance, and suggests Scotland needs to explore appropriate options. Audit Scotland, SMC and local authorities should review LA performance indicators, which need to extend beyond visitor numbers and number of registered museums. In particular, Scottish museums need a mechanism for assessing learning and access. VisitScotland and SMC need to work together to promote museum membership of the Visitor Attraction Grading scheme.

### **New Museum Development**

The significant growth in the number of visitor attractions in Scotland, without a corresponding growth in visitor numbers raises serious questions about sustainability. Local Authority planning and economic development departments, LECs and HLF need to involve SMC and local cultural services at an early stage when considering potential new museum developments. Museums, historical societies, LECs and others need to consider alternative sustainable options for interpretation of cultural heritage, which may not be capital and cost-intensive.

### **Stewardship of the Cultural Heritage**

To a large extent, stewardship remains the 'hidden burden,' which museums carry. It involves the conservation, documentation, management and interpretation of the 12 million objects, which make up Scotland's distributed national collection. A key priority should be the reduction of Scotland's massive documentation backlog, through the development and implementation by SMC of a national documentation strategy. It should be complemented by regional and national collections policies, which adopt a strategic approach to the gaps and strengths in the distributed national collection. The National Museums and National Galleries should develop policies and allocate resources to the provision of security and subject specialist advice. NMS should take over delivery of a national conservation service from SMC.

### **Learning and Access**

Museums see the provision of opportunities for lifelong learning as fundamental to their core mission, but this is not always recognised by other learning providers or by learners themselves. An increase in the numbers of education staff in non-national museums and core budgets are pre-requisite to the delivery of improved services. A cross-sectoral committee, comprising SMC, Learning Teaching Scotland, Communities Scotland, Youthlink and other relevant bodies should develop and implement a national learning and access strategy. This would improve links between museums and other parts of the learning sector, increasing museums' profile in schemes such as the Cultural Co-ordinators scheme. SMC should develop museums' input to training and Continuous Professional development for teachers and community education workers, and should further develop learning support and advisory services for the sector. There is considerable scope for promoting and developing the work of museums in Social Inclusion Partnership areas through cross sectoral partnerships, particularly if critical gaps in capacity and skills are addressed.

In addition there is a need to build new audiences by addressing existing physical, economic, social and psychological barriers to access. Better research is needed, for example, on

museum attendance and non-attendance to inform policy, advice, guidance and training. The Scottish Executive should also review the statutory framework for museums, and particularly anomalies in relation to admission charges and VAT recovery.

### **Volunteers**

The Scottish Executive should recognise the important contribution of volunteers to the museum sector. SMC, the Sector Skills Council, Volunteer Development Scotland and the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations should develop guidance and training for volunteers, and for museums working with volunteers.

### **Tourism**

The Action Plan presents an opportunity for VisitScotland and SMC to work together to co-ordinate national strategies for tourism and museums, allowing more effective marketing of museums and better understanding of what visitors want. SMC should commission research into direct and indirect economic impact of museums. Regional Development posts working across Local Authority boundaries will assist museums to play a full part in local tourism initiatives, encouraging joint marketing and interpretive strategies where appropriate.

### **Roles and Structures**

A new national framework for museums should clearly identify the respective roles of the Scottish Executive, the National Museums and Galleries, Local Authorities, the Scottish Museums Council, Resource and Historic Scotland. Principles of transparency, stakeholder input and accountability should underpin the framework. The Scottish Executive's role should be to develop and invest in the framework, championing museums' contribution to other parts of Government.

There should be a managed transition to a new national agency, responsible for strategic development of the sector as a whole. This body would work closely with Local Authorities taking a regional development approach to realising museums' potential. Unless and until a new agency is established (which SMC recommends by April 2006), the Scottish Executive should formally acknowledge and appropriately fund the Scottish Museums Council as the national development agency. The National Museums and Galleries should play an enhanced role in the development and delivery of curatorial services for all museums. Post-devolution, the role of Resource in Scotland requires clear definition to ensure value for money and impact. The Action Plan for Museums should also identify the role of the Heritage Lottery Fund in supporting museums in Scotland.