

**SCOTTISH  
MUSEUMS  
COUNCIL**



# **The National Debate on the Future of School Education in Scotland**

**Scottish Executive**

**Submission by the Scottish Museums Council**

**12 July 2002**

## Consultation Process

Following the launch of the National Debate on the Future of School Education in Scotland, the Scottish Museums Council (SMC) hosted a consultation event in partnership with the Group for Education in Museums Scotland (GEM Scotland).<sup>1</sup> Drawing on contributions from member organisations and other individuals involved with museum and gallery education, SMC compiled the following response. The term museum is used generically to refer to galleries and heritage sites as well as museums.

## The Scottish Museums Council

SMC is the membership organisation for around 350 museums and galleries in Scotland including local authorities, universities, regimental and independent museums. Our aim is to improve museum and gallery provision in Scotland for both local people and visitors. SMC combines strategic leadership for the sector with provision of professional information, advisory and support services to members.

On 10 July 2002 SMC launched the first-ever national audit of Scotland's museums and galleries.<sup>2</sup> The audit establishes for the first time the full extent of museum collections, buildings and public services. It provides an authoritative picture of the museums sector and its importance to key aspects of Scottish life including tourism, learning, and community development. The national audit has been used throughout to inform recommendations for the development of school education.

Despite the potential for museum education explored below, the audit reveals that under-capacity is having an adverse effect on the sector's ability to develop and deliver effective community and educational programmes. This is a key weakness with respect to promoting the widest-possible access to collections. The challenge is to bridge the gap between the great potential for learning through museums and the actual provision which is being currently offered.

## Why encourage learning through museums?

"A curriculum that offers a breadth of experience and a balance of opportunity for learning is the entitlement of every pupil ... It should help them develop intellectually, aesthetically, socially, emotionally, spiritually, imaginatively and physically."<sup>3</sup>

"Our museums, galleries, and built and natural heritage are excellent

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<sup>1</sup> *National Debate on Education*, City Art Centre, 11 June 2002.

<sup>2</sup> *A Collective Focus: Scotland's National Audit (Summary Report - The Main Findings and Conclusions from the National Cultural Audit of Scotland's Museums and Galleries)*, Scottish Museums Council: Edinburgh, 2002

<sup>3</sup> *The Structure and Balance of the Curriculum: 5-14 National Guidelines*, Scottish Executive & Learning and Teaching Scotland: Edinburgh, 2000: 3.

educational resources. To maximise their potential we propose to support the further development of educational programmes and steps to present collections for young people”.<sup>4</sup>

Museums provide a gateway to our shared history, a peek into the unknown. Through object-based study they tell stories and fire the imagination offering an immediacy of impact that speaks compellingly to learners of all ages. By utilising creative approaches to learning museums operate as dynamic learning environments. For example, children at Tweeddale Museum and Gallery explored the world of ancient Egypt by role-playing archaeologists and discovering buried artefacts for themselves.

In addition to providing access to Scottish heritage, museums also enable children to explore these resources through individuals with specialist knowledge. This expertise provides a ready complement to the work undertaken within schools. It is our belief that Scottish children should have access to a variety of educators and learning opportunities delivered within diverse educational environments. Not only does this commitment necessitate imaginative approaches to teaching, it also encourages the development of alternative delivery channels. As important informal learning providers, therefore, we welcome the opportunity to contribute to the National Debate on the Future of School Education in Scotland.

To summarise, museums:

- are powerful learning institutions
- contain valuable learning resources (collections)
- use innovative teaching methods
- provide staff with specialist expertise
- provide alternative pathways to learning delivery (through face-to-face and online interaction)
- are a flexible learning resource

## **What should children be learning?**

*A Collective Focus*, Scotland’s first-ever national audit of museums and galleries, confirms there are “over 12 million objects held in trust for the people of Scotland”.<sup>5</sup> The national audit further revealed that 78% of organisations have collections which are in whole or in part of national significance. Distributed across the breadth of the country this constitutes a magnificent cultural and educational resource. The collections cover areas as diverse as:

- social, maritime and industrial history
- archaeology
- natural history

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<sup>4</sup> *Creating Our Future... Minding Our Past...: Scotland’s National Cultural Strategy*, Scottish Executive: Edinburgh, 2000: 29.

<sup>5</sup> *A Collective Focus: Scotland’s National Audit (Summary Report - The Main Findings and Conclusions from the National Cultural Audit of Scotland’s Museums and Galleries)*, Scottish Museums Council: Edinburgh, 2002: 1.

- world culture
- visual art
- the environment
- geology

As such, museum collections provide a unique and authentic resource through which children can learn about their own and other cultures. Close contact with primary objects is particularly important as it enables children to actually see what objects look like and how they work. While the cultural and educational value of these collections has been acknowledged through support for initiatives such as SCRAN [Scotland's Cultural Resources Access Network], their full learning potential is as yet unrealised.

### **The 5-14 Curriculum**

Museums are uniquely placed to contribute to the development of life skills while also enhancing children's knowledge about their history and culture. Museums also play a key role in the development of basic skills such as literacy and numeracy, offering multiple links to the 5-14 Curriculum in both subject-specific and cross-subject areas. Museums can facilitate learning in the following curriculum areas:

- Environmental Studies
- Expressive Arts
- Language
- Personal and social development

Although ICT skills are clearly enhanced through engagement with digital collections and online learning exercises, the national audit indicates that only 26% of museums use websites to provide education resources.<sup>6</sup> Further, "more specialist, expensive and time-consuming interpretation methods such as IT displays, live interpretation and video, tended to be less represented".<sup>7</sup> It is of concern that the capacity to provide such services is unevenly available across the museums sector. For example, only 13.5% of local authority museums provide educational resources through their websites.<sup>8</sup>

Formal learning with a heavy emphasis on one or two learning styles can restrict the pace of some children's development. Through the interpretation of objects (seeing, listening, testing and handling) museums can encourage new ways of learning, allowing learners of all ages and abilities to develop cross-curricular skills such as:

- research and analysis
- information and communications technology
- creativity
- problem solving and expression
- decision-making
- investigative learning
- education for citizenship

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, Pp 79.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, Pp 81.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, Pp 79.

- the culture of Scotland
- personal and social development

As a result of taking part children also develop:

- understanding about a range of lifestyles
- their attitudes and values
- interpersonal skills
- self-esteem
- self-awareness

It is evident that the National Priorities for Education, as approved by the Scottish Parliament in December 2002, can be pursued through co-operation with the museum and galleries sector. Children's respect for self and others, duties and responsibilities of citizenship, learning for life, creativity and ambition, are all addressed through museum education.<sup>9</sup> Equally, teacher's skills can be enhanced through working with other educators who use a less formal approach to teaching.

Recommendation a):

It is suggested that more explicit reference is made to museums and galleries as learning resources within the 5-14 Curriculum. With the necessary guidance and resources museums could further develop accessible teaching materials which individual schools could tailor to suit their individual approach to implementing the curriculum.

Recommendation b):

A greater commitment from teachers and education staff within the Local Education Authorities (LEA) would also help to consolidate the use of museum education within schools (see 'Training' section). Additionally, research clarifying what teachers require from museums would aid the development of more effective resource materials to support the curriculum.<sup>10</sup>

Recommendation c):

Support should be given to further developing ICT technologies and their educational/interpretation applications within museums.

### **Learning from employment**

Through work-based placements and training schemes pupils and students could gain a wide range of work and social skills. Activities include front-of-house work, administration, retail, marketing and sales, curating, management and research. At present accountability, bureaucratic requirements and time-constraints inhibit the further development of work-based learning schemes.

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<sup>9</sup> *Creativity in Education*, Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Involvement with training and undertaking responsibility for museum education work should not be restricted to teachers employed on the Cultural Coordinators scheme. Funded by the Scottish Executive (£1.7million until 2004) the scheme supports the placement of Cultural Coordinator posts (2 days a week) within local schools. The Coordinators are expected to identify ways of maximising the contribution of culture and heritage activities to children and young people's education.

Recommendation a):

There was a view that consideration should be given to encouraging children to undertake placements within museums and galleries. Museum staff would require appropriate guidance and support in order to accommodate this work.

Recommendation b):

The potential for the cultural and heritage sector to train young people in employment or those out of work should be investigated. Mentoring and Modern Apprenticeship models could be drawn on in this regard.

Recommendation c):

One of the primary means through which degree level students enter employment in the cultural and heritage sector is through volunteering and student placements. These opportunities are not, however, equally available to further education-level students. More structured links between the museum and FE sector would help to alleviate inequalities of access to employment, training and volunteering.

## **Evaluation**

It is acknowledged that the status of museum education is in part dependent on the provision of demonstrable learning outcomes. Equally, however, an over emphasis on evaluating and evidencing achievements can detract from the learning process.

Recommendations:

A balance needs to be sought between reliable accountability procedures and the freedom and flexibility necessary for creative learning. The Executive should advocate the importance of learning about Scotland's cultural history by assisting the development of effective evaluation mechanisms that:

- are flexible
- sympathetic to cross-subject achievements
- acknowledge the place of complementary out-of-school learning opportunities

## **Where should children learn?**

Learning takes place in a wide variety of contexts, and the benefits of these learning opportunities should be fully recognised. Set in magnificent buildings and landscaped surroundings, many museums could provide space for a variety of learning and community-based activities. These institutions are valuable in part because they are not schools and are therefore able to offer informal, neutral and different learning experiences. Learning in context also adds value to children's learning. For example, at the Scottish Mining Museum children are encouraged to understand their industrial heritage by entering into the last working coal mine in Scotland.

## **Outreach services**

Using loan boxes (containing objects for use as trigger materials), outreach work, touring exhibitions and initiatives such as the Open Museum in

Glasgow, learning is extended into local communities. Not only does such work break down geographical barriers, it also removes inequalities in social access and lends immediacy to the learning experience. Museums are flexible learning resources and access need not be dependent upon entering actual buildings.

Recommendation a):

The value of museum outreach services and associated teaching materials should be more fully recognised within the 5-14 Curriculum. Time and training should be given to teachers to support their use of such techniques.

Recommendation b):

Correspondingly, closer working relations should be established with local museums, and possible training and subsidy should be given to museums so that they can maintain the highest standards of educational materials and services.

Recommendation c):

Although many local authority museum services and education departments do have active working relationships these links need to be strengthened, in part to ensure a co-ordinated approach to policy development.

### **Barrier 1 - Encouraging ownership**

A primary barrier preventing further involvement with cultural heritage is the lack of ownership experienced by many young people. By accessing museums and galleries children gain subject-specific knowledge. Importantly, however, they also learn that the nation's cultural institutions belong to them. They gain the insight necessary to see their own place within Scotland's cultural heritage.

“Pupils thrive on activities that stimulate them, experiences that engage them and in relationships that affirm and nurture them... They develop personally and socially. Their individual and collective sense of who they are and of their role in the world around them grows and takes shape”.<sup>11</sup>

Learning beyond the school gates opens up a world of opportunities and provides children with a proper sense of confidence and entitlement.

Recommendation a):

Rather than restrict this debate to education within school, it is suggested that serious consideration is also given to further developing and investing in complementary learning environments. Cultural and heritage institutions are key providers of out-of-school learning. These learning avenues should be cherished as an essential part of the future education of our children.

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<sup>11</sup> *The Structure and Balance of the Curriculum: 5-14 National Guidelines*, Scottish Executive & Learning and Teaching Scotland: Edinburgh, 2000: 3.

Recommendation b):

In Amsterdam it is compulsory for every school child to visit the Rijks Museum three times in their school career. The establishment of a Cultural Entitlement (as a statutory requirement) would provide each child with a list of cultural entitlements and expectations in relation to their local cultural services. This would help to consolidate the status of these resources within the education system as well as within the lives of individual children. It would also evenly spread the benefits of these resources, nurture individuals' sense of citizenship and help develop the learners/visitors of the future.

## **Barrier 2 - Transport**

Museum educators and teachers repeatedly cite transport costs and services as a major inhibiting factor. Increased access to learning is dependent on removing real practical barriers as well as creating an appropriate strategic context for development.

Recommendations:

School children should not be prevented from accessing their national heritage because their school cannot afford to pay the bus fare. The costs of and access to transport should, therefore, be given priority. The following schemes are suggested as possible means to resolving transportation difficulties:

- partnerships with local bus companies (i.e. taking advantage of 'down times')
- greater use of private sector funding for schools projects which includes transport costs (this would complement the Cultural Coordinators scheme)
- creating a dedicated transport budget for schools education work which schools and/or cultural heritage organisations can access

## **Barrier 3 – Training**

It is evident that museums could contribute more effectively to children's education if teachers (including HE/FE staff) and museum staff/volunteers received more effective and coordinated support and training.

Recommendation a):

Following recommendations contained in the McCrone Report,<sup>12</sup> this could be achieved by encouraging appropriate museums to become training providers for:

- initial teacher training
- general continuous professional development [CPD]
- Chartered Teacher Programme
- Standard for Headship

Such training would enrich and invigorate teaching within schools while also ensuring greater use is made of museum services.

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<sup>12</sup> A Teaching Profession for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Volume 1: Report, Independent Committee of Inquiry into Professional Conditions of Service: Edinburgh, 2000.



Recommendation b):

Provision for undertaking museum-based placements/secondments could be established as part of teacher training programmes across the stages outlined above.

#### **Barrier 4 – Lack of specialist support**

The ambition to devolve the benefits of object-based learning to all Scotland's children is hampered by the lack of specialist staff support (see 'Museum educators' below). Additionally, without more consistent advocacy for museum education from the LEA's, it will prove difficult to further develop this exciting aspect of children's education.

Recommendation a):

The nomination of cultural and heritage sector champions within LEA's would help to alleviate difficulties in representation, as would the identification of designated education and outreach staff in all local authority museum services.

Recommendation b):

In the 1970s every Scottish school had a museum liaison coordinator, a precursor to the Cultural Coordinators scheme (see footnote 10).<sup>13</sup> Further investment in the Cultural Coordinators would accord them the time needed to establish solid working relations with the cultural sector and develop strong cultural education programmes. Early experience would seem to suggest that there is relatively low uptake due to difficulties experienced by local authorities in raising match funding. Investigation into alternative funding streams, such as the New Opportunities Fund and Heritage Lottery Fund, could provide more stability for this programme.

Recommendation c):

The Cultural Coordinators scheme should be closely evaluated against its stated objectives. For example, although the scheme was intended to cover heritage as well as the culture, museum staff have indicated that museums have had a low profile in relation to the scheme. The status of museum and gallery education should be addressed if the scheme is to successfully access Scotland's cultural resources in their fullest sense.

#### **Barrier 5 – Funding**

Unsurprisingly, funding remains a concern within the museum sector. This report contains suggestions in relation to funding for transport and dedicated museum education staff. It is also necessary to highlight limitations, which exist in relation to existing funding schemes for the arts and heritage sector. , For example, the emphasis on innovation has tended to prioritise novelty over sustainability.

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<sup>13</sup> Ken Greer, HMI Inspectorate, National Debate on Education Evant, SCRAN, 28 June 2002, Royal Museum of Scotland.

Recommendation a):

Funding agencies should encourage the development and repetition of models of good practice. This would consolidate excellence and create stability in relation to education programmes.

Recommendation b):

There is a need to establish a sustainable funding framework for learning through museums. This could in part be achieved in part through the identification of dedicated education funding, for instance, through HLF or within local education budgets. The overall framework should be set by the Scottish Executive.

## **How should learning be delivered?**

### **Creating an integrated ladder of learning opportunities**

Effective lifelong learning requires more structured and consistent cooperation across the full range of education providers, including museums and galleries. By so doing, it is possible to build an integrated education infrastructure that enables learners of all ages and social backgrounds to access learning opportunities in a flexible manner through a diversity of delivery routes.

Recommendation a):

The Executive should take the lead in encouraging the cultural and heritage sector to work more strategically with other education providers such as local authorities, LEA's, schools and HE/FE. The creation of more explicit strategic links between providers would help to:

- establish a coordinated ladder of education opportunities available from pre-school to third age (this would also complement the Scottish Credit Qualifications Framework)
- ensure more effective coordination of diverse education services
- encourage the development of productive cross-service opportunities

The role of Learning and Teaching Scotland as a potential co-ordinator should be highlighted.

Recommendation b):

Support for joint marketing initiatives based on solid information and research into children's and teacher's needs, and more effective exchange of information between the cultural sector and schools would encourage cooperative working.

### **Online Learning**

Digital technologies offer unparalleled opportunities for delivering cultural and heritage resources to learners of all ages. Images, ideas and information can be communicated with speed and convenience into classrooms and homes. As such, online learning "can provide a bridge between learners of all ages".<sup>14</sup> Children can develop their interests, gain knowledge, access teaching exercises and material, and interact with visual images using these

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<sup>14</sup> *Culture Online*, Department of Culture, Media and Sport: London, 2001:5.

technologies. This allows for self-directed learning with children learning at their own pace and level, so gaining confidence and individual skills. Placing Scotland's collections online through SCRAN represents a substantial investment in ICT as an alternative pathway to knowledge.

**Recommendation a):**

There is a need to further develop distance learning opportunities and to consolidate the effectiveness of existing online resources. For example, consideration should be given to further funding SCRAN to improve the interpretation of objects on their database for lifelong learning purposes.

**Recommendation b):**

More effective links should be created between the specialist knowledge contained within museums and the learning and teaching needs of schools. For example, through the development of subject specific teaching 'packages' available on a local and national scale. Museums and libraries could also work together on digitisation projects, for instance, using the People's Network.

## **Who should be teachers and learners?**

The generic term 'teacher' conceals the wide variety of individuals who are actually involved in delivering 's education. As the description of learners has broadened to include learners of all ages, so too the definition of 'teacher' should be made more inclusive, incorporating educators of all descriptions. Their role and contribution to the education of children should be fully recognised.

### **Museum educators**

The National Audit indicates that "there are the equivalent of 117 full time education posts in the sector"<sup>15</sup>. This is the widest possible interpretation of staffing levels and other estimates suggest there are only about 20 full time museum education officers in the whole of Scotland. Museum educators act as an important link between an early interest in museums and a later love of history. Without the necessary investment this link will be broken.

"I'm very much reminded of the first time I ever went to a museum. Now, Dundee is my home town and I've been there [the McManus Galleries and Museum] and I think that's a fascinating exhibit and very well worth a visit if you haven't been there... I was about the same age as that young girl and the star exhibit then, and I think it probably still is my star exhibit, was the absolutely fascinating skeleton of the huge whale which was washed up in Invergowrie bay. I lived and grew up in Invergowrie, so that was particularly relevant... I was there in that museum earlier this year and it's still there, it's still as fascinating as

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<sup>15</sup> *A Collective Focus: Scotland's National Audit (Summary Report - The Main Findings and Conclusions from the National Cultural Audit of Scotland's Museums and Galleries)*, Scottish Museums Council: Edinburgh, 2002: 7.

ever, and that was my first contact with a museum” (Mike Watson, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport).<sup>16</sup>

Recommendation a):

An increase in the number of museum education staff would transform the sector’s capacity to deliver high quality learning opportunities. Without the necessary staff access to Scotland’s cultural heritage will not be made equally available to all children.

Recommendation b):

In light of the McCrone report’s recommendations on continual professional development for teachers, it is suggested that the skills and training needs of museum educators should be similarly recognised. Additionally, many museum educators are highly trained professionals with both curatorial and teaching degrees. Poor levels of pay do not, however, reflect either these levels of professional competence or the value museum educators add to children’s learning.

### **Volunteers**

The National Audit of Scotland’s museums, reveals that 53% of those working in the sector are volunteers.<sup>17</sup> While this volunteering tradition represents a considerable investment from communities in the life of our museums, it also presents opportunities for involving children. Notwithstanding this, it should be noted that volunteer staff should not be considered a substitute to professional museum educators.

Recommendation a):

Volunteers currently undertake important education work, for instance, by running workshops and guided tours. These activities could be greatly enhanced and made more readily available through:

- systematic exchange of information between museum volunteers and schools
- complementary teacher and volunteer training
- support/guidance on how to create active programming links between museums and schools (i.e. pupils onto Junior Boards of local museums, establishing school History and Archaeology Groups)
- dedicated funding support for project work (which could be relatively inexpensive due to the use of volunteers)

By so doing museum volunteers could enter classrooms and/or work with children within their museums, so utilising their time more effectively while disseminating their knowledge and experience.

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<sup>16</sup> Speaking at the launch of *A Collective Focus: Scotland’s National Audit* (Scottish Museums Council, 2002), The Museum of Fire, Edinburgh, 10 July 2002.

<sup>17</sup> *A Collective Focus: Scotland’s National Audit (Summary Report - The Main Findings and Conclusions from the National Cultural Audit of Scotland’s Museums and Galleries)*, Scottish Museums Council: Edinburgh, 2002: 8.

Recommendation b):

Conversely, initiatives could also be established to encourage children to undertake supervised volunteering within museums. Such schemes would offer behind-the-scenes understanding about how cultural institutions operate while also providing employment training and social development skills in an enjoyable way. By holding 'Twilight Session' teachers could be introduced to volunteering opportunities as well. Children and teachers could then interpret collections for their peers.

### **Family Learning and Community Involvement**

Museums actively facilitate family learning through workshops, guided tours, exhibitions and special events. Families may learn together or children may attend their own workshops allowing parents the time and intellectual space to learn in their own way. Many museums are able to provide specialist educators to do this. In such a way learning is promoted as an inter-generational activity and one that happens within many different contexts outwith the formal education sector.

Museums are well placed to encourage learning within community and informal settings, establishing links with varied groups of people including minority groups. By using a variety of learning styles museums can help individuals to understand and learn from their heritage. They can also encourage inter-cultural understanding through individuals learning about Scottish culture.

### **Cultural Coordinators**

Consideration should be given to how schools link with education providers such as museums. The Cultural Coordinators scheme is one of the mechanisms through which active links can be developed. While there is strong commitment to the scheme within the sector, there are also concerns about how sustainable the work will be given the time restriction placed on funding.

Recommendation:

It would be helpful if all LEA's produced lists of the Cultural Coordinators in their area and invited cultural and heritage organisations to collaborate with these individuals. Cultural Coordinators should also be given training on working with heritage institutions.

### **Partnership working**

The Community Planning process provides a mechanism through which learning providers such as schools and museums can engage with diverse learners and embed their activities more effectively within their local communities. Local authority School Development Plans also provide a platform for closer partnerships between providers.

Recommendation:

Learning providers should be encouraged to involve themselves with wider initiatives such as Community Planning and local authority School Development Plans, and to seek active partnerships with other educational

and community development agencies. Liaison with Social Inclusion Partnerships is central to this. Guidance on how to identify and consolidate partnerships is needed.

## Conclusions

*Creating our Futures ... Minding Our Past ...*, Scotland's national cultural strategy states that "Culture is at the heart of education... The creativity of our citizens is a key national resource, vital to the individual's quality of life and to society's well being".<sup>18</sup> The strategy also recognised how culture can combat social inclusion and enhance people's quality of life. Access to Scotland's cultural and heritage resources should be made equally available to all children. It is important, therefore, to nurture links between local children and local resources, but also to ensure equality of access to objects of national significance.

Museums are well placed to encourage social inclusion through the development of specialist education programmes that target the needs of different children, as well as through digital technologies that make available these resources online. Emphasis should be given to fostering a shared sense of entitlement to Scotland's heritage while also paying attention to factors such as access to computers and rural isolation that can inhibit equality of opportunity.

Although significant education work is currently being undertaken with school age learners, the enormous educational potential of Scotland's museums is as yet unrealised. Scotland has a unique museum and gallery infrastructure and an invaluable educational resource in the form of its distributed national collections. The capacity to deliver world-class cultural education is in place therefore, at both a local and national level. Additionally, the ambition to extend museums education clearly exists among museum educators. These are solid foundations upon which to build a creative, diverse and stimulating education system for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Museum staff are not under-utilised. Rather, the potential of museum education is unrealised. The development of museum education is, therefore, dependent upon additional resources. We have also, however, outlined a number of recommendations that require inexpensive adjustments in training and curriculum delivery and more effective organisation, for instance. It is suggested, therefore, that the vision for school education outlined in this document requires a change of approach and priorities as well as an increase in financial investment.

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<sup>18</sup> *Creating Our Future... Minding Our Past...: Scotland's National Cultural Strategy*, Scottish Executive: Edinburgh, 2000: 7.