



TEN PRIORITIES FOR A NEW PARLIAMENT

THE FUTURE OF THE PAST

SCOTLAND'S MUSEUMS are an essential part of our national identity and heritage. They provide a focus for community pride and regeneration, and are a key contributor to the tourist economy. Museums offer inspiration for people of all ages, cultures and backgrounds, and provide the means by which people can uncover and understand the past.

Museums are distinguished from other visitor attractions by the original artefacts and collections which they care for and display. **There are over 12 million objects in Scotland which we refer to as our distributed national collection.** Museums attract more than 13 million visitors a year, providing a vast window to Scotland's unique past.

However, despite their vital contribution to the social, cultural and economic fabric of Scotland, many museums face an uncertain future. **If they are to survive, a programme of appropriate financial investment is needed. Now.**

ARTS AND CULTURE HAVE A CENTRAL ROLE IN SHAPING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND CIVIC PRIDE IN THE NEW SCOTLAND. GOVERNMENT SHOULD INVEST IN ITS DIVERSE CULTURAL LIFE AND HERITAGE.

(from the Parliamentary Coalition Agreement May 1999)

The Scottish Museums Council (SMC) is the main channel for the Scottish Executive support to, and the member organisation for, non-national museums and galleries in Scotland. SMC provides strategic leadership and a range of services including grant aid, strategic and operational advice, information and training. SMC has 204 members, which manage 341 museums all over Scotland, including 165 independent, 142 local authority, 7 regimental and 27 university museums.

01

Secure realistic and sustainable levels of revenue funding for museum services

The Scottish Executive should review Grant Aided Expenditure to local authorities and consider ring-fencing local authority museum budgets. To encourage consistency, explicit models of what represents core activity should be developed. These should be linked to standards which make clear what is required by local authorities' statutory obligation to ensure adequate cultural provision, whether in local authority or independent museums.

02

Address the need for capital investment in historic museum sites

There is a need for significant capital investment in the buildings that house collections, making them fit to meet the needs of the widest possible audiences in the 21st century. 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. Government should require Historic Scotland to identify a budget to meet the capital repair costs of museums in listed buildings, prioritising those where the building and collection represent an outstanding cultural asset that should be preserved in context.

03

Safeguard Scotland's significant collections for present and future generations

The Scottish Executive should recognise the distributed nature of Scotland's national collection, and develop mechanisms to ensure long-term care. These could include consideration of a special funding stream for collections designated to be of national importance, but which are not currently in national care. To avoid the loss of unique national assets and to stabilise the position until Scotland has a national museums strategy, the Scottish Executive should establish an interim £300,000 emergency fund for independent museums in crisis.

04

Realise museums' potential contribution to life-wide and lifelong learning

A key objective of the Action Plan for Museums should be to promote and develop museums' contribution to learning and to the wider social and economic well-being of communities. The Scottish Executive should make a national commitment to developing a minimum cultural entitlement regarding young people's access to their national cultural heritage. There is an urgent need for funding to support a significant increase in the number of specialist education staff working within Scotland's museums. A high profile learning and museums

committee should be established to ensure that museums and other learning providers work together to develop a visionary three-year learning and access strategy.

Independent museums are, along with local authority museums, an essential part of community learning. As such, local authorities should include independent museums within community learning plans, and ensure that adequate resources are available for schools and community learners to make the most of all museums.

05

Ensure access, for all, to Scotland's diverse heritage

The Scottish Executive should support the development of wide-ranging strategies and initiatives to increase access, for all, to Scotland's diverse heritage. Research into audience motivations, barriers to attendance and the wider social impact of museums is, therefore, essential. Furthermore, we need to encourage loans and travelling exhibitions to ensure that people in all parts of the country have practical access to Scotland's distributed national collection.

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This document sets out the 10 priorities for a new Parliament, based on extensive research and consultation following the launch in July 2002 of *The Collective Insight, A National Audit* - the largest ever survey of Scotland's museums. It calls for elected representatives to honour the commitment made in the coalition agreement at the founding of Scotland's first Parliament in 292 years.

06

Build capacity at regional level to release museums' contribution to learning, tourism and social inclusion

The Scottish Executive should support the development of the infrastructure for museums at regional level by funding nine regional development posts throughout Scotland. The aim would be to embed museums in the wider community planning process. This would ensure that beneficial partnerships are developed between museums, formal and informal education providers, social inclusion partnerships, community and voluntary bodies, tourism and enterprise networks.

07

Invest in people, staff and volunteers

The Scottish Executive should encourage a strategic approach to capacity building, skills development and training, preferably through the proposed new national agency. This could also be achieved through support for a Sector Skills Council that meets the needs of cultural heritage employers in Scotland. Policies should encourage equality of opportunity for paid and unpaid staff. There is also a need to introduce appropriate volunteer management and support structures in museum organisations, which could address volunteer recruitment, retention, training and skills development.

08

Devise and implement comprehensive performance measures for stewardship of collections and provision of services to the public

Based on the National Audit standards framework, the Scottish Executive should commit resources to the development of a measurable standards scheme for Scotland's museums. Audit Scotland with local authorities and SMC should be charged with the review of statutory performance indicators for local authorities. This work should be supported by the development of detailed guidelines on Best Value for museum services.

09

Develop the use of information and communication technology (ICT)

The Scottish Executive should commit to the integrated national ICT programme for museums - developed by the national ICT task force - as the basis for action up to 2006. The Executive should secure the public role of the Scottish Cultural Resources Access Network, which has played an important role in making Scotland's museum collections accessible to schools online. Similarly, the Scottish Executive should explore the provision of broadband capacity for museums in the same way that the public library network does for library material.

10

Establish a clear national framework for museums, with a new strategic lead body

A key objective of the Action Plan for museums should be to develop effective strategic and advisory structures, which are appropriate to modern Scotland. A new national framework for museums should clearly identify the respective roles of the Scottish Executive, National Museums and Galleries, local authorities, SMC, 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 the 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, the Scottish Executive should formally acknowledge and appropriately fund SMC as the national development agency.

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LOOK BACK TO MOVE FORWARDS

Comparison of Central Government
Funding for year 2002-2003



If Scotland values its history and national identity, then it must safeguard both collections and historic sites for future generations. It must also ensure the widest possible access to high quality museum services for people in Scotland today. The level of public investment necessary to secure the future of Scotland's unique national heritage is small in relation to other areas of Government expenditure. However, the potential impact on lifelong learning, community development and tourism is enormous.

In its second term, we would like the Scottish Parliament to recognise the role of museums today and long into the future.

That would be an historic moment!

SMC's priorities for action are drawn from extensive and detailed recommendations to the Scottish Executive in response to the recent consultation. If adopted, these recommendations could 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. SMC welcomes approaches from elected representatives and partner bodies in the pursuit of a viable future for Scotland's museums.

For further information, please contact Christine Galey (Assistant Director, Information and Learning) on 0131 476 8454 or Carl Watt (Communications Officer) on 0131 476 8452.

The SMC mission is to improve the quality of museum and gallery provision in Scotland for the public benefit

*Includes all grants made to non-national museums