

SCOTTISH  
MUSEUMS  
COUNCIL



A COLLECTIVE  
**FOCUS**

**SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL AUDIT  
SUMMARY REPORT**

THE MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS FROM  
THE NATIONAL AUDIT OF SCOTLAND'S MUSEUMS  
AND GALLERIES



Cover and back cover  
Post horn, Nürnberg  
Edinburgh University  
Collection of Historic  
Musical Instruments

Badge of the Russian  
Order of St. Alexander  
Nevsky awarded to  
Admiral Duncan in 1797.  
National War Museum,  
Edinburgh



# OVERVIEW

**THE NATIONAL  
AUDIT IS THE  
LARGEST SURVEY  
OF ITS KIND EVER  
UNDERTAKEN IN  
EUROPE.**

The National Audit is the first-ever national survey of Scotland's rich cultural heritage held in museums and galleries. The largest survey of its kind ever undertaken in Europe, it covers over 12 million objects held in trust for the people of Scotland. The Audit establishes, for the first time, a picture of the contribution museums make not only to the preservation of our national heritage but also to other key areas of Scottish life, such as tourism, learning, and community development. Museums preserve the past for present and future generations, enabling us to learn from history, and feel pride in a shared identity.

The National Audit undoubtedly highlights some areas where work is needed to enable museums to realise their full potential. But in uncovering the breadth and depth of Scotland's distributed national collection and the wide scope of museums activities, the National Audit has both identified a cause for national celebration and an opportunity to build the Scottish museum service of the future.



## PARTICIPATION IN THE NATIONAL AUDIT: TOTAL ORGANISATIONS/SITES

Organisation type	Number of organisations	Number of sites
<b>Independent</b>	116	164
<b>Local Authority</b>	31	182
<b>University</b>	10	45
<b>Military</b>	7	8
<b>National</b>	4	34
<b>Other</b>	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>435</b>

# STUDY

## THE NATIONAL AUDIT COVERS OVER 12 MILLION OBJECTS HELD IN TRUST FOR THE PEOPLE OF SCOTLAND

### Why Conduct a Scottish National Audit?

The need for an audit was identified by museums themselves and was a recommendation of the *National Strategy for Scotland's Museums*.<sup>1</sup> The Scottish Executive subsequently made a commitment to the Audit in its *National Cultural Strategy*,<sup>2</sup> and commissioned the Scottish Museums Council to undertake the project.

The National Audit has long been seen by the museum sector as a first step towards a coherent national funding and policy framework for museums in a devolved Scotland. The rationale has been that only when we know what we have, both in terms of collections and services, can we build on strengths and identify areas for improvement. The Scottish Executive has confirmed that the Audit will inform strategic policy and planning for the sector. This important research has taken place within the following context:

- An expectation that the Scottish Parliament and Executive will value and invest in Scotland's rich culture and heritage.
- Funding difficulties in a number of independent and local authority museums, most notably the industrial museums, which might be traced to historic funding arrangements, and the lack of a coherent national funding and policy framework.<sup>3</sup>
- Major developments in the museum sector in England where the need for significant investment in English regional museums has been recognised.<sup>4</sup>
- A recognition that policy in the 21st century should be based on evidence as well as aspiration.

### Who is included in the National Audit?

The National Audit aimed to include all museums, including those few not in membership of the Scottish Museums Council. Respondents include:

- Local Authorities
- Independent museums
- University museums
- Military museums
- National Galleries of Scotland
- National Museums of Scotland
- Historic Scotland
- National Trust for Scotland
- Royal Botanic Gardens.

The response rate to the National Audit was exceptionally high at 86% and the final analysis is based on 170 organisations submitting collections data and 170 organisations, covering 435 museum sites, submitting information about buildings and services. These organisations cover every part of Scotland, and all museum 'types'.

## SCOTLAND'S MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

Collection Type	Number of Items held by Nationals	% of DNC	Number of Items held by Non-Nationals	% of DNC	Total Numbers
Archaeology	840,257	6.8	578,586	4.7	1,418,843
Archives	586,428	4.8	1,023,699	8.3	1,610,127
Coins and Medals	67,701	0.5	345,236	2.8	412,937
Costume and Textiles	26,354	0.2	108,375	0.9	134,729
Culture	2,412	0.0	87,258	0.7	89,670
Decorative and Applied Art	44,381	0.4	107,579	0.9	151,960
Domestic Life	12,722	0.1	110,221	0.9	122,943
Fine Art	50,241	0.4	142,790	1.2	193,031
Health	49	0.0	46,507	0.4	46,556
History of Science	8,829	0.1	68,757	0.6	77,586
Industry and Commerce	57,474	0.5	226,867	1.8	284,341
Maritime	836	0.0	112,011	0.9	112,847
Natural Sciences	3,868,700	31.4	2,533,502	20.6	6,402,202
Photography	32,839	0.3	908,839	7.4	941,678
Society	629	0.0	75,595	0.6	76,224
Sport and Leisure	926	0.0	42,158	0.3	43,084
Transport	3,821	0.0	30,159	0.2	33,980
Warfare and Defence	3	0.0	52,181	0.4	52,184
Weapons and Accessories	13,605	0.1	27,986	0.2	41,591
World Culture	34,997	0.3	43,817	0.4	78,814
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,653,204</b>	<b>45.9</b>	<b>6,672,123</b>	<b>54.1</b>	<b>12,325,327</b>

## What can the National Audit tell us?

On the basis of the current data we can:

- clearly identify the distributed national collection, its breadth and depth
- analyse and identify significant general conclusions about current provision, for example, in relation to funding, public access, staffing, ICT and premises
- identify patterns of current activity and standards, for example in relation to economic performance, collections management and learning programmes
- provide a framework for individual museums to benchmark themselves against museums of similar size, type or location.

**Greyfriar's Bobby's bowl  
and collar**  
Museum of Edinburgh



# ANALYSIS

**THE NATIONAL AUDIT UNDOUBTEDLY HIGHLIGHTS SOME AREAS WHERE WORK IS NEEDED TO ENABLE MUSEUMS TO REALISE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL**

## The Distributed National Collection

For the first time, the National Audit establishes the principle and evidence for a distributed national collection. It identifies size, location, significance and composition of collections in the public domain. When the collections data are considered alongside the funding data, significant anomalies in management and funding emerge at both national and local level. These include the position of the industrial museums and Glasgow, as well as subject areas such as photography, costumes and textiles, coins and medals.

- There are over 12 million items in Scotland's museum collections, of which 46% are in the collections of the national organisations.
- The National Audit has for the first time identified the significance of museums collections in five categories: international, UK-wide, national, regional and local significance.
- 78% of organisations have collections which are, in whole or in part, of national significance, although the size of the collections varies considerably.
- Collections of 'national significance' are by no means confined to the national organisations.
- Location is critically important for certain collections for example, industrial museums, military collections, and birthplace museums.



**Teddy bear in uniform**  
Museum of Childhood,  
Edinburgh

**Whale harpoon**  
Scottish Fisheries  
Museum, Anstruther

- In terms of numbers, the largest collections are natural sciences, archives and archaeology. The national organisations hold the largest numbers of natural science and archaeology collections.
- Other collection types are more widely distributed and the non-national museums hold larger numbers of maritime collections (99.3%), photography (96.5%), fine art (74%), coins and medals (83.6%), costume and textiles (80.4%).
- Museums identified over 2,000 'star items' or 'objects which have a special historic, scientific, aesthetic or social value in their own right' from Robert Burns' writing desk<sup>5</sup> to the R.R.S. Discovery<sup>6</sup>.
- There is a documentation backlog on a national scale, with the biggest backlogs that exceed 10,000 items in national and local authority museum organisations.

### Funding

At both national and local level the main driver of museum policy has been historic funding status, and this is reflected in the findings throughout the report. The current distribution of collections raises questions in relation to the balance and extent of central and local government support for museums throughout Scotland.

Appropriate levels of collections care and public services depend upon adequate resources, and the Audit identifies significant weaknesses in services which are a reflection of low levels of funding and staffing.

The Audit does not provide a prescription for the future funding of museums, but SMC believes that it highlights the direction in which funding models must move to achieve greater sustainability, including effective long-term stewardship of the collections. On the basis of the evidence, a sustainable future for most museums requires identified core funding for core museum services. In the absence of such core funding, core museum services are at risk and, in extreme cases, the museum organisation itself may be at risk. An increase in stable core funding for independent museums and adequate funding of core responsibilities for all types of museums should be considered as part of a sustainable national framework.

- The four national organisations and local authority museums receive the majority of their funding from a single identified source. The Scottish Executive provides 76% of funding for the national organisations while local authorities provide 83% of income for the museums which they operate.
- Military and university museums receive a high percentage of their funding from a single source. Military museums attribute 42% of their funding to private sources, while university museums receive 84% of their income from 'other grant' sources such as the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council.
- By contrast, the independent museums have a pattern of funding that does not rely on a single dominant source of income. The most important source of income is from admission charges, which provide 21% of their income overall. They are therefore subject to considerable year on year fluctuations depending on national and local performance factors. The plural funding approach for the independent museums explains a number of their recent difficulties.
- The Scottish Executive provides 1% of all income for independent museums overall. Local authority funding is an important component of the independent museums funding, providing 13% of income overall.
- The majority of independent museums operate on an annual budget of £50,000 or less in contrast to the four national organisations and 50% of local authorities, which have budgets in excess of £500,000 per annum.



ORGANISATIONS WITH LARGEST COLLECTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL, UK AND NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Name	No. of Museum Venues and Sites	No. of Visitors	No. of Paid Staff	No. of Volunteers	No. of Staff With Curatorial Responsibility
National Museums of Scotland	5	921,981	433	202	126
Royal Botanic Gardens (Herbarium)	1	397	9	10	8
University of Glasgow	4	142,077	47	14	15
Glasgow City Council	8	2,650,471	339	130	83
University of Aberdeen	4	26,922	17	12	5
Perth and Kinross Council	3	70,384	29	0	8
Renfrewshire Council	4	108,053	36	1	10
City of Edinburgh Council	11	573,453	96	200	15
Aberdeen City Council	4	340,042	93	9	19
National Galleries of Scotland	5	1,086,491	287	4	43
Dumfries and Galloway Council	13	182,284	55	54	10
University of St Andrews	8	5,900	20	10	3
Scottish Fisheries Museum	1	11,686	17	73	2
Shetlands Islands Council	3	37,757	7	0	3
Scottish Mining Museum	1	30,592	24	16	2
East Ayrshire Council	5	102,522	24	2	9
Falkirk Council	4	36,596	47	6	9
Dundee City Council	3	120,916	46	4	6
Orkney Islands Council	5	51,546	25	8	5
Total	92	6,497,070	1,651	755	478

EXAMINATION

THE NATIONAL AUDIT CONFIRMS THAT HISTORY AND HERITAGE IS A KEY FACTOR IN THE CHOICE OF SCOTLAND AS A TOURIST DESTINATION.

### Visitor Numbers and Economic Performance

The 435 sites included in the Audit attracted over 13 million visits<sup>7</sup> in the year 2000, further confirmation of VisitScotland's research which shows that history and heritage is a key factor in the choice of Scotland as a tourist destination.<sup>8</sup> The overall figure includes sites which attracted over 1 million visits in 2000, such as Glasgow Museums, National Museums of Scotland and the National Galleries of Scotland, and sites which attracted only a few hundred visitors.

The National Audit demonstrates that there is scope for improved marketing and a more commercial approach to retail and catering within the museums sector, perhaps through stronger relationships with VisitScotland, Local Enterprise Companies and Tourist Boards.

However, the ability to increase visitor numbers and generate additional income will also be affected by external factors such as the national tourism profile,

general economic performance and government policy on admission charges, particularly for national and local authority museums.

- There were over 13 million visits to museums in 2000-1.
- 3% of sites had more than 250,000 visitors.
- 88% of sites had fewer than 50,000 visitors.
- The average visitor expenditure is under £4.

### Staff and Volunteers

Museums in Scotland rely on a mix of paid staff and volunteers. Higher proportions of permanent full-time and part-time staff can be found in the national organisations and, to a lesser extent, in local authorities. This mirrors the funding of these organisations where a higher percentage of funding is from stable grants or internal allocations.

The small numbers and the geographic concentration of specialist staff, curators, education officers and conservators,

have a significant impact on museums' ability to deliver core and additional services. The current staffing profile and approach to training must be critically reviewed if museums are to meet basic responsibilities for stewardship and increasing expectations of access and services.

The prevalence of seasonal staff in the independent museums in part reflects the dependence on earned income from visitors, and the lower proportions of grant income. The presumption is that these organisations match the staffing levels to available resources using seasonal and part-time staff. The use of seasonal and volunteer staff may raise issues over the sustainability of some organisations. Many independent museums rely on volunteers to provide a range of core services. A fall in the number of volunteers could lead to a reduction in income, and may also result in a loss of corporate knowledge unless attention is given to volunteer management programmes.



The extent of volunteer involvement across the sector confirms the social importance of museums within their local communities.

- There are currently 10,885 staff and volunteers in the museum sector.
- 53% of those working in the sector are volunteers. 84% of volunteers work within independent organisations.
- There are 2,899 full-time staff in the sector. Of these the national organisations employ 46% and local authorities employ 26%.
- Glasgow Council employs 43% of the full-time staff within local authority museum services.
- There are the equivalent of 639 staff with a curatorial remit. Of these 28% are employed by the national organisations and 40% by local authorities.
- There are the equivalent of 117 full-time education posts in the sector. 25% of those posts (26) are based within the national organisations and one fifth within local authorities.
- Only half of museums have a training policy and 46.7% have a training budget.

### Learning

Museums have an important contribution to make to the formal and informal education sectors, enabling people of all ages to experience, understand and learn from Scotland's heritage. However, the National Audit shows a clear need to build the museum sector's capacity to develop and deliver learning programmes which meet the wide-ranging needs of the community. This is most clearly evidenced by staffing levels, with only 117 full-time equivalent posts focused on education across the museum sector. Disparity and inconsistency of provision exists across museum types, and this has implications for access to museums and the learning opportunities available. The critical challenge facing government and the learning and museum sectors is how best to bridge the gap between the great potential for learning through museums, and actual provision of high quality learning opportunities for all.

More effective links between schools and museums and between different local authority departments are necessary

if museums are fully to realise their educational potential, both now and for the future. In particular, there is considerable scope to develop outreach activities to schools, and to link exhibitions more closely to the Scottish school curriculum.

- 63.9% of museums evaluate their learning and education services. However, only 55.7% of museums have a learning or education policy, with local authority museums being least likely to have a learning or education policy in place (45%).
- 33% of sites create exhibitions which link to the Scottish schools curriculum.
- There is a clear need to develop and implement an appropriate mechanism for measuring and monitoring learning and access provision, for example, the Resource Learning and Access Framework.



**Wemyss Ware teapot**  
Museum of Edinburgh

**Anstruther Easter  
Tolbooth Bell, 1668**  
Scottish Fisheries  
Museum, Edinburgh



### Access

Access in its various forms has become a central priority for all public services, as a matter of individual right and social justice. Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts that 'Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share its scientific advancement and its benefits.'<sup>9</sup>

Although the National Audit reveals that most museums take steps to build links with their local community, the need for a more systematic approach to identifying and targeting potential users is evident. The degree to which museums are able to market and promote must have a consequential impact on the ability to build audiences. Once again, access provision is inconsistent across museum types, and by geographic location. Additionally, the seasonal nature of many museum sites, especially in the independent sector, may raise questions about the adequacy of cultural provision for different areas.

The findings reflect a degree of complacency within the museum sector in respect of museums' statutory

obligations to improve access for disabled users by 2004. Although the majority of organisations assert that new initiatives are compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act, a significant minority did not take the Act into account (20.6%).

- 45.2% of museum organisations currently have an access policy. This includes all national organisations but only 29% of local authority organisations.
- 76.9% of organisations, including all of the military museums, had not conducted an access audit in the last five years.
- In the majority of organisations less than 25% of staff have undertaken DDA training.
- Over 80% of museum organisations develop links with their local communities through policy and planning, and 60% conduct outreach work with their local community.
- 58% of museum sites have conducted visitor research in the last three years.
- 88% of museum organisations produce a current publicity leaflet.

# INSIGHT

**THE AUDIT ESTABLISHES A PICTURE OF THE CONTRIBUTION MUSEUMS MAKE NOT ONLY TO THE PRESERVATION OF OUR NATIONAL HERITAGE BUT ALSO TO OTHER KEY AREAS OF SCOTTISH LIFE, SUCH AS TOURISM, LEARNING, AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT.**

### Premises

The majority of Scotland's museums are in buildings which are listed or scheduled by Historic Scotland (63%), demonstrating that museums have an important but under-recognised role as custodians of the built heritage. Statutory protection imposes limitations on how organisations can adapt older premises to meet modern needs. It may also considerably increase the cost of compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act, which comes into full effect in 2004. The National Audit indicates that there are substantial revenue and capital requirements on a national scale if all museums are to address these issues.

- 63% of museum buildings are listed or scheduled.
- 6% of buildings received a grant from Historic Scotland in 2000-1.
- 43% of museum sites open for only part of the year. The majority of these sites are in the independent sector, although 33% of local authority museum sites only open on a seasonal basis.
- Over half of museum sites are members of VisitScotland's Visitor Attraction Grading Scheme.

### Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

The potential for the application of information and communications technology is enormous. ICT might be applied across a wide range of museum functions, including education, promotion, documentation and collections management. In addition, museums are increasingly required to make their collections accessible as digital resources. The Audit reveals that museums face substantial challenges in the area of ICT application, which it is critical that they overcome if they are to meet public and government expectations. The commitment required to create and ensure public access to digital resources is at least equal to that required to ensure public access to the real objects.

The potential for promotion of museums through the Internet is considerable, with 67% of organisations currently using a website for publicity purposes. Local authorities under-perform with only 18 of the 31 authorities responding positively to this question. Overall findings on ICT



**1908 silver Christening Cup**  
Museum of Childhood,  
Edinburgh

**Parliament chair, 1640s.**  
University of St. Andrews



are particularly revealing in light of the Scottish Executive's proposals to create a Scottish Cultural Portal, which may also provide museums with a means of extending educational and outreach services.

- 67% currently use a website to publicise their services.
- The use of museum websites to provide educational resources is limited to 26% of sites, although images from over 53% of museum sites are available via the SCRAN network.
- Interpretation practices continue to concentrate on traditional forms, such as written material, guided tours and hands-on assistance. More specialist, expensive and time-consuming methods, such as IT displays, live interpretation and video, tend to be less well-represented, raising concerns about the extent to which museums are equipped to meet rising user expectations in the 21st century.

### Documentation

The National Audit demonstrates the need to improve collections documentation. Backlogs (collections which have not yet been catalogued) exist in all types of museums, with the largest backlogs of over 10,000 items being in national and local authority museums. Lack of human resources is cited as the main barrier to tackling backlogs and is substantiated by low rates of cataloguing. With 18% of organisations still using manual recording systems and 35% not using collections management databases, there is room for improvement through ICT solutions.

### Standards

The National Audit has involved the development of a new standards framework. The analysis provides benchmarks for individual museums, and overall demonstrates where the sector is performing well and less well, with a view to identifying future needs. At this stage, there are ten individual standards: forward planning, staff training, research, research services/facilities, documentation systems, storage provision, environment, collections care, conservation and disaster planning. Individual standards results have been made available in CD-ROM format, with interactive search facility.

# FOCUS

**IN UNCOVERING THE BREADTH AND DEPTH OF SCOTLAND'S DISTRIBUTED NATIONAL COLLECTION AND THE WIDE SCOPE OF MUSEUMS ACTIVITIES, THE NATIONAL AUDIT HAS IDENTIFIED A SOURCE OF NATIONAL CELEBRATION.**

### The Next Phase

SMC recognises that this pioneering study is only a first step in gathering and analysing information about the museums and cultural heritage sector. SMC will discuss with the Scottish Executive the need to:

- extend the Audit's scope to other areas not yet covered in detail
- update the data at regular intervals to measure changes and improvements
- develop a framework for the assessment of social and economic impact of cultural heritage organisations.

### Conclusion

The National Audit does not provide a national policy and funding framework for museums in Scotland, but it provides the platform for an informed debate about what is necessary if museums are to contribute to society in the future. SMC believes that the National Audit identified a number of themes for debate including the need to:

1. ensure effective stewardship of the distributed national collection
2. reform historic funding structures to address widespread inconsistency of museum provision
3. work in close partnership with the formal and informal education sector to make an effective contribution to learning

4. actively build museum audiences and encourage access for all
5. raise standards and modernise practice, to meet rising visitor expectations
6. increase capacity within the museum sector in order to develop and deliver services for the future.

The National Audit is a key outcome of the Scottish Executive's National Cultural Strategy. It provides a wealth of data and conclusions which can inform both a national framework and individual planning decisions. It provides a platform for future development and planning by all those interested in the preservation and use of Scotland's magnificent cultural heritage now and for the future.

### References

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# VISION

**THE NATIONAL AUDIT PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD THE SCOTTISH MUSEUM SERVICE OF THE FUTURE.**

**Steam crane**  
Summerlee Heritage Park,  
Coatbridge



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recognised as a charity  
No SCO 15593.

Published by the Scottish  
Museums Council, July 2002

Design: newton.eh6  
Photography: David Boni

