

**Scottish Museums Council  
Submission to the Cultural Commission**

**September 2004**

**SCOTTISH  
MUSEUMS  
COUNCIL**



## **1. Introducing SMC**

The Scottish Museums Council (SMC) is the representative body and membership organisation for Scotland's non-national museums and galleries. The Scottish Executive acknowledges SMC as its main advisor on local museums and as the main channel of Executive support for the sector.

Our aim is to improve museum and gallery provision in Scotland for both local people and visitors. We have over 200 members who in turn manage over 350 museums. They include 32 local authorities, universities, regimental and independent museums, ranging in size from small voluntary trusts to large metropolitan services, attracting in excess of one million visitors a year.

SMC combines strategic leadership for the sector with provision of professional information, advisory and support services to members. While we provide an important integrated service to museums, our long-term aim is to establish a culture of capacity rather than dependency. We therefore place considerable emphasis on helping museums to help themselves.

SMC's vision is:

Modern and accessible museums and galleries in Scotland that use their collections to

- Inspire People
- Shape Identity
- Improve Understanding
- Provide Enjoyment
- Promote Confidence

SMC's strategic objectives enable Scotland's museums and galleries to grow as inclusive, accessible learning organisations that respond relevantly to audience needs, develop as centres of community learning and champion every individual's cultural rights.

## **2. Long Term Vision for Museums in Scotland**

SMC was asked by the Cultural Commission to facilitate the newly formed Museums and Galleries Working Group which has produced the following vision for a Scottish Museums Partnership.

A transformed cultural framework could achieve this vision by 2030:

- Millions of people in Scotland and throughout the world will connect with the unique collections in Scotland's museums and galleries, libraries and archives, giving them a sense of Scottish identity, heritage and values.
- People of all ages and backgrounds will see museums and galleries as central to Scotland's cultural life. Within every community museums will be used as centres of cultural and creative activity, in which collections form the basis of dialogue and debate and of engagement with the visual and performing arts and with science.
- People throughout Scotland will be aware of the nation's significant collections and their entitlement to access them by a wide variety of means and to assured standards.
- Museums and galleries will be recognised as full partners in the formal education system and object based learning will be an exciting, popular part of the curriculum, delivering proven learning outcomes.
- People of all ages will use museums and galleries as key centres of life long learning. Museum activities will be important points on pathways to inclusion, inspiring curiosity and self confidence in a person's ability to learn.
- Everyone nationally and internationally will be able to benefit from electronic access to Scotland's collections and to learning resources based on them.
- Scotland's museums and galleries will play a key role in attracting international tourism and in promoting Scotland abroad.
- Scotland's creative talent will see museums and galleries as a source for inspiration and innovation.
- Scotland's museums will be recognised internationally for the quality of their services and as a model of best practice.

### **3. Delivering the Vision**

Central to the delivery of the vision will be a coherent strategic framework that produces a uniform set of standards and services across Scotland. Delivering this vision will be a new Scottish Museums Partnership. The Partnership will deliver a sustainable network of museums and galleries, sharing collections, resources and expertise. The Partnership will work to develop a regional infrastructure to increase capacity and raise standards.

It will be capable of containing museums with diverse funding patterns as it will operate as a nationally based partnership, rather than a centralised organisation.

SMC in its current role as the strategic agency for non-national museums and galleries already commands the reach required to develop and roll out the standards and mechanisms inherent in this ambitious vision. The next stage might be to widen SMC's strategic role to the whole museum sector as envisaged on page 6.

The following submission should be read in the context of the submission from the Museums and Galleries Working Group

#### **3.1 Education – how do we deliver cultural knowledge and develop artistic, cultural and social skills?**

Museums in Scotland already deliver a wide variety of learning opportunities. Participants in these include preschool children, school students, young adults, families, people over 60 and people from minority ethnic or other groups. Through this work museums have an important role in reflecting cultural diversity and in meeting the needs of the many people who are outside the formal education system or otherwise at risk of exclusion.

Museums in Scotland have for many years been part of the education delivery system, but they have not been formally recognised or supported as such.

SMC is in the final stages of producing a *National Access and Learning Strategy for Museums and Galleries in Scotland* (publication expected in winter 2004), which addresses many of the key questions implicit in the Commission's educational aspirations. This strategy has been informed by comprehensive research and extensive consultation with SMC members and key partners at national and local levels.

The strategy offers leadership routes for the sharing of good practice and recommends ways in which museums can work with public, private and volunteer partners to support learning and help sustain communities. The strategy also offers leadership in recommending how we can develop artistic, cultural and social skills and provide cultural knowledge.

Two examples of the way SMC is already meeting these objectives are:

- Developing and integrating the increased use of electronic and on-line delivery of education via the SMC ICT strategy.
- Encouraging opportunities for engaging heritage with the school curriculum via the Cultural Co-ordinators in Scottish Schools pilot (SMC already have grant aid in place for this project).

However, the quality of projects such as those mentioned above often obscures the fact that funding for this kind of initiative is overwhelmingly short-term and project-based. Delivery is fragmented, impact is limited and there is no sustainable basis from which to consolidate expertise and experience. Outside of the NGS, NMS and Glasgow very few museums have staff with a remit to provide educational services. Projects such as Cultural Co-ordinators play a valuable role helping to bridge the gap and enable school children to access their cultural heritage.

Another major barrier to accessing cultural heritage, particularly in rural Scotland, is the cost of transport.

## **Recommendations**

1. Museums in Scotland that provide learning to agreed target audiences and to assured standards, should be both properly recognised and funded to realise their full potential as part of the education system.
2. Object centred learning should be an integrated part of the school curriculum, and museums should be a full partner in curriculum development.
3. Access to museum based programmes for all school students should be part of the national cultural entitlement. The transformed cultural framework should address both transport and geographical issues.
4. Projects such as Cultural Co-ordinators should be fully resourced to enable them to deliver to their full potential.

### **3.2 Institutional Infrastructure – how do we support the delivery of cultural rights?**

The Museums and Galleries Working Group have been developing the idea of a nationwide strategic framework with partnership and collaboration called the Scottish Museums Partnership. It would need the support of a strategic agency function using the expertise that is currently embodied in the SMC. This body could sit in any of the following cultural governance models:

- Large Scottish Executive cultural department
- A large national cultural agency

- Membership agencies
- Small Scottish Executive cultural department

The question of institutional infrastructure cannot be considered in isolation from the future of funding in the sector and the mechanisms for delivering that funding. Historically, funding problems have centred around:

- Lack of realistic, consistent and sustained core funding over many years.
- Fragmented, ad hoc project based investment in renewal.

Whatever the solution, it must take account of the diversity of the sector's funding streams, for example, local authority, higher education, enterprise etc.

A good example of how one local authority is supporting regional infrastructures is the model developed in the Highlands. The Highland Council has drawn up service level agreements with each of the registered museums in the area. The amount of grant paid to the museum by the Council is dependent on the services provided to the communities in the local area.

SMC has a role to play in helping museums and galleries to engage with their local authorities' through community planning mechanisms, joint Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs), and thereby help to build strong, healthy, more equitable and sustainable communities. Indeed, the existing diverse network of local museums and impressive participation from local communities demonstrate the extent of existing goodwill and community engagement (over 50% of museum staff are volunteers). Improved channelling of this community commitment would bring enormous benefit to collections and visitors alike.

The regional framework needs to take account of the evaluation of the emerging Regional Development Challenge Fund (RDCF) partnerships, of proposed Cultural Commission regional structures and the particular needs of the rural and island museums in Scotland. The approach also needs to take account of the importance of supporting Gaelic Heritage.

The effective delivery of Cultural Entitlement on a regional basis requires an assured standard of quality provision. There is a key role for local authorities both in the delivery of entitlement and in ensuring 'adequate' cultural provision. There is an obvious link between the implementation of a significance scheme and regional delivery of Cultural Entitlement through access to museum collections and services.

The Scottish Museums Partnership should comprise some or all of the following:

- A museums strategic agency which would service the framework for the

Partnership and provide support for its museums. It would administer the funding streams below, liaise with the Scottish Executive on policy development, disseminate best practice and provide quality assurance, linking museum outcomes to the delivery of cultural entitlement. Fulfilment of this wider agency role could be the logical next step in SMC's evolution.

- A Partnership Forum to act as a steering group, involving local authority and independent museums, university museums, NMS, NGS and the museums strategic agency.
- A Significance Scheme for museums having collections of national and international importance. This could serve as a mechanism to secure a sustainable future for nationally important collections, but also deliver defined outcomes in terms of enhanced access. This scheme could be funded by the Scottish Executive and would build on the research currently being undertaken on behalf of the Executive by SMC. A Designation Challenge Fund was established for England in 1999, funded by DCMS and administered by MLAC. Over the period 2000 to 2006 it has awarded grants to a total of £24 million to collections held by 39 organisations (see [www.mla.gov.uk](http://www.mla.gov.uk)). Such a scheme could provide core revenue support, based on 3 year service level agreements, to meet specific targets in relation to national government priorities.
- A Capital Challenge Fund open to significant collections could be established to provide a source for capital grants, particularly for collection related projects, including renewals of buildings and displays or digitisation projects. This could be funded by the Scottish Executive and supported by a lead strategic agency, such as SMC, with matching funding from as many other sources as possible.
- A Project Challenge Fund could be created to develop and deliver innovative projects in the areas of audience development, learning, leadership and development, to equip museums to be dynamic contributors to Scottish society. This would build on the model of the Regional Development Challenge Funding (RDCF) currently administered by SMC.

### **3.3 Delivery of & Access to Cultural Services – How do we provide cultural facilities and ensure open access to them?**

An overriding priority in delivering cultural services to Scotland must be developing a framework which supports not only partnerships between museums (national and non-national), but also between partners external to the museums sector in areas such as education, social justice and health. Museums have the potential to be valuable partners in delivering agendas not traditionally controlled by them, and this increased integration in Scotland's daily life is to be aimed for as we progress ideas of access and delivery. SMC recognises the role museums play in exploring identity and community memory and places this at the heart of its strategic recommendations on

access to and delivery of cultural services. By using museums as 'safe spaces' to explore challenging issues that divide communities (locally and internationally) and to manage community transition (economically - in industrial communities, or racially - in inner city communities), non-national museums can respond to changes in society at ground level.

The following areas remain crucial to the future delivery of cultural services, and inclusive access to them.

### Collections

The capacity to develop, care for and manage their collections is fundamental to museums, because it is the basis of the service they provide and their legacy to future generations. The evidence of the national audit of collections, published in 2002, showed that Scotland's museums hold over 12 million items covering all subject areas and that among these are collections of local, regional, national and international importance. It was clear that collections of national and international significance were held in many of the museums surveyed, although the size of these varied greatly. The audit highlighted that some museums were unable to care for or interpret their collections. In 2001 over 45% of museums surveyed could not meet basic standards for collections documentation, storage or disaster planning.

However, museums in the UK are engaged in a debate about the future of collecting and there is widespread recognition that the way forward is:

- A more collaborative approach to acquisitions, involving both more focused collecting - by individual museums with and for the communities they represent and between museums - aimed at building collections strengths across a distributed national model.
- Rationalising some existing collections, which in some cases may involve transfer or disposal of material.
- Improved storage (including storage shared between museums and/or with libraries and archives) which meets recognised standards, enabling better care of and public access to collections not on display.

Many museums in Scotland are keen to move in this direction. What is needed is a framework for decision making and setting priorities, together with a focus for investment.

### Buildings and Exhibitions

Museums provide public access directly to visitors through exhibitions and facilities, and increasingly through online resources. As deliverers of cultural services museums have the huge advantage that through their buildings they have a physical presence across Scotland – a key element if reasonable physical access to cultural activity is to be part of the national cultural entitlement. Some of Scotland's museum collections are inextricably linked to

a particular building or buildings, which explains why the national audit found that 63% of museum buildings in Scotland are either listed or scheduled. They include not only those built for purpose last century, but also those with more recent associations, because housing museums in historic buildings has suited economic regeneration and building preservation agendas. These buildings place on museums a significant burden of heritage stewardship, involving additional maintenance and complex and expensive works to comply with legislative requirements such as the Disability Discrimination Act.

Depending on their location, environment and facilities, museum buildings can be an important resource for a whole community – as places of learning and enjoyment, as creative and social space and as a safe environment to explore sensitive and difficult issues. There are opportunities for flexible and creative thinking here as there are real possibilities for museums to share spaces with schools, libraries and other cultural venues. Some museum buildings could be renovated, some replaced, some museums could eventually operate from alternative spaces. It is essential, however, that there are criteria in place to enable decisions on investment and alternative options to be made, in the context of the needs of the communities which we serve.

A significant part of the long term displays in Scottish museums and galleries are years beyond their original lifespan, and are badly in need of renewal with up to date interpretation. For example Perth Museums and Galleries, serving a local population of 135,000, has not renewed a long-term display for over 10 years. Yet it is evident that top quality exhibits can stimulate both curiosity and imagination and special (temporary) exhibitions have been shown to be a critical factor in encouraging repeat visits to museums and in drawing in new audiences. There are huge opportunities for museums in Scotland to collaborate on special exhibitions which tour within Scotland and overseas and which provide the basis for shared online resources. Again the need is for a mechanism, which enables focused investment in fresh interpretation of important collections, with far wider access.

### 3.3.2 ICT strategy

SMC have taken the lead in the development of ICT throughout the sector by publishing *A national ICT strategy for Scotland's museums* in June 2004. The strategy was developed in consultation with a number of key national and UK partners including MLA, mda, The National Museums of Scotland, Scran, Learning and Teaching Scotland, SLIC, the National Archives, and the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland.

This strategy highlights the key areas of priority that we must address if we are to mainstream ICT in Scottish museums, and ultimately increase electronic access to museum collections.

The strategy advocates core museum stewardship functions such as electronic documentation. Furthermore, it shows how these functions are essential if we are to ultimately increase electronic access to our museum collections.



We have made an open commitment to the Full Disclosure framework for retrospective electronic documentation. In partnership with organisations such as the British Library, SLIC, and the archives community, we are pushing forward with the implementation of this framework, initially by holding cross-domain workshops.

One example of how SMC are already supporting museums in increasing electronic access to their collections is by the ICT scholarship scheme. Through this annual programme, SMC fund two scholarship places at the Hunterian Museum, for computing students from the University of Glasgow to carry out a ten week project on behalf of member museums. To date, individual projects within the scheme have included developing online collections of digitised images of objects, and also to increase access to member web sites through accessibility and usability audits. Another example is our development of a small museums fund to support ICT infrastructure and training. These two initiatives will increase the overall standards of infrastructure and capacity within the sector.

### 3.3.3 Workforce development: guidance for museums on working with volunteers

SMC aims to reinforce the growing capacity of museums and galleries to provide visitor-focussed services by supporting the establishment of a Creative and Cultural Industries Sector Skills Council. We are working with this and other Sector Skills Councils such as Lifelong Learning to support workforce development and to assist with establishing volunteer support systems.

One of the Strategic Change Fund (SCF) projects is a leadership development programme for Scottish museums, run in association with the Scottish Leadership Foundation, which brings together museum staff from twelve local councils and the University of Glasgow.

### 3.3.4 Cultural diversity

SMC regards the promotion of cultural diversity as a key part of cultural entitlement. We are working closely with Black Environment Network (BEN) on various projects to encourage cultural diversity in museums. The Heritage Education Access Project (HEAP) is a unique programme managed by BEN and funded by HLF. The programme promotes heritage opportunities available to ethnic communities living in Scotland. The aim is to support ethnic community groups of all ages in establishing sustainable links with heritage organisations. SMC is a key partner in the HEAP programme and supports BEN in taking this exciting project forward.

### 3.3.5 Partnership Working

Like the rest of the cultural sector, museums are no strangers to partnerships. At their best, partnerships share best practice, develop skills and enable win-win collaborations. Most museums deliver at least some of their services through a variety of partnerships, both within the museums community and with other domains.

The SCF is building new audiences through partnership work and has produced innovative ways to deliver cultural education. SMC has funded twelve SCF projects including the following learning and access projects:

- *Linking Business with Family Learning* – Almond Valley Heritage Trust, designed to encourage local business and community involvement in the exhibitions and activities at the centre. It will allow the organisation to focus on establishing links with the business community and create a new educational programme specifically focusing on family learning.
- *Outreach Long and Wide* – Highland Council in partnership with Highland Museums Forum and Highland and Island Enterprise. This project brings an education officer to the partnership to improve information exchange, reduce duplication of effort, maximise the sharing of resources and improve the quality of the learning experience for users.

Another good example of developing partnership working can be seen in the projects currently run via the Scottish Executive funded RDCF. These partnerships are centred around one of four themes: workforce development; learning and access; tourism; and interpretation. The projects span Scotland and help museums and galleries build links with external agencies such as tourism bodies and Enterprise Agencies.

## **Recommendations**

5. There should be a strategic framework for museum delivery in Scotland, linked to a cultural entitlement. All museums within it should be funded to deliver a range of agreed services to agreed standards. The framework should be a partnership, supported by a museums strategic agency, which would build on the expertise of the SMC.
6. The framework should enable a collaborative approach to collecting, disposal, storage and access.
7. Criteria for museum standards and delivery should be part of the community and central planning process, linked to cultural entitlement.
8. The strategic framework must enable capacity through support for training and development for both paid staff and volunteers.

### **3.4 Marketing & Promotion – how do we increase and broaden the profile of the audience engaging with cultural activity in Scotland?**

Museums are a huge driver for cultural tourism in Scotland. In 2000 nearly 8 million of the visits to museums were by tourists, many of whom indicated that heritage was a key reason for planning a visit to Scotland. The economic impact in terms of tourist spending on accommodation, food and travel is therefore linked to museums' contribution to the Scottish tourism product. The Tourism Framework for Action published by the Scottish Executive recognised the importance of cultural heritage to the marketing of Scotland as a tourist destination. Museums are well placed to contribute to the recently announced "National Events Strategy". In rural areas museums operate as unofficial tourist information centres, providing information on accommodation and travel.

SMC in partnership with VisitScotland and Scottish Enterprise is planning to hold two conferences. The first, in February next year, will update museums on the changes in the tourism infrastructure and will showcase examples of best practice; the second, in the autumn, will update the tourism industry on the outcomes of the Cultural Review for the museums sector. Both will highlight the importance of museums as part of the tourism product.

SMC's access and learning strategy, media guidance and training programmes aim to enhance museums' and galleries' capacity for self-promotion and marketing.

These programmes educate new audiences. They help traditionally excluded audiences to understand the positive impact of museums and galleries on people's lives both at national and local level. By placing the benefits of cultural inclusion in this kind of context, the strategy can then go on to enable museums and galleries' governing bodies to communicate aims and values internally and to external partners, and champion the contribution of museums and galleries to learning.

SMC believe the next step to building on this work is to make the link between existing and future audience development research and clear, outcome focused performance monitoring. An interim measure could be access to cultural user surveys via the Scottish Executive.

### **Recommendations**

9. A strategic framework for museum delivery in Scotland should be linked to national and regional strategies for tourism and marketing, with public service standards for museums aligned to those of the Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions Grading Scheme.
10. The framework should provide for cross sector research to inform audience development, monitor performance and report outcomes.

### **3.5 Maximising Scotland's Creative Potential – How do we encourage Scotland's people to be the best they can be?**

SMC helps Scotland's museums fulfil their diverse roles in the country's cultural life. Our strategic recommendations are promoting museums as stimulating public spaces that welcome all and promote collective and individual wellbeing, confident citizenship and cultural, social and economic development. Discovery, innovation and analysis unlock the inspirational power inherent in Scotland's museum and gallery collections.

Museum environments stimulate creativity, inspire knowledge, enhance self-confidence and reinforce community and individual identity. SMC's strategic objectives and partnerships enable the heritage environment to offer universal access to ideas, objects, places and spaces that reflect on the past, present and future. This makes museums a key part of Scotland's creative industries.

However, all too often collaborative projects are short term and on a very small scale. What is needed are ways of enabling more people, from a broader background, to take advantage of the creative opportunities that museums provide. Just as important are mechanisms for training provision within the creative industries, which promote engagement with museums and galleries.

An example of good practice is the SMC funded heritage grant aid scheme for Cultural Coordinators in Scottish Schools programme. This identifies ways of maximising the potential contribution of culture and cultural activities to children's formal education. It widens the range of experiences available to children and young people, improving self-confidence, encouraging creativity and raising skills levels in team working, flexible and innovative thinking and communication.

#### **Recommendations**

11. A strategic framework for museum delivery in Scotland should include the stimulation of creativity as an explicit aim for formal and informal learning programmes.
12. Museums should be recognised and resourced as a key part of the cultural and creative industries.

## **4 Cultural Rights and Entitlement**

SMC believes the concept of Cultural Rights and Entitlements should bring universal benefit to all Scotland's citizens. Within this concept is an implicit contract that states that Cultural Rights for the citizen must be met by Cultural Responsibilities from the institutional infrastructure. We offer the following as working definitions of Cultural Rights and Entitlements at this interim stage:

### **Cultural Rights**

A "right" is the moral and statutory basis on which the citizen is due some form of cultural provision – in this case museum services. This duty of Cultural Responsibility is recognised by a relevant body – usually central government, but possibly also one or more national, regional or local bodies, which provide or support the provision of museum services.

### **Cultural Entitlement**

An "entitlement" is the cultural benefit which the citizen or user can actually enjoy on the basis of any identified right. It entails a commitment or "pledge" by one or more of the bodies charged with cultural care, which gives effect to a right by creating a specific entitlement.

## **Recommendations**

A national cultural entitlement should include:

13. Every school student should be able to visit a museum of assured quality and within a reasonable distance, as part of curriculum based activity.
14. Access for everyone to museum collections of assured quality and within a reasonable distance.
15. Access to museum services which are responsive to community needs and aspirations.
16. Online access to significant museum and gallery collections and services in Scotland through a national "museum portal".

## **1. Key Recommendations**

1. Museums in Scotland that provide learning to agreed target audiences and to assured standards, should be both properly recognised and funded to realise their full potential as part of the education system.
2. Object centred learning should be an integrated part of the school curriculum, and museums should be a full partner in curriculum development.
3. Access to museum based programmes for all school students should be part of the national cultural entitlement. The transformed cultural framework should address both transport and geographical issues.
4. Projects such as Cultural Co-ordinators should be fully resourced to enable them to deliver to their full potential.
5. There should be a strategic framework for museum delivery in Scotland, linked to a cultural entitlement. All museums within it should be funded to deliver a range of agreed services to agreed standards. The framework should be a partnership, supported by a museums strategic agency, which would build on the expertise of the SMC.
6. The framework should enable a collaborative approach to collecting, disposal, storage and access.
7. Criteria for museum standards and delivery should be part of the community and central planning process, linked to cultural entitlement.
8. The strategic framework must enable capacity through support for training and development for both paid staff and volunteers.
9. A strategic framework for museum delivery in Scotland should be linked to national and regional strategies for tourism and marketing, with public service standards for museums aligned to those of the Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions Grading Scheme.
10. The framework should provide for cross sector research to inform audience development, monitor performance and report outcomes
11. A strategic framework for museum delivery in Scotland should include the stimulation of creativity as an explicit aim for formal and informal learning programmes.
12. Museums should be recognised and resourced as a key part of the cultural and creative industries.

13. Every school student should be able to visit a museum of assured quality and within a reasonable distance, as part of curriculum based activity.
14. Access for everyone to museum collections of assured quality and within a reasonable distance.
15. Access to museum services which are responsive to community needs and aspirations.
16. Online access to significant museum and gallery collections and services in Scotland through a national “museum portal”.