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## EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

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Our Ref:

Your Ref:

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James Boyle  
Chair, Cultural Commission  
Broughton High School  
Carrington Road  
Edinburgh  
EH4 1EG

Dear Dear James

### Consultation - Inverness

Please find below our comments in relation to this first phase of consultation. I apologise for the delay, but have just returned from leave to attend to this. I trust that you will still be able to incorporate our comments.

Yours sincerely

**Alasdair Joyce**  
**Senior Museums Officer**

## **The Moray Council**

### **Department of Educational Services – Museums Service Response to Cultural Commission Consultation Phase 1**

#### **Cultural Rights and Entitlements**

1 Rights and entitlements are only effective if those to whom they apply are firstly aware of and understand them, and then choose to exercise them.

2 There is a core percentage of the population who, although entitled to use Cultural Heritage Services (hereafter referred to museums services), will choose never to do so, (in the same way that a percentage will never visit a football match, go on holiday to Mediterranean, or listen to Stravinsky). This is a trait that we cannot ignore, but must accept.

3 That percentage can be changed in the future by a change in the way that museums present themselves. We should aim to reduce the percentage by careful market research, clear marketing strategies and targeted promotion. We must gain a better understanding of who our users are, and what they want from us. Our sector must be demand-led, and not provider-driven.

#### **Education**

1 Education is central to museums and heritage. This is now a well established fact - The case has been made and proved. We should move on to a point where this is accepted, and the case does not have to be re-made at the outset of every grant application and project development.

2 Similarly museums and heritage have a vital and central role to play in addressing social justice. This case has also been proved repeatedly. It must be accepted in the future.

3 Museum and heritage learning must in the future be relevant to the curriculum. If education is accepted as central to the education and learning scene, the tendency for the curriculum to 'drive' the heritage elements will be lessened, and the heritage elements seen as valid curriculum components in their own right, not as some add-on that has to be justified at every turn.

4 The ways in which museums reach schools, other learners, and students must move and change. Museums will have to become much more adept and professional about taking themselves into schools, and depend less on the school visiting the museum. There are implications here for museum infrastructure as well, but significantly for education, this will result in the 'museum' becoming much more of a normal component of the classroom, and thereby a component of regular adult life and interest.

#### **Institutional Infrastructure, Access and Service Delivery**

1 This is probably one of the areas for greatest change over the next twenty years or so. Change has already begun in some areas, but the museums profession is in real danger of being so deeply entrenched in previous methodology as to be in danger of becoming 'boxed-in' by its fascination with the past and reluctance, at times, to think in new and different ways.

2 Many museums are in listed buildings, generating clear connections between the cultural and built heritage. Such museums need to grow and develop into centres of excellence, maintaining and preserving these dual functions for the future, and maximising the connections that exist between the elements of building, culture and, in the case of some museums, the human element in the form of their founders and benefactors.

3 Equally, the museums sector must recognise that the 'fixed-building' museum as a service-delivery tool has growing limitations, particularly in the context of social justice, entitlement and rights. Accessibility, geographical location, changing demographics etc. all combine to affect the ways in which fixed museums are used. There is a limit to the size of 'museum estate' that the country can afford to run and maintain and, although this is inevitably related to the size of the 'heritage estate' in the form of the total collections, nevertheless there has to be a balancing of what is cost-effective against the needs, demands and rights of society. There must be a real move towards making the museum less static, and more mobile and flexible, taking the museum to the visitor rather than bringing the visitor to the museum.

4 Museums are, by definition, custodians of objects. Museums are founded in their collections and the information related to them. In the past twenty years there has been at best a patchy approach to collections management and care. This must be addressed, otherwise the collections will deteriorate, unique and irreplaceable objects will be lost, documentation backlogs will become irrecoverable, and the core reason for museums to exist – their collections - will be damaged beyond repair.

5 Museums must repay any investment in their collections' future by a change in emphasis to accessing those collections. At present, there is in many parts of the museums sector a presumption against access to 'treasured objects' unless a case for access can be proven. This attitude must be turned on its head, starting from the very top, with a presumption in favour of access unless the nature of the object makes this impossible.

6 Of course there are many different levels and forms of access, but unless museums are committed, and enabled, to release the majority of their collections from dusty shelves and cupboards to public gaze, they will not deserve to have a future. The professional protectionism towards that which is perceived as 'precious', and which has pervaded many cultural heritage institutions in the past, has no place in the future.

7 Service delivery requires professionals. This is unlikely to change, but the nature of the profession must change. It must become more accessible to its users, hiding less behind its façade of 'The curator' and engaging with its users at an understandable level. The term 'Curator' conveys old-fashioned and dated preconceptions of the profession, which are no longer appropriate. The profession requires a twenty-first century image, and as a first step needs to develop a twenty-first century vocabulary to describe what it does, and how it does it.

#### Marketing and Promotion.

1 The heart of success in any business is sound market research, a marketing strategy built on this research, and well implemented promotional plans and campaigns to follow. Cultural heritage is a business. The sector has to become much more adept at behaving like a business. The sector must spend time in the future identifying who its users are, why they are users – or indeed why they are not users – and providing more of what users say they want to do and see. If visitors to the museum say that they want more opportunities to handle objects, then we must create appropriate opportunities in the future for them to do that. Otherwise they will not visit, or they will not come back a second time.

2 Marketing and promotion is expensive. Even the most modest advert costs money, sending promotional media through the post is expensive, as is printing the media to start with. Museums have to be more realistic about these costs, and be prepared to invest more in promoting themselves in the future. But first, get the product right!

#### Maximising the creative potential

1 Some might question whether cultural heritage is creative, but there is a great deal of creativity involved in interpreting, teaching and learning about cultural heritage. This creativity can only be encouraged if the core of the sector is adequately supported financially. At present, the sector is

under funded. This must be addressed, otherwise the creativity will cease along with everything else.

2 There is much talk of 'sense of ownership' and 'cultural rights', but this can be misleading. It is more about active involvement than ownership, and more about appreciation than rights. Society cannot be involved in something that it feels isolated from, and cannot appreciate what it does not understand, or even feel comfortable about participating in or joining in with. The hardest way to involve people in cultural heritage, and to make them appreciate it for the first time, is for them to come into the museum. The simplest way is to take it to them and put it in their hands, and tell them about it. We must spend more time in the future going visiting, and less time waiting to be visited.