

## **Cultural Commission Phase Two Consultation**

### **Scottish Museums Council (SMC) Response**

January 2005

SMC is pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the Cultural Commission's phase two consultation. Our response considers the Commission's questions under the pan-sectoral questions themed headings.

SMC's initial response to the first stage of the Commission's inquiry laid out a future vision for the museum sector in Scotland and the principles and framework which would enable sectoral participants to deliver a successful scheme of cultural entitlements and responsibilities for Scottish citizens and visitors to Scotland.

This response goes on to consider those principles in greater detail and benefits from existing examples of successful practice and further consultation with the museums sector in Scotland via the latest set of regional meetings themed as *Constructive Change*.

It should be considered in conjunction with the SMGWG submission.

#### **Introduction**

The Scottish Museums Council (SMC) is the representative body and membership organisation for Scotland's non-national museums and galleries. We are acknowledged by the Scottish Executive as its main adviser on local museums and the main channel of Executive support for this sector and the accountable officer.

We have over 200 members who in turn manage over 330 museums. They include all 32 local authorities, university, regimental and independent museums, ranging in size from small voluntary trusts to large metropolitan services, attracting in excess of 1 million visitors a year such as Glasgow Museums.

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 remains to establish a culture of capacity rather than dependency. We therefore place considerable emphasis on helping museums to help themselves, and encouraging other key players to acknowledge their own important contribution.

#### **Vision**

SMC's vision is for modern and accessible museums and galleries in Scotland that use their collections to inspire, shape identity, improve understanding, provide enjoyment and promote confidence.

#### **Aim**

Our aim is to lead, in partnership, the development of museums and galleries across Scotland towards achieving this vision.

### **Strategic Objectives**

- Advocate and communicate the crucial role of Museums and Galleries contribution to the quality of life of the people of Scotland.
- Improve access, learning and stewardship across the sector to maximise Museums and Galleries development.
- To build alliances at National, regional and local levels.
- Deliver best value in terms of quality, efficiency, value for money.
- Provide the evidence base to support policy decision making for the Museums and Galleries sector.

### **1. Rights, Entitlements and Responsibilities (Questions 1-5)**

SMC believes that cultural entitlements should be at the heart of museum provision in Scotland. Defined cultural entitlements should be linked to quality standards that encourage development and improvement rather than advocating a minimum entitlement. The framework for delivery should make provision for individuals and communities to participate to ensure that such entitlements can evolve to meet the changing needs and demands of Scottish Society. The role of championing equitable cultural entitlements in Scotland lies with the Scottish Executive and some legislation may be required to ensure entitlement is secured.

SMC has submitted a separate paper to the Commission defining cultural rights and entitlement and proposing further research on two particular models of delivery: a schools model and an adequacy model (see appendix 1). Although the two models use museums as an example of potential delivery of cultural entitlements they are both applicable to the wider cultural community.

### **2. Cultural Leadership (Questions 6-15)**

SMC believes that responsibility for cultural leadership needs to permeate throughout the cultural sector to ensure that strategy is formulated and delivered to equal high standards.

- 2.1 At the top, the Scottish Executive needs to provide the key leadership, clearly articulating what it wants to see in terms of cultural entitlement and provision, not just within the cultural sector but across all governmental departments. Scottish Ministers need to become the cultural champions of Scotland, bridging the different political portfolios. A strong and vibrant cultural presence can deliver effective benefits forming part of the delivery framework for economic growth, social health and well being and taking education out of the classroom, making it accessible to individuals and communities.
- 2.2 A National Cultural Forum, representing all parts of the cultural sector, should consist of the Chair or CEO of the lead body from each sector and could:
- advise on cultural policy and infrastructure,
  - promote joint working,
  - undertake consultation,
  - commission independent social research and evaluation,
  - ensure consistent standards across the cultural sector.

- 2.3 Local authorities should provide local cultural leadership, through a local cultural plan which would outline the delivery mechanism for both local and national cultural rights and entitlements and other elements of cultural policy. The plan would be both aspirational and responsive to local needs and would be obliged to engage a wide variety of partners such as relevant Independent and University Museums. Partnerships with local and national organisations would be a key element in the delivery of each local cultural plan. Standards and guidelines for the development of local cultural plans would need to be set out by the Scottish Executive.
- 2.4 The Scottish Executive could select the Chair of this National Cultural Forum, which could rotate between the different cultural organisations and agencies.
- 2.5 The lead body for the museums sector should ensure that the link between national and local priorities is clearly understood and that parity of value exists between the bodies delivering the two. Consultation demonstrates that a membership-based lead body such as SMC would reinforce buy-in and confidence in the delivery of future strategies.
- 2.6 Cultural services and the delivery of adequate cultural provision should be statutory for Local Authorities to enable them to commit to investing sufficient funds and manage the political demand between these and the more visible statutory services such as education or healthcare.

'Adequate provision' would be defined in the development of a standards framework linked to cultural entitlements. Where possible, cross-policy imperatives set at national level should be clearly demonstrated at local level to articulate the complementary, rather than the competitive nature of local service delivery. Guidelines on the process of developing and delivering a local cultural plan would be set out by the Scottish Executive, the concept of local partnerships would be central to these guidelines. Local forums should also be used to secure additional funding and achieve common goals.

### **3. Pan Sectoral Planning (Questions 16-21)**

Much of this is covered in the previous section, and it is important to note the sectoral support for an MLA (or functional) equivalent for Scotland. There is strong support for pan sectoral planning and working within the museums sector and SMC advocate a system under which the expertise of each party is recognised and respected, and not one where responsibility for cross domain working leads to one partner being subsumed by the other.

Strategic agencies for museums, libraries, archives represent Scotland in the UK Joint forum and are have started to align their policies, strategies to deliver increasingly collaborative projects. Pan sectoral planning has been carried out on several projects such as the 'Their Past Your Future Scotland' one of the largest community projects happening in Scotland this year, a partnership led by SMC and involving Scottish Library and Information Council, Learning In Scotland and the Imperial War Museum. At both a national and international level they have been representing the Scottish model of sector strategic agencies with memberships working collaboratively to deliver cost effective and successful projects.

#### **4. Funding Arrangements (Questions 22-33)**

Leadership in terms of cultural policy should be reflected in investment of resources by the Scottish Executive and similarly, leadership at local level should be reflected in investment by local authorities.

Public funding between and within cultural sectors should be determined through a framework established by the Scottish Executive. In both the SMC and SMGWG Phase 1 response we set out proposals for a strategic framework for museums delivery, based on a Scottish Museums Partnership which would be funded both locally and nationally. These proposals could operate within the wider pan sectoral framework that is outlined in this paper under Cultural Leadership. Key funding principles might be:

- 4.1 Recognition of participation levels in cultural activity nationally, as well as the cost of the cultural experience. In 2000 museums and galleries in Scotland received over 13 million visits, making them the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest providers of a cultural experience after libraries and cinemas. Visits to very many museums in Scotland are free to the user. On a cost per visit basis (of roughly £4 per visit across the range of museums in Scotland) this is very good value compared with most of the performing arts.
- 4.2 Organisations which have a recognised national role should receive funding directly from the Scottish Executive. There is similarly a case, as set out in our Phase 1 submission, that museums which hold collections of national significance should also receive support from central government through a "Significant Collections Scheme".
- 4.3 Local authority funding for the delivery of a national cultural entitlement should be ring fenced for those organisations that comprise the delivery framework. This will be essential to ensure delivery in the short and medium term and sustainability in the longer term.
- 4.4 Funding for local and regionally based organisations should be devolved to the relevant level, but within a framework which includes the delivery of entitlements as a required outcome from the community planning process.
- 4.5 The funding framework should include funding for capital projects for renewal and development of cultural assets. This should involve a range of funding sources such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, in addition to central and local government. This will be essential to ensure that cultural assets such as museums can meet changing public expectations in Scotland and internationally.
- 4.6 Funding for Research and Development of the sector should continue to be channelled through the sector strategic agencies.
- 4.7 Funding discussions should also take account of the different funding mechanisms that support University and Regimental museums (provided via SHEFC and the MOD respectively) but are part of the overall delivery of cultural entitlement.

However it is important to recognise and support the continuation of the generous private philanthropy that has always been a feature of many areas of Scotland's cultural life and tax and charity regulation framework should give

strong encouragement to personal and private sector giving to cultural institutions.

## **5. Standards and Evaluation (Questions 34-38)**

Cultural rights and entitlements, if established nationally, would set out a consistent national framework for delivery of outcomes. Standards and evaluation would link public expectation with appropriate provision to deliver cultural rights and entitlements. Standards have an important role to ensure basic equality of cultural experience for all citizens. The Sector Strategic Agency, working with a Scottish Museums Partnership should have a role to advise and define standards for the museums sector, linked to best practice internationally. The Scottish Executive and local authorities should adopt funding agreements, which set out what must be delivered, to what standards and how outcomes will be inspected and evaluated. Funding agreements for the national cultural organisations would also set out national delivery against a standards and evaluation framework.

Provision needs to be made for the formal recognition of cultural rights and entitlements— whether in primary or secondary legislation – and core-funding levels must reflect the delivery targets associated with this. As with central government, local authorities must also be required to have cultural strategies in the form of local cultural plans, as part of the lead role they need to take in the overall process of delivery.

Standards and evaluation mechanisms will be all the more important for non-national museums and the lead strategic agency in the museums sector should advise on and define standards linked to existing best practice, not only internationally but also within other cultural sectors in Scotland where standards and performance indicators have been established successfully such as in libraries.

Many local museums already deliver on cross-sector targets, and there is room to investigate whether cross-domain working can be further improved by applying models such as the visitor attractions grading scheme or ILFA to museums evaluation criteria.

## **6. Operations and Administration (Questions 39-43)**

The Scottish Executive should build on the work already undertaken by the Scottish Museums Council, to realise, through investment, a common IT/IS framework for museums in Scotland. This would comprise a common infrastructure, and investment in digital assets, together with a museums portal to provide a single point of public access to the services and collections of museums across Scotland.

Historic building maintenance is also part of the future management of operations and administration, particularly for local museums. Although many buildings are key parts of museum collections, they often swallow a disproportionate percentage of available funds that could otherwise be spent on curatorial matters. The recognition of the burden historical buildings present would assist the effective roll out of funds, and it may be that investigating a two strand approach to funding collections and building maintenance would help produce a more accurate evaluation of what non national museums provide.

The Scottish Executive should have primary strategic responsibility for Scotland's cultural presence internationally, working with and through national organisations

such as EventsScotland and the British Council. Given that many of Scotland's premiere tourist attractions are managed and cared for by local museums, there should be formal recognition of the work these bodies do in building the economic contribution that cultural tourism makes to Scotland's coffers. Investment or partnership programmes with key sites can help to strengthen this further. SMC is currently conducting a research study on 'Realising the Impact Museums and Galleries make to Tourism', which will be launched at a one day conference on 'Museums Galleries and Tourism in March 2005, in partnership with VisitScotland and Scottish Enterprise.

#### **7. Local Authorities (Questions 44-47)**

There is a need for a better definition of local authorities' responsibilities for cultural provision, than the present "adequate provision". This should be provided by defined cultural rights and entitlements which local authorities, with national and other organisations, would be expected to deliver. This would set the baseline of cultural provision across Scotland.

Local authorities should be required to produce and deliver a local cultural plan, which would set out how cultural entitlements would be delivered, to what standards, and how local agencies and partnerships would be resourced to do this.

Equally, the Scottish Executive must realise the long-term effects of national policy prioritisation on local delivery. Culture and sport provision frequently come from the same budget, and given the current 'active Scotland' drive, cultural provision is often robbed in order to satisfy the health agenda. Endemic under investment of this kind will result in cultural provision targets not being met at local levels.

The local cultural plan should also recognise the role of national cultural organisations in delivery. There is a need for better consultation between local authorities and national cultural organisations.

#### **8. Regional Bodies (Questions 48-51)**

SMC does not believe that there is a need for a regional level of cultural infrastructure. This would, in our view, impose an unnecessary additional level of bureaucracy. We believe that the strategic framework proposed by SMC and the SMGWG in their Phase 1 responses consultation would operate effectively at national and local authority level. The development of regional partnership working has already begun with the work funded through the Scottish Executive Regional Development Challenge Fund. The feed back from regional consultation of SMC members was that this was working well and was a good base on which to build future networks and partnerships at regional level rather than introducing a formal infrastructure for regions.

#### **9. National (Questions 52-58)**

National status should apply when an organisation has national responsibilities. These should be clearly defined in terms of outcomes, set out in funding agreements, and measured through performance. National cultural organisations should report directly to the Scottish Executive, who should be responsible for setting objectives and standards, informed by the work of the national cultural forum and sector strategic bodies.

National cultural organisations should be players in the delivery of cultural rights and entitlements, through partnerships with local authorities. For example the national museums and galleries would play a role in supporting museums and galleries across Scotland to provide services of an agreed standard, by ensuring local access to collections of national importance, through loans and touring exhibitions, particularly where these had local relevance e.g. The Lewis Chesspieces.

Significance and National audit principles of this are cross cutting with examples such as the Burns collection, which spans libraries, archives and museums

#### **10. Cross Cutting (Questions 59-62)**

SMC believes strongly that there are numerous opportunities for cross sectoral partnerships involving the cultural and other sectors. We believe, for example, that museums and galleries have a major contribution to make to both education and tourism. The SMC and SMGWG Phase 1 responses proposed that museums should be properly recognised and funded as part of the educational delivery system, with every school child having the right to visit a museum of assured quality and within a reasonable distance, as part of curriculum based activity. Free transport for school visits would be an essential component of this. Again groundbreaking projects such as 'Their Past, Your Future Scotland', enable all generations in communities across Scotland to learn how the Second World War not only affected their history but how the changes it prompted in Scotland affects their present and their future.

VisitScotland should be required to recognise the value and potential of cultural tourism in Scotland, to make this a much higher priority than the agency does at present, and to produce and deliver, in consultation with the museums sector, a marketing plan to develop cultural tourism nationally.

Many non national museums and galleries already work on cross cutting agendas delivering on health, education, social services and economic regeneration SMC is able to showcase and provide further information on examples of best practice such as the ' Back on the Tracks' Scotland Against Drugs project, at Grampian Transport Museum and the Scottish Railway Preservation Society.