

The Museums Association (MA) would like to express its support of the Cultural Commission's work so far to improve people's access and entitlement to Scotland's cultural life in general and museums in particular and to develop the infrastructure in which cultural organisations operate, their funding and leadership.

The MA is an independent museum organisation that represents museums throughout Scotland, which number about 350 in total, and in the rest of the UK, as well as the people who work in them so that they can provide a better service for everyone to enjoy.

We would like to focus on the most important issues affecting Scotland's museums so that they can better contribute to the education of people of all ages, take a key role in regeneration and tourism, celebrate Scotland's past and enable its citizens to shape its future. We have formulated our response having consulted with the MA's representative in Scotland and leading members.

The MA would also like to take this opportunity to endorse the detailed recommendations that the Scottish Museums and Galleries Working Group (SMGWG) and the Scottish Museums Council (SMC) made in its submission to the Cultural Commission's first phase of consultation.

- 1.** We urge the commission to support improved funding of Scotland's national museums and also funding from the Scottish Executive of the national and internationally significant collections cared for by non-national museums run by Scotland's local authorities, universities and independent trusts.
- 2.** The MA urges the commission to support funding structures that encourage national and non-national museums to work in partnership to improve the services they provide.
- 3.** In particular, the MA urges the commission to support the recommendations made by the SMGWG and SMC for capital challenge funding to renew museum buildings and galleries, and project challenge funding to support innovative audience development, digitisation and educational projects.
- 4.** The MA would also like to express its support of the university museums who have called for additional revenue funding through the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, as well as central funding for the national and internationally significant collections that they care for.
- 5.** The plight of the independent museums of Scotland is well known and has been partially recognised by the Scottish Executive's support for individual museums. What is needed is recognition of the key role independent museums play in cultural provision. Independent museums that are of national significance because of their collections should have access to national funding streams as part of their revenue support.
- 6.** The MA proposes that every schoolchild is entitled to an annual free educational visit to a museum. This needs to go together with increasing the capacity of Scotland's

museums to provide the formal and informal education for citizens of all ages.

7. As the Cultural Commission recognised in its interim report, digital technology allows museums to provide new kinds of access to their collections and information about them. The MA supports funding structures and partnership working to develop digital access to collections and a common IT (information technology) framework as proposed by the SMC.

8. The MA also feels that the importance of the Accreditation scheme, which is a set of museum standards, is recognised. Accreditation allows the level of access, services and care of collections to be assessed and areas of weakness identified. Such standards are a key part of ensuring citizen's cultural entitlement to museums of high quality throughout Scotland.

Mark Taylor
Director