**Scottish Culture Strategy – Museums Association Response**

**About the MA**

The Museums Association (MA) is a membership organisation representing and supporting museums and people who work with them throughout the UK. Our membership of over 8,000 includes all types of museums, from small volunteer-run local museums to large national institutions and people working in all types of roles from directors to trainees. Founded in 1889, the MA was the world’s first professional body for museums. We lead thinking in UK museums with initiatives such as *Collections 2030* and *Museums Change Lives*, and provide £1.2m per year of funding for museum projects via our Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund. For more information about the Museums Association, see our website: <http://www.museumsassociation.org/home>

This response is based on consultation and feedback from members and key stakeholders in Scotland.

**Museums in Scotland**

There are over 400 museums in Scotland[[1]](#footnote-1) ranging from major national institutions to small, often volunteer-run museums in communities across the country. From the four sites of National Museums Scotland to Kilmartin Museum in Argyll, they play a vital part in the cultural life of the country, acting as hubs for cultural learning and creative activity, supporting health and wellbeing and giving people a sense of place and pride in where they’re from.

The growth of Scotland’s visitor economy also creates opportunities to engage people with Scottish culture and increase the profile of the country at home and abroad. Museums and galleries are at the heart of this – they account for 42% of all visits to Scottish visitor attractions[[2]](#footnote-2) and visitor numbers are booming. Museums and galleries saw annual visitor growth of 7.5% in 2017, the fourth year of continuous growth in a row[[3]](#footnote-3). The museum sector wants to work with government, communities and businesses to ensure that this growth can be sustained.

**Response to Consultation Questions**

1. *What is your view of the vision as set out in the strategy? What do you like or dislike or what would you change?*

We welcome the ambitious vision set out in the draft culture strategy. We strongly support the Scottish Government’s aim to place culture at the heart of policy-making; the intention to use cultural engagement as a means of improving wellbeing and reducing inequality; the recognition of a wide range of types of cultural engagement; and the recognition of the need for greater long-term sustainability of our cultural institutions.

Museums across Scotland are already contributing to the vision set out in the culture strategy. For many people, visiting a museum plays a key role in their understanding of Scotland’s culture, history and future potential. Museums help to create a sense of pride in place and historic achievement and can improve public policy outcomes in areas such as education, health and wellbeing. They provide access to a wealth of activity – exhibitions, music, tours, educational events, museum lates, lecture programmes, festivals, children’s events and more – all helping to bring places to life and create a sense of vibrancy and community. Museums are an important part of the nation’s cultural offer, attracting people to live in, work in and visit Scotland.

As the draft strategy recognises, the museums sector is a rich resource that can play an important role in extending cultural opportunities to the widest possible audience. Scottish museums are putting greater effort into attracting wider and more diverse communities and employing a more diverse and representative workforce. Many museums work with community and third sector partners to make a positive impact in their communities and to build participation in museums from people of all backgrounds.

* To succeed, we believe this strategy will require strong leadership, sufficient funding and a clear link and relationship to other strategies across government including the museums strategy. In particular, we believe that cross-government working will be vital and that links should be formed between government departments and agencies to ensure that culture is considered when setting any new policy.
* If the proposed new cultural leadership position is created it must have real responsibility for the delivery of the strategy with oversight and scrutiny from existing arms-length bodies including Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS).
* There needs to be a clear delivery plan and objectives for the strategy and these should be created in collaboration with representative bodies from across the Scottish culture sector. We recommend that MGS, the official development body for museums in Scotland, should represent the museum sector when agreeing a delivery plan.

1. *What is your view of the ambition ‘Transforming through culture’? What do you like, or dislike, or what would you change? Please provide comments on the aims and actions under this ambition.*

We are pleased that the draft strategy recognises the transformative potential of culture, and that this is reinforced by the Scottish Government’s proposal to incorporate a cultural indicator in the National Performance Framework.

The Museums Association’s Museums Change Lives campaign demonstrates how museums can have a transformative impact on people’s lives. We focus particularly on the potential of museums to:

* improve health and wellbeing outcomes;
* create better places for and with communities;
* and inspire debate and reflection on contemporary issues.

There are numerous examples of museums and galleries that are delivering transformative social impact in their communities throughout Scotland.

The success of this work relies to a large extent on the positive partnerships that museums have developed with local agencies, charities and businesses. There is huge scope for government to support and incentivise greater partnership working across government departments and with third sector organisations and other cultural organisations.

We therefore agree with the draft strategy’s intention to support greater partnership work and to ensure that this is facilitated through a higher profile for culture across all areas of government. We believe this aim could be supported by obliging all new government supported initiatives to work in partnership with cultural organisations so that government departments and public bodies are encouraged to seek partnership with cultural organisations. We recommend that museums and other cultural partners are consulted closely as new policy is developed. It is also important to recognise that many partnerships – especially in the areas of health and wellbeing and tackling inequality – are not and should not be income generation opportunities and will require public investment.

1. *What is your view of the ambition ‘Empowering through culture’? What do you like or dislike or what would you change? Please provide comments on the aims and actions under this ambition.*

We welcome the Scottish Government’s proposal to recognise a broad range of cultural activity in this strategy, ranging from established and formal culture to everyday and emerging culture. Scottish museums encompass a huge breadth of cultural activity, ranging from internationally important research and exhibitions to venues for local and grassroots creative and cultural expression – often all under one roof. It is important to note that museums in rural areas are often hubs for their local communities and provide safe and accessible venues for community festivals, craft and creative activity and local enterprises.

The MA’s vision is for inclusive, participatory and socially engaged museums at the heart of their communities and we know that many museums in Scotland are already fulfilling this vision. For example, Culture Perth and Kinross are working with community groups to create a changing series of ‘Community Campus Displays’ of items from museum collections in local libraries and community centres[[4]](#footnote-4).

There are also a number of networks across Scottish museums which aim to expand the concept of what is culturally important, including the Scottish Transport and Industrial Collections Knowledge (STICK) Network[[5]](#footnote-5), which aims to increase understanding of Scotland’s industrial heritage. Museums form a core part of the cultural infrastructure that sustains, nurtures and promotes cultural activity in Scotland and we believe that museums have an important role to play in enabling a broad range of cultural expression.

We also support the aim of using partnerships to broaden participation in culture and as a means to reduce inequality. As noted above, many museums are already working with communities to empower individuals, recognise their dignity and expand opportunity.

We agree that the culture strategy should promote a sense of local ownership of culture and participatory decision-making. Many museums already use a co-production methodology which puts the public at the heart of decision-making about what museums collect and exhibit. Such models have been highly successful in opening up museums and in enriching them with knowledge and expertise from beyond traditional and academic sources.

1. *What is your view of the ambition ‘Sustaining culture’? What do you like or dislike or what would you change? Please provide comments on the aims and actions under this ambition. The final culture strategy will highlight where individuals, communities, and organisations are already working towards the vision, ambition and aims of the strategy. Please provide details of any examples of good work and best practice, from Scotland or internationally, that you think could be included in the final strategy. We are interested in a range of different approaches. What can you or your organisation do to support the vision, aims, ambitions and actions of the strategy?*

In 2018 the Museums Taskforce, which was convened by the Museums Association, found that:

“All museums face the same issues of high fixed overheads inherent in what makes them unique - caring for collections and buildings and ensuring public access. To do this, museums need long-term strategic investment and consistent levels of funding.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

Museums in Scotland require stability of funding to continue to look after and use their public buildings and collections and to engage audiences and communities. As public funding continues to face significant pressures we believe that it is vital for the Scottish Government to commit to continued investment in museums to reflect the public benefits delivered by the sector and to support museums to develop new funding models and to increase income generation. In addition Scottish Government should work with local authorities to ensure that they continue to invest in local museums.

Museums also need to have the operating freedoms to make the most of their assets. Some museums under local authority control are constrained by internal procurement processes and limits on opening hours which impede entrepreneurial activity, including taking advantage of Scotland’s rapidly growing tourist trade.

Museums form a core part of Scotland’s tourist offer and the Scottish Government should work with local authorities across Scotland to do more to enable local museums to make the most of tourism opportunities. In addition Scottish Government should work with Visit Scotland to encourage tourists to visit a more diverse range of places across the nation. This would boost the sustainability of local and rural museums.

The museum workforce is changing. The proportion of freelance workers is increasing and the number of roles they occupy is growing. The MA advocates a ‘whole-workforce’ approach to recognise everyone who works in and with museums – freelancers, volunteers and employees - as this ensures that everyone is treated on equal terms and reduces disparities in pay, benefits and opportunities.

Volunteers make up a large proportion of the workforce of museums in Scotland and they have a special role to play in connecting museums and collections with local communities. In order to continue to deliver this added value for museums and communities museums need to be supported to run professional volunteer programmes that support the development and diversity of volunteers across the museum sector.

Scottish museums also have an important role to play in diversifying the cultural workforce. Traditionally, the sector has lacked representation from many areas of society, including ethnic minorities and people with lower socio-economic status. The MA has recognised the importance of achieving a skilled and representative workforce in order to broaden opportunity and create the conditions for a wider and more inclusive cultural conversation. The MA is developing its own Inclusion Strategy for the museum workforce and delivers the Transformers professional development scheme, which has worked with museums in Scotland to empower people from diverse backgrounds to progress in their careers in the sector.

We also strongly agree that museums in Scotland must be at the forefront of an international culture strategy. Scottish museums are already involved in world-leading international partnerships which raise Scotland’s profile abroad and increase its attractiveness as a destination. They also help to bring international culture to domestic audiences. However, this type of work is often reserved to the large, established organisations and we believe that a new culture strategy could do more to support museums of all sizes to participate in international partnerships.

We believe that this ambitious strategy needs to be equally ambitious about how it measures and evaluates success. Museums’ success is often measured only by visitor numbers. The same is true of many other cultural pursuits. This often fails to present a true picture of what cultural organisations do and their impact on people’s lives.

At present there is relatively little data available to allow real evaluation. The Scottish Household Survey is very limited in the data that it gathers on cultural participation. We believe that the Scottish Government will require long-term, longitudinal data of the type gathered in the Taking Part Survey by DCMS in order to establish a fuller picture of cultural engagement. This should include questions relating to protected characteristics and socio-economic status.

This data should be gathered and used to measure against a set of key performance indicators for the strategy. These KPIs should be published on an annual basis to ensure that there is transparency and a clear means of public oversight of delivery of the strategy. We believe that Museums Galleries Scotland should participate in the development of this system on behalf of the museum sector in Scotland.

Given our record as a campaigning organisation driven by the belief that museums change lives, we believe the MA is well placed to work with the Scottish Government and the Scottish museums sector to help deliver the outcomes of the draft strategy. The MA has a dedicated Nations Policy which ensures that all of our work takes into account the interests of our members in each nation. Our professional development schemes are already widely respected and have the support of Museums Galleries Scotland. We fund multiple collections-based projects in Scottish museums via our Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund. We regularly hold members’ meetings in Scotland to discuss priority issues for the museums sector, and our annual conference – the largest of its kind in Europe – is often held in Scotland. We believe that all of these elements of our work can contribute to better museums sector and a better cultural life for Scotland.

Below we set out examples from museums that are already having a transformative effect across Scotland:

***Culture and health***

Glasgow Museums have been working with the charity Contact the Elderly since 2006 to offer monthly Sunday tea parties for older people in their venues in an effort to tackle loneliness and social isolation among older people.  
  
The events bring together small groups of people aged 75+ who live alone and may have little contact with family or friends. They are collected from their home by the same volunteer driver every month and taken to a gathering for the afternoon at a different venue each time.  
  
Alongside the social element of a tea party, looking at objects helps the guests to start conversations with other members of the group and with museum staff. The museums also put on workshops, talks and activities.

Renfrewshire Leisure Heritage Services support a part-time Creative Therapies Worker who is working with some of Renfrewshire’s most vulnerable young people in intensive 1:1 sessions. Working out of Paisley Museum & Art Galleries, with a remit across the local authority area, the Creative Therapies Worker has been using the collections and stories behind museum objects to break down barriers and build meaningful relationships with children and young adults.

Plans are underway to build on this to create group sessional work that will bring young people together to further increase their confidence and tackle some of their underlying health issues.

Renfrewshire Leisure also runs twice-monthly Reminiscence Sessions at the Heritage Centre, Paisley Museum & Central Library. The sessions are delivered by heritage assistants and make use of the extensive photographic and document archive managed by Renfrewshire Leisure. Many of the participants in the session worked at the local mills and are happy to share their memories and stories in informal sessions. The Heritage Centre has become a vibrant community space where upwards of 25 people can come together to share memories and build new friendships. The impact of these sessions on mental health and wellbeing is visible as, for many of those attending, it may be their only contact outside the home.

National Museums Scotland runs Museum Socials for people living with dementia, their friends, families and carers. The sessions are delivered through a partnership with the National Galleries of Scotland, the National Library of Scotland, St Cecilia's Hall: Concert Room & Music Museum (University of Edinburgh) and Edinburgh Zoo and provide invaluable respite for carers and stimulation for those living with dementia. The Socials programme was short-listed for Scotland’s Dementia Awards 2017 for Best Dementia Friendly Community Initiative.

***Culture and education, children and young people***

Since 2011, National Museums Scotland have been working with Impact Arts, a Scottish charity that works to help people and communities transform their lives through art and creativity. Each July, for four weeks, NMS hosts the Impact Arts Edinburgh summer residency programme at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh.  This brings 40-60 young people (aged 16-19) to the museum – many of them for the first time – to take part in a range of creative workshops.

Over the last 5-6 years, working in partnership they have shifted the focus of the residency to draw inspiration from the national collections. For 2018 – the Year of Young People in Scotland – NMS set out an ambitious proposal to support all Impact Arts summer residencies (now known as Cashback to the Future), involving up to 200 young people from Edinburgh, Glasgow, Renfrewshire and Ayrshire.  This new initiative forms part of NMS’s Heritage Lottery Funded Kick the Dust programme, Scotland 365, and culminated in performances and exhibitions from all participants at Paisley Abbey, Renfrewshire in August 2018.

Over the years, young people have grown in confidence, developed new skills, made new friends and established connections with NMS that help to break down barriers to engagement. Some of the young people have joined the Museum’s Young Demonstrators volunteer programme and have gone on to develop their own guided tours or programmed events in the museum.

***Culture, poverty and low income***

The Scottish Maritime Museum established the Scottish Boat Building School in Irvine in 2014 to provide education and qualifications in both traditional and modern boat building & repair. Working with the local community, including young offenders, long-term unemployed, and general volunteers, the school gives its volunteers transferable skills that can lead to jobs for its trainees and, through its commercial boat-building and repair arm, another source of income for the museum.

The MA’s Collections Fund provides financial support to the Maritime Museum to allow apprentices to restore a vessel, the Golden Orfe, which will become a touring exhibit visiting isolated and deprived coastal communities on the west coast of Scotland.

***Culture and technology***

The MA’s Collections Fund supports the Whithorn Trust in Dumfries and Galloway to deliver the “Questions of Life and Death” project. This uses state-of-the-art technology to explore stories from the archaeological bone collections with local young people in deprived areas such as Stranraer and the Machars. They have the opportunity to participate in ‘CSI-style’ cold cases designed to uncover the stories of medieval Scotland, while also learning to use modern technology and learn about STEM.

1. *What do you think success for the strategy will look like? What is your view of the proposed approach to monitoring and evaluating the strategy? Do you think the partial Equality Impact Assessment has identified where the strategy might impact on people differently depending on characteristics such as age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender identity? What would you add or change? Do you think the partial Children’s Rights and Welfare Impact Assessment sets out how the proposals presented in the strategy might impact on the rights and welfare of children? What would you add or change? How do you think this strategy might impact upon people on low incomes, people living in deprived areas, people in material deprivation, people with no/low wealth and people from different socio-economic backgrounds? Do you think the partial Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment identifies how the proposals presented in the strategy might impact on businesses, the third (voluntary) sector or have any regulatory impact? What would you add or change?*

1. <https://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/advice/new-museums/governing-museums/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/media/1095/realising-the-vision-delivery-plan.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <http://mediacentre.visitscotland.org/pressreleases/scottish-visitor-attractions-record-a-bumper-year-in-2017-2422449> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://www.culturepk.org.uk/learning/community-groups/community-campus-displays/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <http://stickssn.org/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <https://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=1246941> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)