



department for  
culture, media  
and sport

# Understanding the Future:

Priorities for England's Museums

October 2006



improving  
the quality  
of life for all

Our aim is to improve the quality of life for all through cultural and sporting activities, support the pursuit of excellence, and champion the tourism, creative and leisure industries.

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# Foreword

By David Lammy

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Our museums are a global success: relevant to all the many people they serve. The Government has been pleased to be able to support museums' achievements. Extra funding for free admission to the national museums has increased visitors by 66 percent at the museums that used to charge. The Renaissance in the Regions investment in regional museums has increased visits by school children by a quarter and attracted nearly three-quarters of a million new visitors from groups who were not traditionally museum-goers.

Both museums and Government have been right to focus on extending access to new audiences. That success has put us in a position to now move beyond the sterile debates that pitch access against excellence or collections against learning. Our new challenge is to secure ongoing and deeper participation in what museums have to offer.

Our guiding value, or moral compass, should be cultural democracy. Democracy is about debate, dialogue, deliberation and, ultimately, what the public genuinely values. So the challenge for museums is not simply broadening audiences, but enabling more people to become involved in what museums do: continuing the process of democratising collecting and interpretation, blending curatorial expertise with public participation in museum decision making, and enhancing the contribution of volunteers, so that museums can develop their own role as community spaces, as mediators between the past and the present, and as agents in a dialogue about who we are and what we might become or achieve.

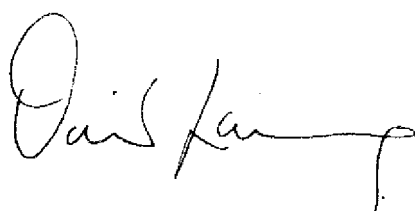
Deepening engagement reinforces the part that museums play in so many things that we all value: helping people learn; building stronger communities; improving people's health; contributing to the visitor economy, and providing a focus for the regeneration of our towns and cities.

We now understand museums' contribution to giving children the learning skills they need and to improving their confidence and creativity. Museums work with adults who saw no place for themselves in formal education, but who can acquire skills in different contexts and new ways. Museums reach refugee communities isolated by the stratification of our large cities and towns, and engage with migrant workers in dispersed rural communities.

Museums' contribution to our economy is well documented, and the pull they exert on overseas visitors well known. They will help to set the stage for the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012, and will be part of what visitors

remember when they go home. Such has been the success of our museums in helping to build and sustain the communities they serve that it is now inconceivable for Government to overlook the role they play in education, health and well-being, or supporting vulnerable people.

That museums change lives is a bold claim to make. I believe that they do, and that the Government must continue to support them in this. The discussion that follows sets out our priorities for museums over the next decade. The focus is on the value that museums bring to all of our lives, as extraordinary institutions with a unique part to play in building and sustaining community and identity – locally, nationally and internationally.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Lammy', with a stylized, cursive script.

David Lammy

# Introduction

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This paper sets out the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS's) priorities for the next decade for all kinds of museums in England: the national museums; local authority funded museums; university museums and independent museums.

DCMS has a direct relationship with only a small number of the 1,400 or so registered and accredited museums in England: the national museums and those funded through the Renaissance in the Regions programme. But the small independent or local museum may well be drawing on the support and expertise of a museum development officer, or using a grant from its Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) regional agency, which will in turn be funded through Renaissance. Some independent museums will be in receipt of substantial public funding through Renaissance as well as from their local authority or Lottery funders. These priorities will guide not only the targets which DCMS set the museums it sponsors, but also the programmes it supports for the wider museum community. DCMS believes that they are relevant, in different ways, to the museum sector as a whole.

In any case, all museums face common challenges: as institutions dedicated to learning; in how they reflect and sustain senses of community; in making the most of their collections; developing their workforces; and how best to work with partners inside and outside the museum sector. In facing these challenges, museums can learn from the complementary strengths of each other. The national museums have unparalleled collections and large-scale public programmes. Many smaller museums can and do learn from their practices. But larger museums have much to learn from the way smaller independent or district council museums draw upon the support of a local community or local expertise and reflect and sustain a sense of community through doing so.

This paper is the second part of a three-stage process to set priorities for museums in England and the public programmes that support them. In the first stage, DCMS published *Understanding the Future: Museums and 21st Century Life*. This was a broad ranging paper setting out the full range of issues museums are contending with. It gave the sector an opportunity to respond to Government on these issues. DCMS published a summary of those responses at the end of 2005.

This second paper is the result of collaboration between DCMS officials and a group of informed advocates for museums, conscious of and committed to

the need for further change for the benefit of museum audiences. This group focused on the key priorities for museums over the next decade. The paper sets out the issues that are at the top of DCMS's agenda for museums over the next decade, informed by the discussions of this group.

The paper sets out what we think museums can do for society and the most significant issues they face in doing so. Many of the answers to these challenges are in the hands of museums themselves. So DCMS hopes this is a set of priorities that the museum sector recognises and that can command broad support from museums and their partners. To that end, the document will run as a twelve week consultation and comments are invited by the 19 January.

The third stage of work will involve refining this vision in the light of reactions to it and developing a set of concrete proposals to take it forward. DCMS will be holding a series of five seminars on each of the chapters in the paper: learning; identity; collections; workforce; and structures. These seminars will include representatives of the museum sector, as well as experts from outside who can bring a fresh perspective.

DCMS will ask MLA, with support from the sector and taking into account responses to *Understanding the Future: Museums and 21st Century Life* and the outcome of our seminars, to prepare an initial action plan. This will set out the first steps to deliver the priorities and time scales for developing further what will be an ambitious, long-term project. DCMS has asked the MLA to produce this initial plan in time for next year's Museums Association conference.

The action plan will be a dynamic and living document. It will respond to developments inside and outside the sector and will be shared between Government, the MLA, the sector and its partners and users.

Responses to this paper should be sent by the 19 January to:

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# 1. Overview

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The Museums Association's definition of a museum is: ***Museums enable people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment. They are institutions that collect, safeguard and make accessible artefacts and specimens, which they hold in trust for society.***

**What can museums do?** They promote the public enjoyment and understanding of art, history, science and technology and the natural world. Essentially they are organisations dedicated to learning, discovery and understanding. DCMS welcomes the resurgence of the core mission of museums in public education and formal and informal learning.

Museums also help people determine their place in the world and define their sense of identity. Our senses of identity are increasingly dynamic and complex.

DCMS expects museums to consolidate and extend the role they can play in fostering learning and nurturing senses of identity. See chapters 2 and 3.

**How do they do it?** Museums' most important resources are their collections, their people and expertise, and their buildings. There has been an extraordinary renaissance in museum building over the last decade, but more use can be made of museums' collections, and workforce development needs close attention. See chapters 4 and 5.

**How do museums relate to one another and other institutions?** Museums are part of a complex ecology of educational, heritage and cultural institutions supported by the public, private and voluntary sectors. The Government respects the diversity of the sector and distinctiveness of each museum, but expects them to co-operate more, inside and outside the sector, to strengthen and extend the contribution they make to public life. See chapter 6.



## 2. Museums & Learning: thinking and doing

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***"... learning through cultural resources that are socially and educationally richer ... and less formal and restrictive"***

*David Anderson, Director of Learning and Interpretation,  
V&A, May 2005*

The biggest achievement of museums over the last two decades is the resurgence of their role in learning. Museums have a unique role to play in delivering the nation's educational priorities at all levels: in schools, in informal lifelong learning, or for the most advanced research. They can support a range of different learning styles, many of which cannot so easily be offered in the classroom. They offer the opportunity for social and collaborative learning; for learning through observation, discussion, handling and problem solving; creative experiences like drawing or role play; through working on one's own or through working as part of a group. Critically they offer a different starting point from the classroom: real objects rather than abstract ideas.

### **ANIM8TED**

**Anim8ted is a partnership project between the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television, Cartwright Hall and Bradford Industrial Museum aimed at exploring the potential of animation for supporting a variety of subjects across the National Curriculum. The project uses museum and gallery collections to inspire young people to create their own animations by working with an artist. An evaluation of the project found the pupils had strengthened their knowledge and understanding of how animation works, strengthened their skills in maths, planning, team-working and communication, and had been inspired by the collection at Cartwright Hall. All of the children involved expressed a wish to return to museums. Their teachers also found benefits in terms of their own confidence in using museum resources in their teaching. The project also fostered community cohesion by bringing together schools from Bradford with very different ethnic backgrounds. The pupils enjoyed meeting each other and were exposed to opportunities for increased understanding of cultural similarities and backgrounds.**

Since the landmark report into education in museums, *A Common Wealth: Museums and Learning in the United Kingdom*, was published almost a decade ago, progress has been enormous. In 1994, just 37 percent of museums made some limited provision for education. Now 86 percent of museums work with formal education groups and 88 percent with informal learners. In 1994, 36 percent had facilities used solely or primarily for education purposes: now the figure is 77 percent. Twenty-three percent had an education policy: now it is 69 percent.

The highest profile has been to museums' work in support of young people in formal education, but museums have also made enormous strides in increasing informal learning opportunities as well. The role of museums in supporting schools is enormously important, but they have so much more to offer. Museums provide ideal venues for families to learn together. And looking back to their original founding purpose, in the realm of lifelong learning, they inspire and motivate people so that they want to get back in to learning and build people's confidence so that they believe they can develop their skills and knowledge. The contribution that museums can make to adult learning – skills for life – should be further developed and, beyond this, Government and the sector should build upon initiatives which support responsible and responsive citizenship. As part of the fabric of our society, museums are equally part of our commitment to democracy.

We must build on this platform of success in three ways:

First, we need to complete and consolidate the increased connection between schools and museums. Schools' contact with museums has increased by 40 percent over the last decade, helped most recently by funding from Renaissance in the Regions. Museums are a vital part of the well-rounded learning experience that Government wants for our children, and part of its increased commitment to education outside the classroom; museums form part of the cultural activity that we want all children to enjoy. DCMS will continue to give the highest priority in its funding and in its targets for its sponsored museums to increase participation still further and to supporting schools and museums in this.

Secondly, we need to improve our understanding of what museum education work can achieve: what impact it has; where it can be most effective; and how we can best communicate those benefits to the museum and educational

communities. The framework of best practice represented by *Inspiring Learning for All* should be further developed and its use encouraged across the sector.

We know that museum collections can be used to support learning among excluded and vulnerable groups such as looked after children, young people in pupil referral units, refugees or people with special educational needs. The impact of their engagement with museums can be profound, but it is also resource-intensive. We need therefore to be able to measure the value, as well as the cost, of such work. Evaluating the impact of museum-based learning is difficult. Museum use is voluntary. Learning is often informal, experiential and impacts on feelings and attitudes rather than on the acquisition of concepts. In response to this, the MLA has developed Generic Learning Outcomes which have successfully demonstrated in concrete terms the educational benefits of museum programmes. DCMS supports fully the work of MLA to build on this evidence base to produce best practice guidance on what is most effective in museum education, and build the case for those benefits.

For its part DCMS will use the Generic Learning Outcomes in developing targets that reflect quality as well as quantity of educational output for its sponsored museums. We expect other museum sponsors and governing bodies to also concern themselves with the quality of educational provision. DCMS will also work with DfES to produce a museums education strategy addressing these issues of best practice and links with schools.

Finally, museums are also an enormous and often under-used resource for the research and academic community. Academic perspectives on collections offer museums another source of ideas and knowledge that inform the ways in which they are presented and interpreted; broader contextual research provides a framework for their re-presentation and reinterpretation. At the same time, museums can provide a popular outlet for research for the academic community, enhancing the value of work that might otherwise only be seen by a small number of specialists. And there is evidence that museums raise the aspirations of young people towards higher education. Many of our national and university museums have, of course, a considerable presence in the world of academic research.

University museums particularly can support and initiate innovative and cross-disciplinary museological and subject research. Granting of research analogue status to several national museums will tie them more closely into the

academic research community and its interests. But there will always be many museums with less or differently focused resources, where nevertheless collections could be of great value to academics and, through the generation of knowledge about their collections, to the museums themselves. A priority is to build new mechanisms to link museums, especially those with limited research activity, into academic communities.

### **DCMS's priorities over the next decade**

- 1. Museums will fulfill their potential as learning resources:**
  - a. Museums will be embedded into the delivery of education in every school in the country.
  - b. Understanding of the effectiveness of learning through museums will be improved further and best practice built into programmes of formal and informal learning.
  - c. The value of museum collections as a research resource will be well understood and better links built between the academic community and museums.

### 3. Finding our place in the world: the building blocks of belonging

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***"...common ground cannot be staked out in a single narrative about who we were but only in a more intricate narrative about who we are. Our Island Story, in short, needs to become Our Island's Stories"***

*David Lammy, 24 October 2005*

Museums were established with an explicit purpose to educate their public. But implicit in the work of a museum has always been its role in helping us make sense of who we are and exploring our place in the world. Museums embody, celebrate and sometimes challenge our notions of identity. As our society becomes both more dynamic and more plural, this task is becoming more important for all cultural institutions and for museums in particular.

It is an oft quoted cliché that one of the first institutions a newly independent nation will want to establish is a national museum. A collection of objects describing the lineage of the newly formed nation provides a concrete representation of a common history and a seed around which a sense of national identity can coalesce and grow. The novelist Amin Mahloun describes this kind of record as *'the vertical sense of identity'*. It is a stream of heritage flowing from ancestors, traditions and religion to create a common sense of who a group of people are. Museums have always been supremely good at providing a space to express these sorts of connections of tradition: from the largest notions of nationhood to the history and traditions of the most specific and local communities. It is a thread that runs through the museum community from the grandest national institution to the smallest community history museum.

## CHATHAM HISTORIC DOCKYARD TRUST

**Chatham Dockyard Historical Society was established by a small group of Dockyard workers before the Dockyard's closure in 1984. They recognised that the loss of the Dockyard risked losing forever Medway's 400-year defining relationship with the Royal Navy. They collected objects and photographic and written archives to create a museum of the former Royal Dockyard in one of the Dockyard buildings. In 1984, ownership of the former Dockyard passed to Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust, which was charged with preservation of the site and educational explanations of the site's significance. The relationship between the Historical Society and the Dockyard Trust has developed over the years. The original impetus to commemorate the significance of the dockyard to Chatham came from the former Dockyard workers, many of whom continue to work on a voluntary basis in research, supervision and interpretation of the collections. The relationship with the Dockyard Trust provided professional expertise and resources allowing the importance of the Dockyard story to reach a broader audience than the Historical Society might alone.**

It remains vital to communicate these 'vertical' heritages but, increasingly, they alone are not enough to capture our sense of who we are and where we fit into the world. The last 50 years have seen a transformation of our society to match the industrial revolution's movement from the agricultural land to industrial urban centres: GDP has trebled over the last 50 years; spending on leisure has increased threefold over the last 30 years; the proportion of women in paid work has increased fivefold; and our ethnic and social diversity has changed forever.

Our society is more complex than it was 50 years ago and changing ever more rapidly. Against this background, a single historical story captures less and less of who we think we are. We need a multitude of 'horizontal' stories that root us in the here and now and link up different historical traditions into a complex, but common, culture. Increasingly museums are also providing a space where multiple, contemporary and cross-cutting senses of identity, as well as the traditional vertical story, can be expressed.

This work can be difficult. There is a risk of pigeonholing people in a tokenistic way. In choosing which identities to explore, museums, are making an implicit statement that these are the identities that matter. We risk replacing a single dominant story with a series of stories that fail to connect with one another – the 'muslim' story or the 'working class' story. We risk creating the sense that society sees the identity of muslims or working class people as defined by those terms alone. Museums need to recognise the multiple histories of our diverse communities, but also be places where cross-cutting stories can encounter one another, allowing different historical traditions to meet. The challenge for museums is to be aware of the increasingly multiple identities around them, not just the obvious ethnicities or religions or sexualities, and of the infinitely complex relations between them.

Museums are arenas for expression and debate about how we fit into the world. Museum collections and the knowledge built on them are a representation of what we think is important about our world. A transformation is possible and necessary to fulfill the potential of museums in exploring and celebrating the sense of identity they can express. So what are the challenges that museums face if they are to achieve all this?

First, museums need an intellectual framework within which to work: to understand better what role they can play in often-contested understandings of the world and where and how people fit into it. Issues of identity are some of the most sensitive in our society. We can point to examples: the play *Behzti* which closed after demonstrations by some of the Sikh community or the reaction of some Christians to *Jerry Springer the Opera*, where real conflict has arisen from addressing issues of identity. Museums – even art museums – do not have the same license to be polemical as individual artists: they represent a collective understanding. That is not to say that museums cannot question notions of identity, or that they are confined to a blandly celebratory role. We need to work out exactly what role museums can play in helping communities express and develop an understanding of their place in the world. And we need to develop ways of understanding the benefits of those dialogues in producing more fulfilled citizens and more cohesive communities. The museum sector needs to work with partners in academia and beyond to build this kind of intellectual framework.

Secondly, museums need more and better practical tools for engaging with communities in all their diversity and putting their stories into broader

contexts. At their best museums provide space and intellectual support to extract the sometimes very different meanings different communities can bring to their collections. But the challenges are very different for different kinds of museums. For our grandest national institutions, their very stature and authority can be a barrier to reaching people who feel that institutions are 'not for them'. Equally, there are museums that are so closely rooted in their own community, whether of place or of interest, that they find it difficult to look beyond it and to set their own specific expertise within a broader context. Enabling museums to understand the true challenges of inclusiveness is thus a major museum development activity, and is a priority for the next decade. At its simplest, it is about better, more engaging museums across the whole sector, learning from one another and from other agencies.

### **DCMS's priorities over the next decade**

#### **2. Museums will embrace their role in fostering, exploring, celebrating and questioning the identities of diverse communities:**

- d.** The sector needs to work with partners in academia and beyond to create an intellectual framework supporting museums' capacity to tackle issues of identity.
- e.** The museum sector must continue to develop improved practical techniques for engaging communities of all sort.



## 4. Living Collections

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***“... enable people to explore the world, and to make other people, other experiences and other places real and tangible”***

*Jane Glaister, Chair, MA Collections Inquiry, 2005*

A museum is defined by its collection. It provides the bedrock on which everything else is built. Recent years have seen a subtle but fundamental shift in attitudes towards collections, symbolised by the Museums Association's *Collections for the Future* report last year. There are two key messages. A collection is a living thing. New items need to be added, and museums need to identify items that are not relevant to their work and could be better used elsewhere. And a collection is not an end in itself. Museums collect for reasons: for the knowledge implicit in the collection; for the stories the collection can tell us; for the joy the collection can bring to the public who support the museum.

It is implicit that in making more effective use of museum collections, we must also consider how they are managed and cared for. Museums need to look more strategically at their approaches to documentation and collections management, look more holistically at the challenges posed by acquisition and disposal; at the opportunities and issues raised by digitisation, including the need for greater co-ordination and synergy across the whole sector; and at the balance it creates between the needs of present and future generations.

The theme of opening up museums and their collections runs through this paper. Chapter 2 stresses the need for more links to the academics and other researchers who can bring new meanings to collections, enriching the intellectual rigour and depth of interpretation for the public. Chapter 3 calls for better connections with communities of all kinds to draw the expertise of those outside both museums and universities into the process of understanding and interpreting museum collections. Chapter 6 stresses the need for more and deeper partnerships between museums and others, including through loans and exhibitions. In all these areas, the opportunities to reach wider audiences have never been so great as new technologies revolutionise the ways we communicate.

We focus here, though, on two priorities:

First, it is vital that we maintain the dynamism of museum collections. There is increasing concern that museum collecting has declined considerably. Collections are the defining resources of museums; museums need to continue to collect, especially the varied contemporary material record of the communities they represent. If they do not, the museum's raw material will decline in relevance. They will struggle to represent the world today. And their version of our common stories risks becoming static and backward looking.

Museums have cited many reasons for this: lack of financial resources, particularly at the top end of the art market, but also space, staff time and expertise. Different issues, and different kinds of collections, will require different solutions. The Government has already increased the annual size of the National Heritage Memorial Fund from £5-£10 million. But we recognise there is more to be done, including by Government. DCMS recently hosted a forum on acquisitions with leading museum practitioners. It began a dialogue to elucidate and start to solve the various problems. To inform this work we have begun a study on how museums, and the cultural sector more widely, can make best use of the existing tax reliefs for charitable giving.

We will also be looking at how we can help museum staff get the expertise they need. Training as part of the Renaissance programme will have a part to play. Partnerships between museums or groups of museums can also help, either to co-ordinate individual museums collecting strategies or in some cases to make joint purchases.

DCMS also welcomes the Museums Association consultation on the ethics of disposals by museums and will be thinking through the consequences of the issues it raises for the national museums, whose founding statutes have strong restrictions on disposals. A museum must not lightly dispose of its key resource, but many museums are finding it increasingly difficult to make sensible use of inherited collections, particularly when they have been built up without sufficient discrimination.

## THE UK MARITIME COLLECTIONS STRATEGY

The UK Maritime Collections Strategy (UKMCS) was founded in 1998. Its membership consists of 11 lead museums and 29 other active members across the UK that hold maritime collections. Each lead partner covers areas of collections for which they have specific subject expertise. The partners are working towards co-ordinating collecting policies, on loans and exhibitions, sharing expertise and transferring collections between institutions.

The partnership works through co-operation and manages collections as a distributed national collection. The outcome is shared expertise and collections dispersed to appropriate locations throughout the UKMCS partnership. The National Maritime Museum accounts for around half the UKMCS heritage resources – some four million objects – and items are being identified for dispersal from Greenwich to other partnership organisations, enabling greater public engagement with collections.

Second, we need to find new, more collaborative approaches to sharing and developing collections and related expertise. We do not believe it is practicable, or desirable, given our museums' history of diversity and autonomy, to seek to create a single national distributed collection subject to some kind of central management. But there are ways in which museums with common interests can work more closely together to co-ordinate their approaches to their collections. Some collection types have set up arrangements which seek to co-ordinate collecting policies between a wide range of institutions. This has a range of benefits for the interpretation of collections, curation, storage and most of all for the public, who have access to a broader and better range of interpreted material of more relevance to them.

Another approach is to encourage more longer-term or permanent loans between individual museums. The Esmée Fairbairn trust is funding a five-year programme run by the Museums Association. This will actively broker relationships between potential lenders and borrowers, standardise contracts and systems, provide some funding to help museums with the costs of

lending material and offer financial help with peer review of under-used collections to understand their potential.

### **DCMS's priorities over the next decade**

#### **3. Museums' collections must be more dynamic and better used:**

- f.** Government and the museum sector must find new ways to encourage museums to collect actively and strategically, especially the record of contemporary society.
- g.** The sector needs to develop new collaborative approaches to sharing and developing collections and related expertise.

## 5. Maximising the potential of people

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***“... a motivated, appropriately skilled, diverse and outward-looking workforce capable of delivering high-quality services to everyone”***

*Learning for Change: towards a skilled and diverse workforce, MLA, 2005*

If a collection defines a museum, then its people – from a chairman of trustees to a volunteer giving a few hours a week – bring it to life. Museums increasingly employ people in a broad range of disciplines, from specialist curators, conservators and registrars to education professionals, front of house staff and outreach workers. And of course, museums are one of the most successful sectors in attracting volunteers. Volunteers bring a different kind of personal commitment and involvement than a paid worker. They enrich the museum's understanding of its audiences, as well as being vital to the financial viability of many smaller organisations. But while thinking and practice around buildings, collections and education has changed radically, museums lag behind others in harnessing the talent pool available to them and helping the whole of their workforce to develop their skills to reach their potential. Without meeting this challenge, museums will never realise their full potential.

DCMS sees three priorities in tackling these issues:

The first concern is the limited range of people represented in positions of influence in museums. Taking ethnicity as an example, a study by the Museums Association of the Renaissance Hub museums showed that 2.5 percent of staff in education, curatorial and senior management positions were from black and minority ethnic communities: little more than a quarter of what would be expected if the workforce was representative of England's ethnic make up. Figures for the national museums show a higher figure – 5.5 percent – but given the large part of their operations found in London, where 27 percent of the population is of black or minority ethnic origin, a higher figure is to be expected.

This lack of diversity would be a matter for concern in any organisation, but it is a serious issue for cultural organisations whose task is to represent, debate and develop the interests and identities of all members of their communities. Community engagement and understanding will be more effective with a workforce that is representative of the communities the museum serves. Individuals will relate more easily to communities they belong to, and a diverse

workforce will foster a working culture more sensitive to and sophisticated about issues of cultural difference.

There are a range of schemes that promote the broadening out of museum workforces to under-represented groups – Diversify, Inspire, Young Graduates for Museums and Galleries – which DCMS will continue to support and if possible expand. But there also needs to be a leadership from museums themselves and a commitment to change their working cultures to deliver an improvement of the diversity of their workforces. This is not restricted to ethnic origin. Disabled people are under-represented in the museums workforce. And while women are well represented in many areas of the sector, the gender balance shifts disproportionately to men at senior management levels.

We welcome the recent report by the National Museum Directors' Conference on diversity asking all its members to give responsibility for diversity issues to a named member of the senior team and also to set themselves goals for minority staffing. We will expect implementation of these recommendations by the national museums and we urge other museums and their sponsors to do the same. For its part DCMS remains committed to its targets to move towards representative boards for those museums where Ministers have a role in appointing Trustees.

Entry into the museum workforce is part of the reason for a lack of diversity. Many museum entry-level jobs, particularly for curators, are massively oversubscribed – despite relatively low levels of pay – and often only available to those who have worked for some time as an unpaid volunteer and have a postgraduate qualification. Both the financial resources needed, and the personal contacts that help find useful volunteer positions, narrow the pool of talent from which a museum's workforce is drawn. After finding a job, salary progression is usually slower than would be found in most other sectors employing similarly qualified people.

Together, factors such as these combine to make the range of people entering the profession narrower than it need be. This is compounded by a stuffy image which puts off many young people from working class and black and minority ethnic backgrounds from even initial interest, and a schools careers service which is not properly equipped to advise young people on the range of careers available in museums.

We need to move to a position where perceptions of museums as careers are better, and routes into the profession are both clearer and more varied. Government is playing its role in addressing these issues. MLA is working with Creative & Cultural Skills to develop a Creative Apprenticeship framework which will benefit the museum sector and some museums have apprenticeship schemes of their own. Museums have also been involved in the emerging conclusions of DCMS's Creative Economy Programme. But museums also need to change their approach. An over-supply of applicants does not guarantee that the best possible people will necessarily be employed, and museums cannot afford complacency.

At the same time, we must avoid the sense of a restrictive single route for career progression. There is no single type of museum professional, and the trend to widen the range of professional skills museums draw on is essential to museums' success. Museums need more customer service skills and retail skills, as well as curatorial skills, and they need to find them from a broader range of places, including volunteers. There is a paradox whereby pay is lower in many disciplines within the museum sector than in comparable professions, and yet staff turnover is relatively low.

### **IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM NORTH**

**Imperial War Museum North's award-winning volunteer programme has helped to broaden and refresh the museum's workforce, while strengthening vocational training and basic skills among a wide group of people in an area of high social and economic deprivation. Among the volunteers involved in the programme are people who have been long-term unemployed, people with poor basic skills, young adults at risk of exclusion and refugees and asylum-seekers. The training programme provides basic and interpersonal skills development which has in many cases enabled the volunteers to move on to further learning and to secure employment in other cultural and non-cultural organisations. Although the museum only opened in 2002, the integration of volunteers from the local community into the workforce has helped it quickly to be seen as a valuable community resource and an important contributor to social inclusion and urban regeneration.**

Thirdly, continuing professional development (CPD) needs more attention. Most employers claim to regard this as important, but in practice investment in CPD is patchy and appears to vary greatly from museum to museum. It is in the interests of museums as employers to ensure staff have the opportunity to refresh and develop their skills in order for the sector to reform and modernise to meet the expectations of its users. DCMS's continued investment in the core funding of national museums, the Renaissance programme and Strategic Commissioning is intended to support and strengthen CPD throughout the sector. We will look to MLA to ensure the Museum Accreditation process maintains rigorous standards for training and CPD. Now that Accreditation is to be included in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment for local authority museums, it will be vital for local authority services to maintain effective training and skills development for museum staff.

#### **DCMS's priorities over the next decade**

##### **4. Museums' workforces will be dynamic, highly skilled and representative:**

- h.** Museums' governing bodies and workforces will be representative of the communities they serve.
- i.** Find more varied ways for a broader range of skills to come into museums.
- j.** All museums will commit to and collaborate on developing continuing professional development for their workforce.



## 6. How museums fit together

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***"... it is incumbent on all museum authorities to commit to working to demonstrate the strength and possibilities of a coherent sector that can truly impact upon people's lives in diverse and positive ways"***

*Cllr Ged Bell, Chair of the Tyne & Wear Joint Museums Committee*

A great strength of our museum sector is its diversity and local control. Of the roughly 1,400 accredited museums in England the great majority are funded either by local authorities or are independent charities. That allows them to respond to and represent their audiences with a responsiveness that would be impossible if they were subject to some sort of central direction. This has however, resulted in a complex structure for the museum sector.

Within this diffuse system, the majority of the total budget for museums is concentrated in the funding provided by DCMS either to the national museums or through Renaissance or the MLA. As the predominant funder, DCMS must ensure that its funding not only meets its responsibilities to its directly sponsored institutions but also that, in doing so, the maximum benefit accrues to the museum sector as a whole and to the public it collectively serves.

Perhaps the most debated issue in this area has been the financial arrangement of national museums which, unlike other major national cultural institutions, are funded directly by the DCMS, rather than through an intermediary funding council. There are clearly pros and cons of both the current approach and a funding council. But we believe that this is a second order issue and many of the benefits of closer working could be achieved through building stronger partnerships across the museum sector, whilst still preserving the direct accountability of each museum to its public.

We need to clarify the relationships between museums and build more effective partnerships between them. To provide a baseline from which we can all work, DCMS will work with the major bodies involved in funding and supporting museums to produce a statement of the responsibilities of each towards the museum sector. This will help elucidate the complex relationships between the different parts of the sector and what they can expect from each, including not least DCMS.

We also welcome the development of stronger partnerships with agencies and organisations outside the museum sector. Frequently set up to reach new

audiences, such partnerships serve to develop the skills of museum staff in working with a broader range of people, often in challenging contexts. So they help develop new skills, as well as broadening the reach of museums.

### **WORKING WITH ADDENBROOKES NHS TRUST**

**The Education Officers of the Fitzwilliam Museum and Kettles Yard Gallery have worked collaboratively since 2003 developing a partnership with Addenbrookes NHS Trust in Cambridge to create a programme of work for patients suffering from cancer.**

**Large prints of high resolution images, prepared by the Fitzwilliam Museum, are made available for patients to explore and create dialogue through. The print could stimulate memories the patients might want to describe, evoke a place, feeling or associations. Most of those involved become absorbed and distracted from their situation.**

**The careful growth of the partnership was essential to its success and the preparatory work went through many stages. Initial meetings with the Head of Palliative care were followed by a demonstration held in the hospital for all the staff of the Oncology Department and museum-based demonstrations for the nurses of the cancer ward. These sessions gave all participants a sample of how the partnership proposed to work with the patients.**

**Following the start of the work on the wards the partnership sharpened to a close working relationship with the Ward Sister and a team of volunteers under her care. Systems for administering and delivering the ward sessions had to be developed and adjusted before satisfactory solutions were found. The programme now runs to a regular pattern and provides both interest and real joy to many patients.**

DCMS sees three priorities:

First, if the strength of our museums lies in their diversity, then one of their weaknesses is the lack of consistent and comparable evidence of their collective and individual value. If we are to understand what impact museums are having, what works best and how museums, Government and MLA can better focus our efforts, we need to be able to measure the results of museums' work individually, collectively and with partners from beyond the sector. DCMS and MLA will encourage and facilitate the development of common standards for data collection and evidence-building across the sector.

Second we need to maximise the potential of partnership with the national museums, which are the best resourced in the museum community. The *Renaissance in the Regions* report published in October 2001 argued that the Government should set up and fund a series of regional museum Hubs. The report, and the programme which followed, emerged from a crisis in England's leading regional museums. Central Government investment has been hugely effective in reversing a period of long decline, and has begun a process of transformation in those same museums and across the wider sector, making possible the creation of a new framework in which national and regional museums can increasingly work together. Independent evaluation has demonstrated that the joint DCMS/DfES Strategic Commissioning programme has also supported new and stronger partnerships between national and regional museums, with benefits valued by the museums and their audiences: building capacity; sharing skills; broadening access to collections; and forging new and sustainable relationships with non-museum partners.

The national museums have enthusiastically taken up the challenge of increasing their regional partnerships, but we believe it is possible to extend significantly the range of regional museums reached. DCMS therefore welcomes the recent joint research by the National Museum Directors' Conference and MLA into how to make national-regional partnerships work better. It particularly welcomes the recommendations for the Renaissance Hubs and MLA regional agencies to take a role in facilitating partnerships between regional and national museums.

As agencies with knowledge of both potential regional and national partners, they will be able to widen the net of suitable partners to the benefit of both parties. We also look forward to proposals that can help consolidate partnerships between national and regional museums into deeper, more

collaborative relationships rather than short-term 'transactional' ones. DCMS and MLA will be making the improvement of national and regional partnerships a core expectation of the national museums and the Renaissance Hubs, through our funding relationships with them.

This paper is directed at museums in England but, of course, political boundaries are far less sharp for cultural institutions than they are for Governments. Inevitably within the United Kingdom, Europe and worldwide separate arrangements exist for the funding and oversight of publicly sponsored museums. But many museums are not publicly funded, and those which are owe an allegiance not only to their paymasters, but also to the international community of ideas. We are keen to foster these relationships for the benefit of museums and their publics, to add to the worldwide community of ideas and to promote Britain's image abroad.

So our third priority is boosting museums' international work. This is part of DCMS's wider interests in developing a cultural foreign policy. The expression of culture allows individuals, communities and nations to express who they are and to allow others to understand where they have come from. So culture can allow an exchange of views, can help an understanding develop, where some of the more formal means of building relationships can be difficult. We want to maximise the cultural sector's international work, to get the greatest impact both for the 'cultural product' but also for Britain's image, reputation and relationships abroad. Museums play a key role in developing these international relationships.

### **DCMS's priorities over the next decade**

#### **5. Museums will work more closely with each other and partners outside the sector:**

- k.** A consistent evidence base will be developed showing the contribution of all kinds of museums to the full range of public service agendas.
- l.** There will be deeper and longer lasting partnerships between the national museums and a broader range of regional partners.
- m.** Museums' international roles will be strengthened to improve museum programmes in this country and Britain's image, reputation and relationships abroad.

# DCMS's priorities over the next decade

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## **1. Museums will fulfil their potential as learning resources (pp 7-10).**

- a. Museums will be embedded into the delivery of education in every school in the country.
- b. Understanding of the effectiveness of museum education will be improved further and best practice built into education programmes.
- c. The value of museums' collections as a research resource will be well understood and better links built between the academic community and museums.

## **2. Museums will embrace their role in fostering, exploring, celebrating and questioning the identities of diverse communities (pp 11-14).**

- d. The sector needs to work with partners in academia and beyond to create an intellectual framework supporting museums' capacity to tackle issues of identity.
- e. The museum sector must continue to develop improved practical techniques for engaging communities of all sorts.

## **3. Museums' collections will be more dynamic and better used (pp15-18).**

- f. Government and the sector will find new ways to encourage museums to collect actively and strategically, especially the record of contemporary society.
- g. The sector will develop new collaborative approaches to sharing and developing collections and related expertise.

## **4. Museums' workforces will be dynamic, highly skilled and representative (pp 17-22).**

- h. Museums' governing bodies and workforces will be representative of the communities they serve.
- i. Find more varied ways for a broader range of skills to come into museums.
- j. Improve continuing professional development.

**5. Museums will work more closely with each other and partners outside the sector (pp 23-26).**

- k. A consistent evidence base of the contribution of all kinds of museums to the full range of public service agendas will be developed.
- l. There will be deeper and longer lasting partnerships between the national museums and a broader range of regional partners.
- m. Museums' international roles will be strengthened to improve museum programmes in this country and Britain's image, reputation and relationships abroad.

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