

3 March 2014

## **Collaboration between museums**

### **Purpose of report**

For decision / direction

### **Summary**

Museums are rooted in places and contribute to local distinctiveness. They are incredibly diverse and vary hugely in size and ownership. But whatever the delivery model, councillors are uniquely placed to ensure that museums are central to a place's wider cultural offer, to corral other local partners behind a shared vision and to ensure that the contribution of museums to other local priorities is maximised.

The focus of this item is to discuss how to strengthen further collaboration between national museums, regional museums and the local museum network, in order to increase reach, share professional expertise and help to build sustainability in a very challenging fiscal climate.

The Board will be joined by Diane Lees, current chair of the National Museum Directors' Council, and Director General of the Imperial War Museum.

### **Recommendation**

Members are invited to comment upon the actions set out in paragraph 25.

### **Actions**

Subject to comments from the Board, officers to take forward any suggested actions.

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## **Collaboration between museums**

### **Background**

1. For the last year the LGA's Culture, Tourism and Sport Board has focussed on the links between culture, economic growth and the visitor economy.
2. Museums are rooted in places and contribute to local distinctiveness. They are incredibly diverse and vary hugely in size and ownership. But whatever the delivery model, councillors are uniquely placed to ensure that museums are central to a place's wider cultural offer, to corral other local partners behind a shared vision and to ensure that the contribution of museums to other priorities is maximised. Against a very challenging fiscal backdrop, councils are supporting museums to innovate, become more efficient and forge new partnerships.
3. Public participation in museums has reached an all-time high since records began. The proportion of people who visited a museum or gallery reached 52% in 2012/13 - a significant increase from 42% in 2005/06. This means that some 4 million more people visited a museum in 2012/13 than in 2005/6.
4. The LGA's recent submission to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee's Inquiry into Arts Council England highlighted that outside London, councils spend as much as ACE on this country's cultural infrastructure, including £184 million annually on museums. The submission also said that whilst we recognise the importance of London as a global visitor destination that is hugely important for attracting overseas visitors and investment, there is significant potential to encourage visitors to London to extend their stay and visit cultural attractions in other parts of the country. We also want to maximise the potential for the rest of the country to benefit from London's cultural assets, for example through touring exhibitions and museum loans. This also works both ways, for example, with exhibitions in London often enriched by items from local museums and heritage collections.
5. Diane Lees, current Chair of The National Museum Directors' Council (NMDC), and Director-General of the Imperial War Museum, will join the Board for this item. The NMDC represents the leaders of the UK's national collections and major regional museums (including Brighton City Council and Bristol City Council). Their members are the national and major regional museums in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the British Library, the National Library of Scotland, and the National Archives. The NMDC is an independent, non-governmental organisation.

### **An overview of the museums sector**

6. The Museums Association estimates that there are 2,500 museums in the UK. Just under 1,800 museums have been accredited by the Arts Council. Registration under the Accreditation Scheme indicates that a museum has achieved a nationally

approved standard in management, collections care and delivery of information and visitor services.

7. Over 140 collections are also part of the Arts Council's Designation Scheme, which identifies the pre-eminent collections of national and international importance held in England's non-national museums, libraries and archives, based on their quality and significance.
8. The museums sector is incredibly diverse and is made-up of:
  - 8.1. National museums established and funded by central government through the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). They are generally larger institutions that hold collections considered to be of national or international importance. England's national museums include three of the world's top five most-visited museums.
  - 8.2. Local authority owned and run museums. They generally house collections that reflect local history and heritage, or a specialist collection, but they may also have items that are of national or international importance, especially in the larger regional museums.
  - 8.3. Independent museums are owned by registered charities and other independent bodies or trusts. Some councils have transferred their museums service to independent trusts in order to benefit from greater flexibility and a more entrepreneurial approach. For example, York Museums Trust and Coventry Transport Museum.
  - 8.4. University museums are owned and managed by universities and their collections often relate to specific areas of academic interest.
  - 8.5. English Heritage properties are buildings and monuments of historic interest, many of which also hold collections inside. They are managed by English Heritage, although this will transfer to a new charity subject to the outcome of the consultation on the future of English Heritage.
  - 8.6. National Trust properties are owned and run by the National Trust, an independent charity. The National Trust remit extends to historic houses and gardens, castles, industrial monuments and social history sites, as well as areas of natural beauty.
  - 8.7. Regimental museums and armouries collate and preserve Britain's military heritage and are often managed by the armed services.
  - 8.8. Britain's unoccupied royal palaces are run by Historic Royal Palaces, an independent charity.

9. Whatever the delivery model, councils have a vital leadership and support role to play, helping museums to be exciting, relevant, impactful, accessible, efficient and valued for their overall contribution to a place. Through planning and infrastructure, councils can help to create the conditions for museums to thrive.
10. This will most likely be within the context of a stronger commissioning role for councils, with more focus on the contribution of museums to economic growth, social care, wellbeing and children and young people, and a “whole place” approach to investing in culture.
11. The LGA has focussed on:
  - 11.1. **Supporting portfolio holders for museums to lead the transformational change** that is required to continue providing high quality museums; to meet budget challenges and people’s changing expectations about how they want to engage with museums.
  - 11.2. **Maximising the opportunities presented by a single cultural conversation.**  
A key focus continues to be encouraging greater collaboration between cultural services and beyond. We need to support wider networks of portfolio holders, such as those leading economic growth, public health and children’s services to understand and value the contribution of museums to local political priorities. More joined-up conversations on issues like assets, commissioning, digitisation and reaching marginalised communities will result in better outcomes and a more efficient allocation of resources. This needs to be underpinned by strong partnerships between museums professionals and councillors founded on a shared vision about the wider contribution of museums.
  - 11.3. **Supporting museums to maximise and articulate their contribution to other political priorities, especially economic growth.** Telling a shared positive story about museums, as part of a wider cultural offer, and growth will help to raise the profile of culture going into the next Spending Review. For example, museums - including small niche collections - are key visitor attractions helping to bring people and spending into places. There are already many strong partnerships between schools and museums, helping to engage young people in innovative ways. Museums also offer volunteering opportunities which can help people get back into work and a growing body of evidence suggests that visiting museums can have a powerful positive effect on wellbeing and motivation.
  - 11.4. **Maximising the potential for the rest of the country to benefit from London’s cultural assets, for example through touring exhibitions and museum loans.** We made these points most recently in our submission to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee’s inquiry into ACE.
12. On 1 October 2011 ACE took on responsibility for supporting and developing museums as part of the functions they inherited from the Museums, Libraries and

Archives Council. ACE funds 16 Renaissance Major Partner Museums. Together they are receiving approximately £20 million a year in funding until 2014/15 as part of the Renaissance programme for regional museum. One of the criteria for Major Partner Museums is that they must include a designated collection.

13. In addition, nine further museums (targeted beyond the Major Partners) are receiving £3 million a year in funding until 2014/15 to build a network of support and transfer innovation across the wider sector. Please see **Annex A** for a list of ACE-supported Major Partner and Development museums.
14. Supporting collaboration between museums is a key focus for ACE programmes. Applications for funding in the 2015-18 Major Museums Programme are open until 17 March 2014.

#### **Collaboration in the museums sector**

15. There is a strong history of collaboration within the museums sector. National museums view collaboration as an essential way of ensuring people around the UK have access to their collections, exhibitions and expertise.
16. Partnerships between national, regional and local museums give people right across the UK the opportunity to access the national collections and benefit from excellent museum provision, including a wider range of exhibitions, learning initiatives and community engagement projects.
17. Working in partnership allows national, regional and local museum partners to increase their audiences, develop innovative programmes, share expertise and develop their staff, as well as being a valuable way of maximising impact and resources.
18. The National Museum Directors' Council identifies the following forms of collaboration and crucially this is very much a two-way process:
  - 18.1. **Public services** – exhibitions and loans, digital access, learning, audience development. For example, the loan of the Lindisfarne Gospels from the British Library to Durham Cathedral in 2012 generated £8.3 million in economic benefit and was visited by 100,000 people. Roman Empire: Power and People is a British Museum touring exhibition which started at Bristol Museum, continued to Norwich Castle, and will tour to four other venues. The Natural History Museum's Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2013 will open at ten UK venues including Bristol's MShed, Cumbria's Rheged Centre, and Guernsey Museum and Art Gallery.
  - 18.2. **Collections** – scholarship and knowledge sharing, distributed national collections, touring exhibitions.

- 18.3. **Professionalism** – building staff capacity, developing subject specialist networks, brand and profile-building.
19. According to an NMDC survey carried out in 2009, across 16 national institutions the total number of projects undertaken with partners across the UK in 2008-09 was well over 1,600. Although it is often difficult to quantify the direct costs of participating in partnerships, the total figure for 10 national museums which estimated how much they spent in 2008-09 was over £2.5 million, which in most cases excludes staff time and in-house resources (such as exhibition production costs). Loan activity was strong, with nearly 80% of survey respondents describing their loans services as good and sustainable. In 2012/13, DCMS-sponsored museums lent objects to 2,727 venues in the UK. However barriers remain, with the cost of loans, particularly transport, and expectations on both sides, especially around standards, being deterrents to action.
20. The NMDC is currently updating its information about partnerships and Diane Lees will share the headline findings at the CTS Board. This will include an update on how collaboration is changing in response to financial pressures. We know that in times of financial hardship there is greater demand on national museums to collaborate with other museums, and that the nature of collaboration can change. For example, sharing exhibitions between museums and helping to manage professional development and a loss of specialist expertise, especially around collections.
21. Models of partnership working also vary widely, from formal partnership agreements between individual museums and long-term strategic programmes to short-term project based partnerships.
22. There is also a huge amount of partnership activity undertaken with other types of bodies such as educational and research institutions, community groups, local, national and international cultural sector bodies, local authorities and private sector organisations.
23. In the current fiscal climate, it is arguably even more important that we do all we can to support collaboration in the museums sector.
24. **Members are invited to discuss the barriers that might prevent smaller museums from accessing our rich heritage and ways of overcoming them.** In doing so, Members might wish to identify other opportunities for joint working and partnerships.
25. **Members are also invited to comment upon the suggested actions:**
- 25.1. **Develop and share practical proposals with the NMDC, ACE and Museums Association on how we can overcome barriers that might prevent smaller museums from collaborating with the nationals.**
- 25.2. **Develop and share practical proposals with the NMDC, ACE and Museums Association about how we can maximise the potential for the rest of the**

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**country to benefit from London's national museums.** Members may also wish to consider the role of national museums based outside London (such as National Museums Liverpool and the Royal Armouries in Leeds) and regional museums and how they also work with the wider local museum network.

- 25.3. **Identify and share case studies about the positive potential of collaboration between national and other museums. In particular, how collaboration can strengthen further the ability of museums to help councils achieve wider community helps such as growth, wellbeing and social inclusion.**
- 25.4. **Incorporate collaboration between museums and the wider cultural sector into our 2014/15 improvement programme for portfolio holders (joint with ACE).**

## **Annex A**

### ACE Major Museum Partners

Beamish and Bowes Museum

Birmingham Museums Trust (Birmingham City Council; Thinktank)

Bristol City Council

Cumbria Museums Consortium (Tullie House; Wordsworth Trust Lakeland Arts Trust)

Horniman Museum & Gardens

Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust

Leeds Museums & Galleries

Manchester Partnership (Manchester City Galleries; Manchester Museum; Whitworth Art Gallery)

Museum of London

Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service

Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter and Plymouth City Museum & Art Gallery

Royal Pavilion & Museums, Brighton & Hove

Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums

University of Cambridge Museums

Oxford University Museums and Oxfordshire County Museums Service

York Museums Trust

ACE Museum Development Providers

Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery & Archives; Plymouth City Museum & Art Gallery; Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery; South West Federation of Museums & Galleries –

Herefordshire Heritage Services; The Marches Network

Leicestershire County Council

Manchester Partnership (with Cumbria Museums Consortium)

Museum of London

Norfolk Museum & Archaeology Service

Royal Pavilion & Museums, Brighton & Hove; HCC Arts & Museums; Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust; Oxfordshire County Museums Service

Tyne & Wear Archive & Museums

York Museums Trust