

NATIONAL STRATEGY CONSULTATION DOCUMENT UMIS RESPONSE

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CONTEXT

Section 1 of the Consultation Document sets out the context and key issues affecting the sector that will influence the strategy.

1. Do you broadly agree that these are the key issues affecting the sector?

Don't know

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The guiding principles of the strategy are outlined in the Consultation Document, Section 2.

2. Do you think that increasing the impact and public benefit of museums in society should be at the heart of the National Strategy?

Yes

3. Do you agree that a threeway relationship between collections, knowledge and communities is central to the sector?

Don't know

4. Would you say that the three guiding principles are important for the National Strategy?

Making the best use of available skills and resources **Yes**

Increasing the sector's ambitions **Yes**

Increasing the visibility of the sector **Yes**

5. In your opinion, is there anything missing from this section?

The conclusion drawn in the Consultation Document is that the complexity and scale of the sector requires a single strategy. UMiS argues that this complexity demands the very opposite - a pluralist approach with overall guidelines as apposed to single strategy, which is potentially unsustainable. UMiS argues for a more sustainable approach aligned with the strategies of other government agencies etc. to take best advantage of the diversity of museums in Scotland.

The general approach of the consultation document, and the ideal of a *single* strategy, promotes homogeneity and appears to undermine the diversity of the sector. It does not appear to support that fact that we are all better at different elements, and make a distinctive contribution to the overall sector. A single strategy does not allow for the fact that different parts of the sector are aligned to deliver different strategies. There needs to be consideration of the fact that there are also other strategies that we work within (eg SFC with its 4 priorities)

some of which align naturally with museum priorities, and some which are more important for host institutions. Where other government funding channels are in alignment, the museums strategy should be designed to articulate with them.

Business management and income generation have become increasingly important for, say, local authority trusts, so this applies to museums other than university museums that are working within other frameworks and strategies.

There is a need for a ‘curatorial strategy’ to clarify the objectives that relate to collections.

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VISION

Section 3 of the Consultation Document proposes the following vision for the sector: Ambitious museums and dynamic collections – connecting people and places, understanding our past, shaping our future and sharing our culture with the world.

6. Do you broadly agree with this vision for the sector?

No

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THE THEMES FOR THE STRATEGY:GENERAL

Section 4 of the Consultation Document proposes the following three themes for the strategy:

7. Do you agree or disagree that these three themes are key areas for the sector?

(i) Knowledge and learning – **Strongly Agree**

(ii) The economy - **Agree**

(iii) People and places – **Neither Agree or Disagree**

8. In your opinion, has any key theme been missed out?

Yes

If yes, which key theme is missing?

Several key themes are missing.

Museological research, and sustaining that (and other types of) research.

Collections-based knowledge and learning should not be conflated with developing the profession and the workforce. University museums can also make a strong contribution here.

Museum management is also missed out – this is not the same as museums as businesses with objectives which support the national economy.

The ‘national strategy’ needs to clarify between those objectives that relate to the management of museums as businesses from those that relate to the social and economic role of museums.

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THEME 1: KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING

Section 4 of the Consultation Document outlines the key issues under Theme 1: Knowledge and learning.

9. Do you agree or disagree that the issues outlined within this theme are important for the sector?

Agree

10. In your opinion, have any key issues been missed out in this section?

Yes

If yes, which key issues are missing?

Investment in collections and developing the tradition of collections-based research are both missing. Further, a strategy for research and learning is also required. University museums can offer leadership in this area. The Consultation Document misses out investment in the profession - museum practice needs to be specified as a separate strand.

The size and connectedness of the museums profession in Scotland makes it a uniquely good place to develop and understand some of these areas of practice across the whole sector.

11. From your own experience, can you outline an example of how the sector is delivering in this area?

- 1. 'Revealing the Hidden Collections' – the innovative project involved technical and curatorial innovation coupled with excellent knowledge exchange to create a platform for continuing and expanding work..**
- 2. The role of university museums in museum training and workforce development in work-related training provided in all universities, from initial training to CPD and academic research.**
- 3. MGS Interns Project.**

Knowledge and Learning is the core business of university museums (rather than something which we 'endeavour' to provide),

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THEME 2: THE ECONOMY

Section 4 of the Consultation Document outlines the key issues under Theme 2: The economy.

12. Do you agree or disagree that the issues outlined within this theme are important for the sector?

Agree

13. In your opinion, have any key issues been missed out in this section?

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14. From your own experience, can you outline an example of how the sector is delivering in this area?

If yes, which key issues are missing?

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THEME 3: PEOPLE AND PLACES

Section 4 of the Consultation Document outlines the key issues under Theme 3: People and Places.

15. Do you agree or disagree that the issues outlined within this theme are important for the sector?

Agree

16. In your opinion, have any key issues been missed out in this section?

Whilst we broadly agree with this theme, it could be developed much more strongly by distinguishing the economic role of museums from their business activity.

17. From your own experience, can you outline an example of how the sector is delivering in this area?

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KEY STRATEGY OBJECTIVES (1)

Section 5 of the Consultation Document outlines the key strategy objectives.

18. In your opinion, are these the right objectives to provide a routemap to deliver the strategy's vision?

Neither Agree nor Disagree

19. In your opinion, have any key objectives been missed out in this section?

Yes

If yes, which key objectives should be added?

UMiS queries the objective which solely promotes Scottish identity – our collections of world culture are evidencecelebrate that asset as much as Scotland’s own cultural assets. We ask where science, engineering, life sciences and the natural world fit into the People and Places theme.

University museums have been developing the social inclusion agenda through Widening Participation, international recruitment etc. There are good examples of best practice in this sector.

University museums are clear on their audiences, not having to meet social inclusivity targets or other social agendas. The Consultation Document is attempting to set a strategy for museums which sets these ‘key strategy objectives’ as the primary output of their activity rather than as a consequence of innovative, challenging activity in collections care, research, training and public engagement.

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KEY STRATEGY OBJECTIVES (2)

The key strategy objectives are grouped under the headings below.

For each objective, please tell us how important you consider it to be for the sector

20. Understanding our past

Unlock the stories of collections through research, exchange and discovery.

Very important

Use collections and the knowledge around them to foster a culture of learning.

Very important

Empower communities to make decisions about their collections.

Of little importance

21. Shaping our future

Raise the quality and the standard of services and collections.

Very important

Work together to promote economic, environmental and social sustainability in museum businesses and among communities.

Of little importance

Nurture talent, share expertise and develop skills and leadership across the workforce.

Very important

Work to raise aspiration and realise ambition in the heritage arena, stimulating economic activity, regeneration and innovation.

Very important

22. Connecting people and places

Build and continue to develop ties between collections, communities and places.

Important

Help to deliver wider social and economic agendas through effective partnerships with other public bodies.

Neither important nor unimportant

Maximise the number and range of visitors to Scotland's museums through the outstanding quality of their experience.

Very important

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23. Sharing our culture with the world
Be ambassadors for Scotland's culture.

Important

Nurture relationships internationally.

Very important

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KEY STRATEGY OBJECTIVES (3)

In this section we would like you to only focus on those objectives that you consider to be most important for the sector.

For each objective that you consider to be important for the sector, please tell us how you could contribute to its delivery.

24. Unlock the stories of collections through research, exchange and discovery

University museums' collections and expertise are pivotal to this objective.

25. Use collections and the knowledge around them to foster a culture of learning

University museums' collections and expertise are pivotal to this objective.

26. Empower communities to make decisions about their collections

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27. Raise the quality and the standard of services and collections

University museums can provide excellent examples of Best Practice, Knowledge Exchange, Recognised Collections, workforce development.

28. Work together to promote economic, environmental and social sustainability in museum businesses and among communities

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29. Nurture talent, share expertise and develop skills and leadership across the workforce

Very strong role in leadership, with formal training responsibility.

30. Work to raise aspiration and realise ambition in the heritage arena, stimulating

economic activity, regeneration and innovation

31. Build and continue to develop ties between collections, communities and places

University museums have a broader role within universities. Part of our strength is that we are part of larger institutions that have much relevant expertise and creativity.

University museums have an international reach in terms of training future museum leaders.

The Consultation Document lacks innovation and ambition. As museum professionals we should use our expertise in collections to challenge people, not just to celebrate past achievements.

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32. Help to deliver wider social and economic agendas through effective partnerships with other public bodies

33. Maximise the number and range of visitors to Scotland's museums through the outstanding quality of their experience

34. Be ambassadors for Scotland's culture

35. Nurture relationships internationally

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STRATEGY PLANNING AND DELIVERY

Section 6 of the Consultation Document outlines the role of the National Development Body.

36. Do you agree that the roles and functions of the National Development Body laid out in Section 6 of the consultation document are the right ones?

No

If not, why not?

UMiS questions the primary roles and responsibilities of the new body, as it is unclear where the new body is going to sit politically and operationally. We are uncertain as to whether or not this is in government, an 'agency', or a government department. If it is the latter, how effective can the stated function of advocacy be?

We need an advisory body and a robust funding body for the sector. We do not believe the new body should be responsible for delivery. It should be a facilitating body and, for example, commission the sector to collect research instead of undertaking it.

The new body should be a lean institution and not overly bureaucratic.

We need a clearer set of options for the structure, size and responsibilities of the new body before we can give proper feedback.

37. Have you examples of innovation and new ways of working that could be relevant to the delivery of the strategy?

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OVERALL FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATION

Section 7 of the Consultation Document outlines the overall approach to evaluation of the strategy.

38. Do you have any comments on this section?

An overall comment is that what the Consultation Document is not focussed and strategic enough, with very high level objectives but no ‘how tos’.

We would be opposed to creating a monitoring service. This is an unnecessary step and waste of resources as universities, university museums (and indeed other sectors) have their own government-established monitoring and evaluating frameworks.

The new body should be strategic and advisory should not be monitoring and delivering. It should facilitate funding and resources eg such as the HLF-funded MGS Interns Programme. Recognition is an ideal example of such an initiative.

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CLOSING QUESTIONS

39. Do you consider the tone and language of the document clear and appropriate in terms of taking the strategy process forward?

No

40. How could the National Strategy help you to realise your ambitions a) for your organisation and b) for the sector?

The crucial contribution of the university sector to this objective should be recognised, from collections and research to workforce development.

41. Do you have any further comments about the consultation document?

UMiS queries the overtly instrumentalist approach of the Consultation Document.

A national strategy should support a dynamic, creative, pluralist sector and should not propose a one-size-fits-all approach. University museums should be valued as the intersection for many agendas: we bring partnership with the higher education sector; through partnership with us people have an opportunity to engage with universities, potentially for the first time, through

widening participation programmes, student recruitment and formal and information professional training.

We require a body which in the current context protects existing resources though ideally increases resources.

The vision – ambitious museums and dynamic collections etc – presents a false distinction between museums and collections. The full vision statement is not sector-specific enough.

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YOUR PROFILE