



**National Collections: an NMDC brief
June 2007**

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1. About NMDC:

The NMDC represents the leaders of the UK's national collections, including the National Archives, the British Library and the national museums and galleries in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It represents the interests of national museums to government and other stakeholders and plays a key role in the development of the work of its members and their contribution to society and the economy.

Our 28 members (listed in Appendix 1) operate in 83 locations across the UK.

Further information about the NMDC can be found on our website:

www.nationalmuseums.org.uk.

2. National Collections –Achievements over the past ten years:

Over the past ten years the UK's national collections have used government funding and self-generated income to lever additional funding from a wide range of sources to enable significant developments in programmes and facilities. The national museums continually seek to improve their reach and impact, while fulfilling their stewardship role to the highest standards. Our vision is to be the places and resources to which most people actively and repeatedly turn for information, learning and enjoyment, and through which individuals, communities and society are transformed. We believe this aspiration is bold and achievable, provided the museums have appropriate financial and political support.

a. Huge increase in visitor numbers

- Visits to national museums are up by around 50% since 1998/9 due to new facilities, new programmes and the removal of admission charges. There were over 35.1m visits in 2005/6, up from 24 million visits in 1998-9¹.
- Visits to formerly charging museums are up by 87%². Natural History Museum's visit numbers nearly doubled since 1996-7 (1.7m to 3.3m). V&A visit numbers rose by 175% from 937,000 in 2001/2 (prior to free admission) to 2.6m in 2006-7.
- An extra 16.5 million children have visited museums since they were granted free entry in 1998³.
- Between 2002/03 and 2004/05 alone, the number of people from lower socio-economic groups visiting government-sponsored museums increased by almost 30%⁴.
- There were over 10.7 million visits from overseas residents to UK national museums in 2005/06⁵.
- Seven of the top ten visitor attractions in the UK are national museums.⁶ The National Maritime Museum is the winner of the 'Large Visitor Attraction of the Year 2006'⁷.

b. Inspiring learning for all

The past ten years has seen a revolution in museum education. National museums have placed learning at the core of their ethos, and have developed extensive programmes and learning opportunities from early years programmes to advanced

¹ DCMS data derived from the museums' annual funding agreement returns.

² *New figures show more people than ever enjoying our national museums thanks to free admission, says Tessa Jowell*, DCMS news release 25 June 2007

³ DCMS data derived from the museums' annual funding agreement returns.

⁴ Tony Blair's culture speech at Tate Modern, 6 March 2007

⁵ Tony Travers (2006) *Museums and Galleries in Britain: Economic, social and creative impacts*, LSE

⁶ Association of Leading Visitor Attractions, 2005 http://alva.org.uk/visitor_statistics/

⁷ England Awards for Excellence 2006'

academic research and established their role as vital centres of knowledge transfer. National museum websites include outstanding learning resources including online exhibitions, downloadable worksheets on national curriculum themes, teachers packs, making a strong contribution to Curriculum Online.

- The British Museum's Egyptian Ancient Civilisation educational website alone receives over 4m unique visits a year
- National museums have established links with 244 UK universities, 52 Further Education colleges, and over 80 overseas universities.
- 2.8m children participate in educational sessions at national museums – an increase of more than 50% since 2001/2.
- Tate Britain won a Sure Start Partners in Excellence award for supporting children's learning, in partnership with Big and Small and South Westminster Sure Start Children's Centre.
- The National Maritime Museum provides national curriculum links for KS1, 2 and 5, for subjects including Art & Design, Citizenship, English, Geography, History, Literacy, Maths, Numeracy and Science.
- The Imperial War Museum supports teachers' professional development running a PGCE and BEd for Citizenship course, which examines methods of teaching about the Holocaust, using the Holocaust exhibition as its focus.
- The National Portrait Gallery, Tate, British Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, British Museum and National Maritime Museum have been awarded Academic Analogue status by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in recognition of that their research capability is analogous to Higher Education Institutions. The Natural History Museum is an Academic Analogue of all six science Research Councils.

c. Fuelling the economy: creative industries and tourism

The overall economic impact of the national museums and galleries is approximately £1.5bn⁸. National museums have developed their role as a vital part of the creative industries, a showcase for new design and a resource that inspires and feeds other parts of the creative industries. They are also a major driver of tourism. Seven of the top ten visitor attractions in the UK are publicly-funded museums and galleries⁹ and 85% of overseas visitors come here for our museums and galleries.

- An economic impact assessment of the British Library showed that for every £1 of public funding, the British Library generates £4.40 for the UK economy.
- The V&A makes an essential contribution to sustaining Britain's leading role in creative design by making the best of historic and contemporary design available through its exhibitions and programmes, acquisitions and commissions. In 2006/7 34% of the audiences at the V&A identified themselves as practitioners, students or teachers in the Creative Industries.
- The British Library's Business and IP Centre has helped 25,000 business people since it opened in 2006¹⁰.

d. Fostering debate and promoting understanding of identities

The national collections are centres of debate on global issues such as climate change and international affairs. Museums, libraries and archives also enable people to explore issues of identity whether personal, local or cultural.

- *Moving Here* developed by The National Archives in partnership with 30 heritage organisations enables users to explore 200 years of migration history to England

⁸ Tony Travers (2006) *Museums and Galleries in Britain: Economic, social and creative impacts*, LSE

⁹ *Values and Vision: The Contribution of Culture*, 2006, NMDC

¹⁰ British Library Economic Impact Assessment <http://www.bl.uk/about/valueconf/pdf/value.pdf>

of four ethnic communities, including over 150,000 digitised versions of original content a readily accessible context.

- *Understanding Slavery* is a national education project developed by a partnership of national and regional museums including the National Maritime Museum and the National Museums Liverpool. The website seeks to encourage teachers and students to examine the history of the subject, including its modern legacies, through museum collections and schemes of work within the National Curriculum.
- The V&A is the lead partner in the *Image & Identity* partnership project which seeks to engage and inspire young people in responding creatively to museum collections through the visual arts.

e. Enterprise and Efficiency

National museums are multi-million pound businesses serving public benefit. Over the past ten years, they have developed innovative income generation activities including licensing, destination restaurants, consultancy, on-line products and exploiting of leading brands. Many of the most exciting programmes and projects have only been made possible through self-generated income and successful leveraging of funding from wide range of sources. The national collections have also been recognised as successful at making efficiency savings.

- Tate now generate over 50% of income from non-governmental sources¹¹.
- Tate Publishing is the number two visual arts publisher in the UK with a reputation for high quality award winning exhibition catalogues and an increasingly diverse list of more general art titles.
- The British Library has achieved £40m of efficiency savings since 2001¹².

f. Extending reach through new technologies

The national collections are reaching a vast global audience through the web. The V&A website alone had almost 20 million visitor sessions last year, up to 60% of which were from outside the UK. They have been at the forefront of technological innovation, working in partnership with the private sector to develop products which enable broader and deeper exploration of our national collections.

- As museums reach a wide and varied public they are often the only place to test out products. For example, the V&A has been working in collaboration with PlayStation (PSP) to develop an exploration of the collections using interactive technologies including Playstation PSP consoles.
- The British Library's *Turning the Pages 2.0* technology gives access to iconic texts via the web. More than a million people from over 100 countries have downloaded *Turning the Pages* on the web.

g. Transforming visitor facilities and creating inspiring public spaces

Over the past decade, national museums have transformed both the visitor experience and the public realm through an ambitious programme of capital renewal, creating inspiring public spaces, which are valued by users and local communities, as well as professionals. These include:

- Tate Modern; British Museum Great Court; Imperial War Museum North, National Railway Museum Shildon, Science Museum Wellcome Wing; Natural History Museum Darwin Centre; National Portrait Gallery Ondaatje Wing; National Waterfront Museum, Swansea; World Museum Liverpool; National Maritime Museum's Neptune Court; The British Library Centre for Conservation; V&A British Galleries.

¹¹ Tate Report 04/06

¹² British Library Efficiency Delivery Plan 2005/06 - 2007/08, DCMS

h. Working in partnership

National museums do not act in isolation but are a vital part of many different communities, including partnerships and collaborations with the education, academic, business, scientific sectors, as well as with community groups. Partnerships and cooperation enables unprecedented use of collections, nationally and internationally.

- In 2005/06 the V&A made short term loans to 17 UK towns and cities and loaned 2,600 objects across the UK¹³.
- Some of the regional museums working in formal partnership with NMDC members include: Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery; Bolton Museum and Art Gallery; Bowes Museum; Bradford Museums and Galleries; Brighton & Hove Galleries and Museums; Bristol City Museums and Gallery; Exeter Museums and Gallery; Glasgow Museums; Hampshire Museums County Service Horniman Museum; Leicester City Museums Service; Lincoln City and County Museum; Manchester City Galleries; Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service; Sheffield Galleries and Museum Trust; Sutton Hoo Visitor Centre, Suffolk. National Trust; Tyne and Wear Museums; York Museums Trust, as well as the National Museums Northern Ireland and National Museum Wales.

¹³ V&A Funding Agreement report 2005/06

3. National Collections – the challenges we face

a. Maintaining international status

The UK's major museums face major challenges to remain among the best in the world. While national museum funding has increased over the past ten years this has not kept up with rises in costs or visitor numbers. Plus, many countries across Europe and the world are investing in new museums and galleries and existing collections leaving the UK institutions in danger of losing international visitors.

In 1980 the Louvre and British Museum had equal numbers of visitors; but by 2005 the Louvre had 7.3 million compared with the British Museum's 4.5 million, (even though the Louvre charges for admission)¹⁴. One significant and major outcome of the Louvre's popularity and international positioning is the lucrative new deal with Abu Dhabi, worth \$1.3 billion, to adopt the name, lend works of art and to stage special exhibitions.

b. Building contemporary collections

The cost of acquisitions is growing rapidly while the resources available for growing collections are falling behind those of our international competitors. For example the average annual spend on collections purchase 2001-04 was £1.577m at V&A compared to £16.623m at the Metropolitan Museum, USA¹⁵. US institutions also benefit to a greater degree from philanthropy supported by a favourable tax regime. For instance the Seattle Art Museum recently received more than 1000 works of art from 53 donors worth more than \$1 billion in total.

British museums are struggling in particular to build contemporary collections of objects representing the world of the last 30 years. Such collections are vital resources for students, designers and artists in the UK and are essential to enable museums to support the creative economy and foster understanding of the modern world. There is also a risk of undermining the UK research infrastructure if the British Library is unable to maintain the breadth and depth of its collections.

c. Maintaining provision

Museums also face significant costs in maintaining facilities. One third of museum displays and facilities – often housed in historic, listed buildings – are in need of significant renovation. Plus, in order to engage new audiences and maintain an international presence, museums must keep up to date with the latest technology, by digitising collections and growing knowledge transfer capabilities. This is costly and requires expert support.

d. Providing for the Olympics

As the UK rises to the challenge of hosting the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games its cultural institutions will also be on display to the world. The London Olympic Games in 2012 present an exceptional opportunity: a unique occasion to showcase the very best of our cultural activity to a global audience and to create a lasting cultural legacy will be a defining feature of London 2012. It was promise of such a strong cultural offer which played a key part in winning the Olympic bid for London.

It is important to recognise that to fulfil promises set out in the Olympic bid and to achieve this legacy there has to be investment in culture in the run-up to the Games and a deep commitment to sustaining the quality and availability of what has already been achieved.

¹⁴ Tony Travers (2006) *Museums and Galleries in Britain; Economic, social and creative impacts*, LSE

¹⁵ Ibid

4. National Collections and the Spending Review

The challenges faced by the national collections are caused, in a large part, by budget restraints. To assist museums in facing up to these challenges, and in order to fulfil government policy objectives, museums need a spending review settlement of at least 2007-08 grants maintained in real terms and a meaningful capital investment programme.

Funding cuts would have a disproportionate impact on museums and seriously damage service provision. For instance, when tasked by DCMS with investigating the impact of possible cuts, NMDC found that cuts of 7% would mean a reduction of over 20% in real terms, amounting to some £99.4 million (the same figure as was granted to enable free admission). The effect on public programmes would be so severe as to virtually wipe out all that has been achieved in terms of broadening access.

National museums have made impressive efficiency savings but at least four-fifths of museums' expenditure is committed to statutory stewardship and fixed infrastructure costs which, rising faster than the Treasury's calculated rate of inflation, are necessary for maintaining our collections and. So cuts would be achievable only at the cost of major reductions in service delivery and asset care. This means that the innovative programmes for public engagement would suffer disproportionately.

A major reduction in public funding would also negatively impact on museums' ability to develop commercial revenue and engage in partnerships with private and public funders. Donors want to support the development of flourishing institutions; they do not wish to subsidise routine public expenditure.

5. Seeking Government support:

The National Museums are currently seeking government support on the following:

a. Incentivising donations to museums

As noted above, government funding for acquisitions has greatly diminished at a time when the price of pre-eminent cultural objects has massively increased. Tax regime reforms could go a long way to enabling museums and galleries to raise funds, build their collections and acquire important items, as has been demonstrated in Australia and the US.

In particular the introduction of a 'lifetime gifts' policy would provide an important tool for museums to build relations with donors, who may then go on to bigger or subsequent donations, for example capital projects for the galleries that house the donated objects. Directors have argued that this is the typical model of relations with donors in the US and that as philanthropy at this level is a global market, UK museums are at a disadvantage with incentives to encourage gifts of objects.

The introduction of such a 'lifetime gifts' policy could be seen as a logical extension of current tax policy: Objects can already be gifted to museums in lieu of capital gains tax and inheritance tax when somebody dies and gifts of cash and shares benefit from tax relief in the form of Gift Aid.

Such a reform would help tackle the very real problem currently facing national museums and galleries – building collections of objects representing the world of the last 30 years – as outlined above. A lifetime gifts policy would enable museums to cultivate relationships with a younger generation of newly wealthy individuals, people who are more likely to collect contemporary objects, and to bring those into the public sphere.

b. International Affairs

The museum directors believe that culture can make a vital contribution to international relations and that museums play a unique role in fostering international cultural exchange. Many of the national museums already do a great deal of impressive work in this area, for example the British Museum's partnerships in Africa and the Middle East and the V&A's work with China. Museums can create opportunities for diplomacy, for example The British Museum's exhibition in Tehran provided an opportunity for the Foreign Secretary to visit at a sensitive time.

But currently missing are an over-arching strategy and high-level cross-departmental government support for cultural diplomacy. In an attempt to plug this gap, a group of NMDC Directors are developing a proposal to put to DCMS for a strategic programme of work on international affairs. We look forward to working with the Department to take this exciting new project forward.

6. NMDC – other work priorities:

The NMDC is also currently active, and welcomes government support, on the following work areas:

Digitisation of collections: Examining the opportunities offered by digital technology through the digitisation of collections project.

Tackling cultural diversity: An NMDC working group has developed and is monitoring a set of proposals for museums to improve the cultural diversity of their boards, staff and audiences.

Improving efficiency through shared services: An NMDC working group is exploring capacity for increased efficiency through shared museums' services, in line with current government objectives.

Finding solutions to climate change: Exploring the role museums should play both as agents of change and producers of emissions.

Best practice in collections management: Enabling appropriate and effective museums collections management through peer review.

Improving access via copyright policy: Working with law firm Farrers to develop a common museums policy on non-commercial use of museums' images to improve access.

Appendix 1 – NMDC members

Amgueddfa Cymru-National Museum Wales British Library * British Museum Fleet Air Arm Museum Imperial War Museum Museum of London National Archives National Army Museum National Galleries of Scotland National Gallery National Library of Scotland * National Maritime Museum National Museum of Science & Industry National Museums Liverpool	National Museums Northern Ireland National Museums Scotland National Portrait Gallery Natural History Museum Royal Air Force Museum Royal Armouries Royal Marines Museum Royal Naval Museum Royal Navy Submarine Museum Sir John Soane's Museum Tate Tyne & Wear Museums Victoria & Albert Museum Wallace Collection * associate members
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