

NMDC submission to the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee Inquiry, *Countries of Culture*

The National Museum Directors' Council (NMDC) represents the views of the Directors of the UK's national collections and major regional museums, including the Major Partner Museums. A full list of the organisation's membership can be found here:

www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/members.

1 Executive summary

1.1 Museums preserve, protect and promote one of the few irreplaceable public assets: the nation's collective memory, knowledge and history. Preserving our heritage through museums is a fundamental aspect of maintaining a healthy and prosperous civil society. Museums are civic institutions that simultaneously serve a local, regional, national and international audience, as well as an online audience who may never cross the threshold. Museums matter because they uniquely serve a public past, a public present and a public yet to be born.

1.2 Public investment in museums matters to local and central government because of the impact museums have on public policy priorities. They:

- create a thriving, vibrant and diverse cultural life for the nation;
- contribute to regional prosperity;
- develop peaceful and prosperous communities by creating safe and welcoming community spaces;
- promote health and well-being;
- sustain tourism – museums are the country's most popular visitor attractions;
- strengthen the UK's soft power;
- provide education, life-long learning, skills development and apprenticeships; and
- are world leaders in scientific, technological and creative innovation.

1.3 Museums are uniquely able to achieve this because of their collections, the buildings in which they are housed and the expertise of their staff. The objects in museums' collections tell stories about people, places, the natural world and thought, scientific innovation, art and design, and the stories told by these objects, brought to life by their study and engagement with the public, help us explore and understand the world around us. This means museums have long-term fixed costs, and collections, expertise and buildings require investment.

1.4 The UK museum sector is more vibrant, popular and internationally respected than it has ever been. Visitor numbers have never been higher: there were over 72 million visits to the museums within NMDC's membership alone in 2014-15, including 14.3 million visits to the English regional Major Partner Museums. The strength, breadth and quality of the UK major civic collections is possibly unique across the world, and the presence of world renowned collections – as well as staff expertise and landmark museum buildings – right across the country is something to celebrate. 74 regional museums hold Designated Collections (collections of national and international significance not held in a national museum) and every winner of the prestigious Art Fund Museum of the Year since 2012 has been a non-national museum – Royal Albert Memorial Museum Exeter, William Morris Gallery, Yorkshire Sculpture Park and The Whitworth.

1.5 Museums have successfully adapted to become cultural enterprises, safe and social community spaces, and part of the intellectual life of their locality. Museums that have historically been more dependent on revenue finance or support-in-kind from a local authority are those which have made the biggest changes to ensure the public investment they receive is used as efficiently as possible.

1.6 In order to be successful cultural enterprises museums must be able to maintain their public trust and popularity, as well as their reputation for expertise and high quality collections care. This requires core and secure public investment in collections, expertise and buildings: from this basis, museums can then generate income and become more financially sustainable.

1.7 The remarkable success and the potential of non-national museums – as well as the public impact of partnerships with national museums – is now at risk due to the significant and swift decline in investment from local authorities, the biggest public funder of museums in the UK. In the wider context of local and central government spending the amount allocated to museums is very small. Cutting this will only have a minimal impact of reducing spending, and yet the value of what is lost will be considerably greater. If museums reduce the extent to which they curate, acquire, conserve and engage with the public, the collections and cumulative knowledge wither and the many positive impacts museums have disappear.

1.8 Local authority investment in museums has, and will continue to, rapidly decline. NMDC is sympathetic to the financial pressures local authorities are under, but would strongly urge local authorities to view their contribution to museums as an investment not a cost. NMDC would like national and local government, Arts Council England, HLF and those who run museums to work together to maintain strategic public investment and create the conditions for museums to flourish. This can be achieved by:

- Enabling museums to seek best value from their assets and ensure there are no unnecessary barriers to enterprise;
- Celebrating the contribution museums make to public policy priorities and therefore fully integrate museums into regional policy and economic planning (including having an enhanced role in Local Enterprise Partnerships) and community development;
- Investing in transition to help museums continue their successful evolution to a more financially sustainable operating model which protects previous investment and is suitable to the economic and social circumstances of their locality and the nature of their collection; and
- Thinking creatively and ambitiously about how museums can work together for mutual benefit and to ensure most effective and efficient use of resources across the whole sector.

2 The current funding situation for cultural sectors in the regions and sub-regions

Local government

2.1 The financial environment within which non-national museums operate has changed rapidly since 2010. The greatest change has been the marked and rapid reduction in local authority investment. Although this is a consequence of the significant cuts made to the budget of the Department for Communities and Local Government, it is compounded in some parts of the UK by the removal of the tailoring of the local government block grants to local demographics and the long-term increase in the cost of statutory services (most notably, adult social care): statutory services therefore require a greater proportion of local authorities' budgets, thus reducing the amount available for non-statutory services.

2.2 Public investment in museums takes two broad forms: direct revenue investment in museums and their core business; and project support, capital investment, tax relief and investment in local infrastructure. Museums need the former to take advantage of the latter, and some wholly independent museums rely on the latter to maintain their viability.

2.3 The current funding situation across the UK is mixed, but all museums which receive revenue investment from local authorities within NMDC's membership have seen a reduction in this funding. Since 2010 investment by local authorities has reduced markedly, in some cases as much as 60%. These significant reductions have been compounded by the short notice with which they have had to be implemented, with many cuts made within the present or forthcoming financial year.

2.4 Some organisations have had to make changes to mitigate the speed and depth of the cuts. For example, York Museums Trust introduced admission charges for local residents to the re-opened York Art Gallery; Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums has introduced charging for facilitated school visits, for temporary exhibitions at the Laing Art Gallery, for the Play Tyne interactive water play area at Discovery Museum and for many events and activities; some museums have had to reduce opening hours or close sites and most have reduced their staff headcount.

2.5 The Cornwall Museums Partnership, Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums and the Manchester Museums Partnership have all demonstrated the benefits of a group of museums in a locality sharing some functions – both formally and informally – as a way of ensuring their income has the greatest public impact. Many of these partnerships have formed as a response to the reduction in available local authority investment, but require the political will of local authorities to maximize their potential. It should be noted that the recent Welsh Museums Review set out proposals for regional hubs and therefore the realizing of economies of scale. Museums in Northern Ireland have undergone similar changes because of the merging of local authorities.

2.6 As organisations that require long term planning because of the fixed overheads inherent in the core business of caring for collections and buildings and ensuring public access, museums could more effectively and efficiently manage their public investment if funding was agreed for at least a three-year period (at present it is usually agreed on a year-by-year basis). For those museums which receive local authority revenue investment their own financial planning is made more challenging because yearly settlements are indicative and are only confirmed within weeks of the start of a financial year. These museums would ultimately be better able to adapt to any changes in levels of public investment if they could plan to manage this over a longer period of time. This gives the opportunity to develop alternative funding streams and operational models and to make a detailed assessment of the long term needs of the collection, the public and the institution.

2.7 Some local authorities have prioritised culture because of the crucial role it plays in making a location attractive to live in, work in and visit. For example, culture is a major priority

for the city of Hull and economic plans, led by Hull City Council and relevant agencies, have prioritised the development of culture along with attracting new manufacturing and engineering to the city. They did this because they recognise that culture plays a crucial role in making a place more attractive for significant business investment and in encouraging professionals to relocate; that Hull has a rich heritage which is inspiring to visitors and residents alike; and that culture provides attractive and attainable employment opportunities for residents in a part of the country that has experienced significant levels of deprivation. Hull's vision, and the execution of this by a consortium of business, civic and cultural organisations, was rewarded with the announcement that Hull will be the City of Culture in 2017. This status has in turn levered significant investment into the city and its cultural infrastructure. Brighton and Hove City Council is working with cultural and education-based agencies across the city on the 'Our Future City' initiative, which aims to find ways to transform the city in the next 10 years and address inequality and lack of opportunity, and recognises the key strategic role of culture in delivering positive outcomes for children and young people.

Universities

2.8 Museums and universities are increasingly working together and should be supported and encouraged by DCMS and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to do so. Not only are museums and universities able to collaborate on research, teaching and sharing expertise, but universities are significant catalysts for economic development and in forging a sense of place. Universities are placing much greater emphasis on public engagement (including as a requirement of the Research Evaluation Framework, which is presently being reviewed) and on ensuring their locality is attractive to prospective students and staff. Museums and universities, along with libraries, form the intellectual heart of a place, fostering knowledge, curiosity and creativity.

2.9 The University Museums, Galleries and Collections Fund currently sits within the budget of HEFCE. University museums and galleries make up 2.3% of the UK's museum sector, but care and make available to the public 25% of Designated Collections and make a significant contribution to wider scholarship and innovation. University museums increasingly contribute leadership and specialist expertise – promoting, for example, a renewed focus on collections research for the wider sector through partnerships with their university. Major Partner Museums at the Universities of Cambridge, Manchester, Newcastle and Oxford have seen unprecedented growth in new forms of community collaboration and partnership with regional museums, while other university museums have forged new forms of strategic partnerships with local authorities to support joint projects, including skills sharing and community engagement programmes. HEFCE's support for museums is presently under review.

2.10 As university museums continue to develop their public engagement and play a significant and unique role within the museum sector, the comparatively modest annual budget of £10.5m from the University Museums, Galleries and Collections Fund – which is used to lever in £56m of additional funding annually for university museums – should be protected.

Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)

2.11 The HLF continues to be a major supporter of the museum sector, and its strategic approach to investment – supported by its network of regional offices and associated expertise – has helped transform museums and visitors' expectations of them. HLF has recently sought to adapt its funding, whilst maintaining the principle of additionality, to support museums' long-term sustainability. The Catalyst programme to develop endowments and fundraising capacity in cultural heritage organisations has been very successful, as has increased funding for organisational change through the Transition Fund, collections development programmes through the Collecting Cultures funding stream, and heritage skills development through projects funded by the Skills for the Future programme.

Arts Council England (ACE)

2.12 ACE is the development body for museums, and is presently consulting on changing

its investment model. Since it assumed responsibility for museums in 2010 ACE has invested in museums' projects and programmes by funding individual museums, consortia and support organisations. The proposed changes to ACE investment include subsuming Major Partner Museums into the National Portfolio and thus investing in organisations' business plans (as well as continuing to make strategic investment in programmes and projects). At present, there are only limited circumstances where museums are eligible to apply for ACE-administered lottery funding.

Philanthropy and private investment

2.13 Research has demonstrated that it is much more challenging to raise income through philanthropy and private investment outside of London. Many national organisations have their headquarters in London, whilst regional offices often have limits on their ability to offer corporate support or partnerships locally. Arts Council England and Museums Galleries Scotland have both invested in developing fundraising skills in the museums sector. However, if museums were integrated into local or regional economic planning it would greatly assist them in developing partnerships with business and local philanthropists.

3 The regional impact of local authority settlement on the cultural sector

3.1 NMDC has serious concerns for the future of local authority investment in museums following the local authority settlement in the 2015 Comprehensive Spending Review. Although there was a positive outcome for national museums and Arts Council England (standstill funding in real terms) the positive impact of that for the museum sector as a whole will be undermined by the likely reductions in local authority investment. The scale of the cuts to local authorities with no protection for museum provision leaves museums at risk of large and swiftly applied cuts to revenue funding and changes to the in-kind support they receive. Even where local authorities have so far been able to continue to invest in local museums, many may struggle to be able to continue to do so.

3.2 The greatest risk will be posed to civic museums' ability to maintain staff expertise, good standards of collections care and to carry out necessary maintenance on their buildings. Museums by their nature have fixed and continuous costs: they need a level of base investment in the expertise of staff who are then able to seek best value from the assets; to ensure the safety and security of their buildings in order to maintain high visitor numbers; and to continue the care of works and objects which fascinate and engage the public and alternative investors. Since local authorities are one of the largest investors in UK museums, the scale of the reductions set out in the settlement will place the future of some civic museums at risk.

3.3 Since 2010, museums have prioritised keeping the doors open. To do this they have been forced to reduce some of the less visible curatorial and conservation functions. This is not sustainable. Long-term erosion of expertise and inability to invest in maintaining the basic fabric of buildings will cause long-term damage to the vitality of the whole museum sector. If there are further significant and swift cuts to public investment in museums, short term solutions will be the only ones available. Opening hours will be cut, charges introduced and programming and partnership work, including loans, markedly reduced, and thus the access the public has to its collections and heritage will be much diminished. Collections need constant maintenance or they irrevocably deteriorate.

3.4 The 2015 CSR announced a change to business rates to enable local authorities to retain 100% of revenue, although the implications of this are unclear. Museums are a major contribution to making a place attractive to live and invest in. Major business investors, such as Rolls Royce in Derby, have been very supportive of city museums because of their civic value. Museums foster creativity and curiosity, which is crucial in inspiring the designers and technicians of the future in industry. Excellent museums help to encourage local business investment by creating an environment which helps attract and retain workers. This will become more important as local authorities retain 100% of their business rate receipts.

4 New funding models in the cultural sector, including use of Lottery funding

4.1 The future of individual civic museums will be affected, to some extent, by a series of external factors beyond their control: local demographics, degree of political stability, economic conditions, type of collection and the ease with which their region attracts tourists. There are a number of alternative funding models – and it may not be necessary for museums to move to being independent trusts if it is not in the best interest of that service. Research commissioned by Arts Council England from TBR Research demonstrated that the viability of a civic museum service is dependent on the level of political support from the local authority, rather than the specifics of its governance model. However, museums which do not have independent control of all their assets (where a local authority retains ownership and control of collections, intellectual property and property) will still need some financial support from their local authority. There is a public expectation that general and local taxation supports publicly-owned museums – Arts Council England’s 2014 Public Attitudes Survey showed that 70% of the public support maintaining public investment in museums¹.

Place-based investment

4.2 Place-based investment – recognising the impact museums have on a range of public policy priorities in a location – should be explored. Many of the UK’s civic collections were built on a foundation of philanthropy, public “subscription” and investment by local businesses and public corporations. Founders led the establishment of the UK’s great civic collections and wished to leave an indelible mark on their city by investing their personal wealth into improving the place that had supported their own development. Fundraising campaigns for local museum provision which revive this spirit and emphasise the importance of a museum to the future vitality of its locality – to serve a public audience yet to be born – could re-invigorate the public realm in the same way communities have come together to secure the future of other community assets. Government needs to incentivise and actively foster philanthropy outside of central London to secure a future for civic museums which is more sustainable than year-on-year revenue funding from increasingly pressed local authorities. The particular characteristics of each locality will determine what model of philanthropic investment could be possible, but these could include a combination of city or region-wide endowments for culture, local small-scale giving campaigns, long term corporate investment and match-funding of public investment.

4.3 Decisive influence needs to be exerted on business to illustrate the importance of cultural infrastructure to the economic and social vitality of an area. Government needs to champion the value businesses receive from the continued presence of an excellent museum service and encourage them, alongside local authorities, to contribute to long term revenue funding to ensure they continue to reap the benefits.

Ensure museums are part of region-wide economic planning

4.4 Museums are central to place-making. As a physical building with a collection that documents the history and human achievements of a place or subject, they are a critical part of the civic infrastructure. Museums foster curiosity and creativity, and create a local environment which helps attract and retain workers. Museum and gallery-led regeneration has revitalised local and regional economies across the UK by attracting visitors. The most popular tourist attractions in England are museums, with tourists visiting museums the length and breadth of the UK. For example, 50% of Beamish’s visitors travel from outside the North East; 60% of Ironbridge Gorge Museums’ visitors stay overnight in the area; and 67% of visitors to Penlee House in Penzance do not live in Cornwall.

4.5 Given this it is frustrating that there is so little representation of museums on the boards of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and so few examples of where museums specifically – or culture more generally – has been prioritised and thus benefited from the work and resources of LEPs. Where museums have been part of LEPs they have seen significant benefits. Cornwall Museums Partnership is represented on the board of the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly

LEP in recognition of the significant role museums play in attracting tourists to a county whose economy is heavily reliant on tourism. The structure of the New Anglia LEP – which includes a Cultural Board – allows both business and civic leaders to take advantage of the economic impact culture can have in Norfolk and Suffolk. It also enables cultural bodies to benefit from the Local Growth Fund to further boost their role in regional cultural tourism.

4.6 Section 106 offers an opportunity to invest in museums. The Department for Communities and Local Government and local authorities should be encouraged to strategically deploy the funds generated through Section 106 planning requirements for supporting cultural and leisure provision. This would allow for the development of regional – and even national – cultural infrastructure, including publicly accessible storage, partnerships between national and non-national museums, museum re-developments, or a contribution to city or region-wide endowments. For example, the development of the Challenger Tank Plaza at the Discovery Museum in Newcastle has been made possible because of a strategic use of the cultural requirements in planning regulation Section 106.

4.7 Combined authorities and city devolution

There are already many examples of both formal and informal partnerships between museums across a geographical location. The Humber Museums Partnership was formed in 2014 for a project called ‘Joining Up The Humber’ and was a huge success – the Partnership was then awarded Major Partner Museum status in 2015 by Arts Council England and its members now work together on a series of joint projects. The partnership comprises of Hull, North Lincolnshire and East Riding Museums services working closely together to celebrate and share local heritage. Working collaboratively allows for the sharing of ideas and shared topics exploiting historical links between sites, shared resource, shared projects and exhibitions, all of which enhance and enrich the visitor experience. City devolution and the introduction of combined authorities presents the opportunity to realize the sorts of economies of scale and strategic planning long enjoyed by the Norfolk Museums Service (a collaboration between district councils and county councils) and the neighbouring Colchester and Ipswich Museum Services. The opportunity presented by city devolution is to place museums at the heart of city-wide planning and demonstrate how they are delivering the priorities for the city.

4.8 Invest to save

Transitioning to different operating models and becoming more enterprising requires investment in order to make savings in the long term. Some finance is available for this through the HLF via the Transition Funding and Catalyst programmes. However, because museums necessarily have high fixed costs and must care for a collection for future generations, change may require more upfront investment in collections management, staffing and capacity building, and in the existing buildings (which are frequently not purpose-built 21st century museums but listed heritage assets).

Museums would therefore prosper in the future through investment in making existing buildings fit for enterprise, the provision of upfront capital to develop locally appropriate business models, and assistance to establish endowments. By investing in this manner, central and local Government would see the completion of the transformation non-national museums have been undergone since the inception of the Government-funded *Renaissance in the Regions* programme and the HLF. However, this significant investment – particularly in capital projects – has been predicated on a model of local government revenue and project support that is quickly disappearing. Museums therefore need financial support to develop new operating models to ensure they can continue to benefit from their historic investment.

4.9 Delivering public policy priorities

Museums deliver on a range of key public policy priorities, including health and well-being, raising aspirations, reconciliation, and the development of peaceful and prosperous communities. DCMS should work with museums to promote the significant impact museums

can have on these priorities to relevant Government departments (including Health, Communities and Local Government, Ministry of Defence, Education) and help identify sources of support. These departments can be difficult for individual museums to navigate at present.

4.10 Strategic funds to support partnership working across government agencies and local authorities in order to deliver on specific policy goals (such as the Prime Minister's Challenge on Dementia) would be an effective and targeted use of public investment. The DCMS/DfE Strategic Commissioning model to invest in museum education programmes could be replicated across other public policy priorities. This sort of finance is important to museums which by nature have high fixed costs and budgets, thus making it difficult to find capacity to begin this sort of work.

4.11 By working in partnership with specialist organisations such as charities, care providers and community groups museums are able to use their collections and devise specific programmes to draw people back into society and tackle loneliness and isolation. The significant impact of this work – using comparatively small amounts of public funding to make a major difference to the lives of vulnerable people – should be championed and supported by DCMS and the Department of Health. For example, National Museums Liverpool receives funding from the Department of Health to run the award-winning *House of Memories*, which targets carers and health and social care providers and helps them to deliver a positive quality of life experience for people living with dementia. The programme demonstrates how a museum can provide the health and social care sector with practical skills and knowledge to facilitate access to untapped cultural resources, often within their locality.

4.12 Museums are safe and social spaces: warm and welcoming to the whole community. A museum that is fully embedded within its community means that no-one feels the museum "is not for them". Fostering a sense of community – understanding differences and sharing commonalities – is a powerful way of encouraging civic engagement and participation in civil society to celebrate, commemorate or help in times of crisis. Museums tell local, national and international stories, giving a sense of shared heritage and fostering a sense of common identity for a place. Few other civic institutions have the public trust or infrastructure to mastermind large-scale acts of remembrance, address difficult histories or explore sensitive subjects. DCMS should champion this role within Government (as they have with the commemorations of the centenary of the First World War) and help museums form partnerships and unlock funding to support this element of their work. For example, Birmingham Museums Trust has used ACE funding to develop its 'Faith in Birmingham' Gallery through engagement with local interfaith leaders and volunteers, responding to audience research which highlighted that museums should be safe spaces in which people can share and explore their differences to each other.

4.13 Business rates

The application of business rates to museums across the UK is complex, confusing and iniquitous. It is becoming an increasing costs to many museums.

4.14 A beneficial business rates environment is one of the key ways in which government supports museums. Over half of museums in the UK are charities and benefit from 80% mandatory relief on business rates for their properties, many of which are historic buildings and sites in their own right. It is vital that this relief is protected as business rates are devolved to local authorities. Three quarters of museums also benefit from some amount of discretionary relief, but this has already been reduced for many and will be increasingly under threat as local authorities' own finances are squeezed. 60% of museums responding to a survey in 2015 fear their rates bill would increase in the future.

4.15 As more museums are now paying business rates, the issue of whether the valuation of their properties is fundamentally fair has become increasingly urgent. In many cases it is not fair, but challenging the valuation is expensive and complicated. This could be helped

significantly by including museums valued by the Contractors Method within the lower “education” band of the de-capitalisation rate. About half of museums are valued by the Contractors Method, which relies on a de-capitalisation rate set by statutory instrument regulation. Museums currently have the higher rate applied, which is set for commercial properties, and which presumes they have to acquire capital funding at commercial rates. A lower de-capitalisation rate is available to Educational hereditaments on the basis that they have access to lower long term interest rates to fund their development. This lower rate would be more appropriate for museums, whose developments are almost always funded through grants, primarily from the HLF. They should therefore be classified as educational hereditaments and subject to the lower rate – many museums are classified as educational charities in any case. This would not require primary legislation but merely an amendment to the Miscellaneous Provision Statutory Instrument. This simple change would provide a cost-effective mechanism for the long term support of many museums across England.

NMDC would be happy to provide the Committee with detailed examples if required.

4.16 Heritage Lottery Funding

The Heritage Lottery Fund’s twenty year investment in the museum sector has transformed the visitor experience and public expectations of museums. HLF should continue to work in close collaboration with the sector to maintain the additionality principle whilst targeting medium and long term infrastructure challenges. This includes transition funding, endowments, supporting a digital infrastructure, creating a more diverse and appropriately skilled workforce, collections management and partnerships.

5 Cultural partnerships in the regions, including with National Portfolio Organisations and Major Partner Museums

5.1 Museums of all sizes and types work in partnership to deliver almost any aspect of a museum’s operation. The most successful partnerships are those that are given time to develop, are mutually beneficial, and respond to identified needs of audiences or museums themselves.

5.2 Working in partnership is a core part of the work of local and regional museums, and the formation of regional or subject-specific partnerships between museums has long been beneficial. There is nevertheless scope for growth and an increasingly strategic approach. Working in partnership, particularly across a specific region, enables both economies of scale and a critical mass. For example, museums in the North West of England with natural history collections have worked together on joint collections initiatives and advocacy, producing the pamphlet *Seven Million Wonders*; the Harvey Gallery, Derby Museum and Art Gallery, Nottingham Contemporary and Chatsworth House collaborate on the ‘Grand Tour’, with each museum curating an exhibition from their own collection and touring it to the other venues; and the Royal Pavilion and Museums has a formal partnership with the University of Brighton, conducting joint research and subsequent public engagement, such as with the Museum’s *Fashion Cities Africa* exhibition and events.

5.3 Major Partner Museum funding includes a requirement for recipients to carry out a sector leadership function. Each MPM leads on an area of museum practice and also provides support for smaller museums in its region. For example, both the Museum of London and the Cornwall Museums Partnership provide basic collections care advice and training to smaller regional museums, tailoring programmes to the specific requirements of the museums.

5.4 Museum Development – a service provided by local authorities and Arts Council England in each English region to support small and medium sized museums – is critical to the future health of the UK museum sector. Small and medium-sized museums rely on the advice, training, information sharing and small grants provided by well-connected and experienced Museum Development Officers. This is a system of support unique to the museum sector and

can be a highly effective way of ensuring that museums survive and thrive. Eight of the nine museum development providers are also Major Partner Museums and act as an interlocutor between the largest and smallest museums. Museum Development provision must be preserved in order for the whole sector to best work together and flourish.

5.5 National museums have a range of different models for partnership working with museums of all scopes and sizes. National partnerships can be adapted to the needs of the wider sector and increasingly focus on the sharing of skills, resources and knowledge, as well as the sharing of collections. The British Museum's National Programmes, Tate's 'Plus Tate' network and IWM's lead of the First World War Centenary Partnership demonstrate the breadth of what is possible.

6 Skills, management and infrastructure of regional cultural institutions

6.1 In a climate of cuts museums face a major challenge in ensuring an adequately skilled workforce ready to face future challenges, respond to changes in technology and fulfil the expectations of a 21st century audience. The nature of many museum jobs, particularly curatorial, is changing, with staff increasingly having to work in multiple roles as staff numbers are reduced and specialist roles lost. This is not sustainable. Erosion of expertise will cause long-term damage to the vitality of the whole museum sector, and thus the access the public has to its collections and heritage will be much diminished. Collections need constant maintenance or they irrevocably deteriorate. If museums reduce the extent to which they curate, acquire, conserve and engage with the public, the collections and cumulative knowledge wither and the many positive impacts museums have disappear.

6.2 Museums have a highly skilled and dedicated workforce. However, the current museum workforce lacks diversity and is not representative of society as a whole. It is important to ensure entry routes into the sector reflect the skills required, and are not prohibitive to those with the relevant talent to seek a career in museums. Apprenticeships have been under-utilised by museums and additional support and targets to do this could be a catalyst for change. Government could support a package that would encourage the uptake of apprenticeships, support practice that encourages diverse recruitment and provide in-house and cross-organisation training opportunities to foster cultural change, as well as working with museums to encourage greater diversity at senior levels in the museum sector by improving retention and staff development. In order to engage a wider demographic and unlock the rich variety of stories that collections can tell, museums should be supported to create diverse programming and recruit a diverse Board of Trustees. By doing this, more people may see themselves reflected in museums' displays and leadership, and consider a career in museums.

6.4 Volunteers make up a significant proportion of the workforce and museums could be supported and encouraged to follow their peers who already actively recruit volunteers from non-traditional backgrounds. For example, the HLF supported Imperial War Museum North, Manchester Museum and the Museum of Science and Industry to develop *if: volunteering for well-being*, a ten-week training and volunteering programme working with collections in Manchester for participants who want to learn new skills and improve their health and well-being.

6.5 There are opportunities for museums to share skills capacity and resource by working in partnership supported by cross-sector or region-wide infrastructure. Norfolk Museums Service, funded jointly by district and city councils and the county council to run ten museums across Norfolk, demonstrates the long term success of such an initiative – the county museum service was established 40 years ago, and has latterly also developed a region-wide programme to share services, expertise and programming, 'Share East'. The HLF's *Skills for the Future* programme provides the means for museums and heritage organisations to cover gaps in skills in the sector by providing more accessible work-based training. The programme has funded traineeships in traditional museum activities, such as curatorship, new

areas, such as utilising digital technologies, and maintaining skills at risk, such as traditional heritage crafts. The employment rate of the trainees is very high.

7 Physical and virtual accessibility of cultural sectors in the regions, including digital outreach and engagement

Digital

7.1 Digital engagement with museums' collections, content and staff expertise is ever-growing, and, as technology develops, audience expectations of how they are able to engage with museums digitally is changing. Making digital part of everything a museum does – from fundraising to collections management – is both a challenge and an opportunity. The museum sector needs to meet long term challenges of macro collections management, digital preservation, digitisation and digital engagement by consideration of the wider digital infrastructure of the sector, rather than through a project-by-project approach. Creating a sector-wide digital infrastructure would enable the public to find content they are interested in without having to visit each individual museum's website. Digital infrastructure should build from existing models and what has already been proven to work – such as Art UK – and from commonly-used standards. However, it should be modular, not a rigid structure imposed on the whole sector.

7.2 Ensuring greater public access to and use of museums' collections digitally requires museums to work in partnership with different platforms and to put their content in places where the relevant audience already exists – examples include the Google Cultural Institute, BBC, TES Global and Wikimedia. Providing the funds and brokering the partnerships required would be a helpful role for DCMS to take. Any digital infrastructure should also consider the requirements of archive and library collections. Seed-funding for digital partnerships, which could take the form of a challenge fund, with Government providing the mechanism to broker more partnerships between content-rich museums, tech companies and start-up investors, would encourage new and innovative projects to increase public access to collections.

7.3 However, museums need digital independence, particularly those who are managed within a local authority. Some museums are unable to have their own website or social media presence and NMDC would strongly urge local authorities to allow their museums to develop their own online identity and grant them digital independence.

Accessibility

7.4 Ensuring no group in society feels marginalised or isolated is fundamental to making communities safe, raising aspiration and creating vibrant and thriving places to live. Fostering a sense of community – understanding differences and sharing commonalities – is a powerful way of encouraging civic engagement and participation in civil society to celebrate, commemorate or help in times of crisis. Museums are uniquely able to do this by using their collections, building and staff expertise.

7.5 The nature of their collections provides museums with the opportunity to actively engage groups in their communities and ensure their stories are documented. For example, the Discovery Museum in Newcastle has developed the *Destination Tyneside* gallery to present the long view of immigration to the area; working with local group OutStories Bristol, MShed documented the experiences of the LGBT community in the city in the exhibition *Revealing Histories*; and the British Museum exhibition *Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam* was visited by approximately 60,000 British Muslims – many travelling from across the UK on a family day out.ⁱⁱ The proportion of visitors to museums from lower socio-economic groups, as well as the number of black and ethnic minority visitors, has grown substantially in recent years.ⁱⁱⁱ

7.6 Capital investment, particularly from the HLF, means that museums are physically more accessible than ever before. The nature of some historic buildings, in which a number of

museums are located, present some practical challenges for physical access, but museums have sought to develop ways to mitigate this.

8 Value and impact of culture in the regions

8.1 Museums preserve, promote and protect one of the few irreplaceable public assets: the nation's collective memory, knowledge and history. They are also a catalyst for economic development and scientific advancement, a major tourist attraction, a safe and egalitarian community meeting place, key contributors to the nation's soft power, and the inspiration for current and future generations of pioneers, designers, makers and community leaders. They are civic institutions that simultaneously serve a local, regional, national and international audience, as well as an online audience who may never cross the threshold. Museums matter because they uniquely serve a public past, a public present and a public yet to be born.

8.2 Communities need safe and welcoming public spaces. Museums across the UK are embedded within their communities. They form partnerships with artists, charities, community groups, businesses, schools, collectors, universities and the NHS to ensure the whole community is part of the museum. Museums are a source of great civic pride and affection and command a high level of public trust, and for these reasons communities look to museums to commemorate and celebrate significant moments in history. Over the last twenty years museums have used public, private and lottery investment to vastly improve their buildings, galleries and the visitor experience they offer.

8.3 Museums enrich people's lives by creating a thriving, vibrant and diverse cultural life. They have never been so popular: 52% of adults and 62% of children in England visited a museum in 2014-15^{iv}. The collections held in trust by national and local governments belong to the public, and museums recognise this with sophisticated public engagement in research, exhibitions and gallery re-development. Communities view civic collections as a common treasury for all – a collection that their ancestors built for them which should continue for future generations. Museums adapt their public offer to make sure no-one misses out, with initiatives to ensure everyone can access this common treasury. Thousands of objects are lent and borrowed between museums – and are even displayed in more unusual locations like shops – to ensure they serve a truly national audience.

8.4 Museums are critical to place-making and developing regional prosperity, something which will become ever more important to regions when they retain 100% receipts of business rates. Museums generate much greater economic value than the sum of their public investment – £3 for every £1 provided by the public purse^v – something very few public services can demonstrate. Museums make places attractive to visit, to do business and to live in, and can be the catalyst for long-term economic revival. Tourism is the UK's fifth largest industry and museums are the country's most popular visitor attractions.

8.5 Museums also strengthen the UK's soft power by being popular and trusted institutions which conduct ambitious international projects, and the UK has recently been assessed as the country with the greatest soft power. In quickly changing and challenging times, cultural dialogue is crucial to helping us understand the world around us.

8.6 Museums are uniquely able to achieve all this because of their collections, the buildings in which they are housed and the expertise of their staff. The objects in museums' collections tell stories about people, places, the natural world and thought, and the stories told by these objects, brought to life by their study and engagement with the public, help us explore and understand the world around us. It is through museum collections that stories are preserved, a connection to the past is made and fundamental questions of identity can be explored. Objects prompt visceral, emotional responses: they can be a source of joy and wonder, but can also be the starting point for challenging conversations about contested histories, reconciliation and facing the uncertainty of the future. This can only happen if those

conversations are brokered by skilled staff and the collections curated and conserved by specialist experts.

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Technical note

The English museum sector is made up of a number of different types of museums. 16 national museums (which between them have branches across the country) are sponsored directly by Government (13 by DCMS, three by the Ministry of Defence). Civic museums are those where the collection and buildings are owned by a local authority which is likely to also provide revenue funding, either as a direct service or via an independent trust. There are wholly independent museums which own their own assets, including the collection. There is a network of military museums, most focusing on particular regiments (which have received investment from the Ministry of Defence) and many universities also operate museums (30 of which are also supported by HEFCE). Arts Council England (ACE) is the development body for non-national museums in England, and uses its Grant-in-aid to support 21 large regional museums and consortia as Major Partner Museums (MPMs), nine museum development services and individual museums' priorities through a series of programmes. Lottery funding for the museum sector is predominantly provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) via a network of regional offices, rather than by Arts Council England. Museums have much in common with other collections-based institutions, such as archives, libraries, historic houses and heritage sites. Although cultural policy is devolved, much of what is included in this paper affects or benefits museums in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as well as England.

ⁱ Public attitudes towards arts and culture: ComRes research study for Arts Council England, 2014

http://press.artscouncil.org.uk/press_releases/112/

ⁱⁱ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/apr/13/haji-exhibition-british-museum>

ⁱⁱⁱ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/360009/Taking_Part_2014_15_Quarter_1_Report.pdf, p. 51. From 2005 to 2014, the proportion of museum visitors from lower socio-economic groups had increased to 38.1% – the fastest growth of any socio-economic group. Similarly, there have been substantial increases in BME visitors since 2005/06, from 35.4% to 43.4%.

^{iv} DCMS Taking Part Survey 2014/15 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/taking-part-201415-quarter-4-statistical-release>

^v http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/The_Economic_Impact_of_Museums_in_England-FINAL_REPORT.pdf