



**SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE**

---

**SCOTTISH  
MUSEUMS  
COUNCIL**



## **CONSULTATION PAPER**

# **A SIGNIFICANCE RECOGNITION SCHEME FOR NON-NATIONAL MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES IN SCOTLAND**

### **Contents**

- 1 Introduction and Background**
- 2 Value of a Significance Recognition Scheme**
- 3 Other Relevant Schemes**
- 4 Principles for a Scottish Significance Recognition Scheme**
- 5 Proposed Significance Criteria**
- 6 Criteria for Collections Management and Public Services**
- 7 Potential Numbers and Scope for Partnerships**
- 8 The Process of Recognition**
- 9 A Funding Stream for Recognised Collections**
- 10 Responses**

**Annex A: Summary of questions**

## 1 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Scottish Executive has commissioned the Scottish Museums Council to consult with interested parties over proposals contained in this paper for a Significance Recognition Scheme for non-national museums and galleries in Scotland.
- 1.2 The Scottish Executive's National Cultural Strategy *Creating our Future: Minding our Past* (2000) called for a comprehensive national framework for museums and galleries, for partnerships and for the development of policies for national collections, particularly in relation to Scottish material.
- 1.3 To build a strong platform of evidence for this process, the Executive commissioned the Scottish Museums Council (SMC) to undertake a National Audit of the sector. The largest survey of its kind ever undertaken in Europe, the Audit gathered evidence from 170 organisations and 435 sites, including independent museums, local authority services and national institutions. The full findings were published as *A Collective Insight* in July 2002.
- 1.4 The National Audit established for the first time the principle and evidence for a distributed national collection. It indicated that there are over 12 million items in museums throughout Scotland, 54% of which are in the collections of non-national museums. Of all museums, 78% stated that they held material of national, UK-wide or international significance – as opposed to purely local or regional significance. This figure included large variations in terms of size and scale, besides being the product of differing judgements about what constitutes 'significance'. Nevertheless it did underline that responsibility for significant collections lies beyond the National institutions, with museums throughout the country.
- 1.5 The Executive's subsequent *Action Framework for Museums* (2003) indicated the desirability of developing 'some hierarchy of collections' within the distributed national collection which would provide one means of prioritising resources within a total strategy for Scotland's museums.
- 1.6 The tasks currently before the Cultural Commission, appointed by the Executive in 2004 to undertake a review of the whole cultural sector in Scotland, include:
  - to explore the notion of cultural rights for the Scottish citizen, and those of its creative community, and define how these might be translated into a scheme of entitlements;
  - to redefine the institutional infrastructure and governance of the Scottish cultural sector to enable it to deliver the entitlements that spring from rights; and

- to consider the designation 'national' and how it might be more appropriately determined’.
- 1.7 The development of a Significance Recognition Scheme for Scottish museums is proposed in this context. It will not only serve as a mechanism to secure a sustainable future for nationally important collections across the country, but could also improve access to museums’ collections and services, contributing towards the concept of cultural entitlement that is fundamental to the work of the Cultural Commission.
- 1.8 In 2004 the Scottish Executive tasked the Scottish Museums Council commissioned a feasibility study into a significance recognition scheme, overseen by a Steering Group of representatives of key constituencies within the Scottish museum sector. The study reviewed parallel schemes and criteria operating in England and overseas, but drew its conclusions with specific reference to the Scottish context.
- 1.9 **This paper proposes a Significance Recognition Scheme based on that study. Its aim is to enable the Scottish Executive to recognise a schedule of collections in non-National museums and galleries that are of such importance and quality that they are worthy of formal recognition and support by the national government.**
- 1.10 In addition, it is proposed that the Scheme will:
- provide a strategic context for investment by local government, Lottery distributors and others; and
  - encourage the organisations that have responsibility for significant collections to widen their social and economic contribution and promote excellence in both collections care and management and the delivery of public services.
- 1.11 This consultation paper seeks comments on:
- the principles and criteria that should underpin a significance recognition scheme;
  - the process of recognition; and
  - how any subsequent national funding support for recognised collections might be most effectively deployed.

## 2 Value of a Significance Recognition Scheme

- 2.1 The factors influencing where significant collections are to be found are historic and *ad hoc*, so that there are considerable variations in the resources available to non-national museums that are needed to:
- fulfill their responsibilities for preserving nationally-important cultural heritage; and to
  - maximise the public benefit of these collections in terms of access and learning.
- 2.2 These are issues for local authority, university and independent museums alike, with independent museums in particular facing problems of sustainability, notwithstanding the responsibility of some of their number for collections that illustrate key elements of Scottish history. The Scottish Executive has recognized these difficulties and in recent years has provided fixed-term funding assistance to several independent museums in this category. A Significance Recognition Scheme will provide a fair and objective rationale when considering future investment of this kind.
- 2.3 It would not be the only mechanism for development support to the sector, nor would Recognised collections be the only focus for delivering quality public services, but within a total framework for Scottish museums it would be a means of:
- identifying and articulating what, in terms of moveable cultural heritage, is of outstanding importance in terms of ‘showing Scotland to the world and the world to Scotland’;
  - acknowledging the right of Scottish citizens to expect that there is a national framework for the preservation of the nation’s moveable cultural heritage (as there is for the historic environment), which recognises the cultural entitlement of future, as well as present, generations;
  - identifying where the heaviest responsibilities for preserving and providing public access to this material lie;
  - providing opportunities for enhancing the understanding and use of these significant collections through integrated approaches to research, curation and interpretation, utilising the national pool of expertise, including that within the National museums and galleries.

### **3 Other Relevant Schemes**

- 3.1 The study examined whether there were significance schemes or significance criteria for moveable cultural heritage operating in other countries which would provide useful models for a Scottish scheme.
- 3.2 There is a considerable body of international law, convention and literature relating to the criteria for identifying pre-eminence or significance of cultural heritage in general. How such criteria are deployed is influenced by traditions of government and administrative structures as much as museum philosophy and practice. The study identified the following broad categories of use:
- Lists of types or classes or objects defined under protective legislation or guidelines, e.g. UNESCO conventions, export control, and historic building listing criteria. In all these cases the criteria provide a framework within which expert value judgements are made by a central administration.
  - Assessment of significance used to prioritise resource allocation within individual collections and nations, e.g. the Netherlands Delta Plan (1990-2000) where resources were primarily for conservation, and in which self-assessment by museum staff played a role.
  - Cases where significance of collections is only one of several criteria used to determine which museums should be eligible for government support, e.g. Poland, New Zealand.
  - Significance assessment as a curatorial management tool. In this, Australian national guidance stands alone as a methodology which is commended to all museums as an internal process, whatever their size and funding framework.

#### ***English Designation Scheme***

- 3.3 The scheme that most closely matches the position in Scotland is England's Designation scheme, which has relevance less for reasons of geographical proximity and UK synchronism than for the structural similarities and the shared tradition of museum practice found in both countries.
- 3.4 The English Designation Scheme was launched by the former Museums & Galleries Commission in 1997 at the invitation of the (then) Department of National Heritage. The requirements for seeking Designation were:
- the museum had to be fully Registered;
  - the collection, or collections, in question met the scheme's significance criteria;

- the museum met a range of essential standards for collections management and public services; and
  - was able to demonstrate it was working towards high standards of collections care and services to the public.
- 3.5 The process involved the submission by museums of an argued case, supported by evidence. This was assessed by an expert Designation Panel, and recommendations for recognition made to the Secretary of State for National Heritage (subsequently for Culture, Media and Sport). Initially the number of collections to be recognised was limited to 30, but the first list was 50, and following further application rounds in 1998 and 1999, collections in 62 museums now enjoy Designated status. From November 2004 the English Designation Scheme is being extended to libraries and archives.
- 3.6 The immediate practical benefits of Designation were:
- access to the Designation Challenge Fund (£15 million over the period 1999-2001, and £10 million from 2002-2006) to support projects aimed at developing high quality of care, interpretation and public access to Designated collections;
  - eligibility for the Government Indemnity Scheme;
  - acknowledgement in Heritage Lottery Fund funding criteria.
- 3.7 Other benefits reported by museums during a 2001 review of the scheme were:
- increased value placed on collections by governing bodies, with, in some cases, a consequence of higher resource-allocation;
  - some success in leveraging other funding;
  - improvements in standards of collection care and presentation of collections;
  - fresh approaches to interpretation which had increased access to and use of collections by school pupils, tourist visitors and the local/national community, particularly where institutions had been able to undertake digitisation and web-based projects;
  - improvements in staff morale and skills.

#### **4 Principles for a Scottish Significance Recognition Scheme**

4.1 The following key principles are proposed for the development of a Significance Recognition Scheme for Scotland:

- an intellectually-robust rationale, the validity of which is accepted throughout Scotland, both within and without museums;
- criteria capable of objective application;
- a scheme that recognises collections, not museums; but
- incorporates both collections standards and service standards;
- gives positive encouragement to building partnerships;
- only applies to museums that are fully Registered/Accredited; (in the case of partnerships, lead museums must be fully Registered/Accredited, even if its partners are not);
- includes consideration of buildings/sites/landscapes where these have a key relationship with significant collections;
- a transparent process for selection; and is
- capable of easy and speedy implementation.

**Q1: Do you agree that these are the key principles that should underpin the Scheme**

**Q2: Are there different or additional principles that you believe should be adopted?**

## 5 Proposed Significance Criteria

- 5.1 The concept of ‘significance’ underpins all museum collecting for preservation, and is based on judgements of the value of items to a locality or intellectual discipline. It is strongly dictated by the parameters of the collector or collecting institution. A museum whose primary purpose lies in its local community is likely to have more collections of local significance; an institution that sees for itself a world role is likely to focus on material that is recognised as important by an international community.
- 5.2 However, museums do not live in an unchanging world, and a collection assembled in the past may acquire a significance different to that for which it was brought together. For example, the value of a collection of works by Victorian painters, assembled to reflect aesthetic values of their day, may lie as much today in its representations of society at that time.
- 5.3 Nor can collections speak for themselves. They require champions to articulate their merit to an audience that shares a common definition of significance. Changes in society, and in academic and public interests, mean that what may have been deemed significant a generation ago may not be so regarded today. The decline in the fortunes of some natural history collections can be ascribed to such trends. What is ‘significant’ will shift over time.
- 5.4 Like most countries around the world, Scotland lacks an established, structured approach to assessing the significance of moveable cultural heritage. Ultimately, decisions about what is recognised as significant will have to rely on informed judgements based upon broadly-drawn criteria. There is merit in these criteria being expressed as succinctly as possible: the more the definitions are elaborated, the greater the risk of producing unintentional exclusions.
- 5.5 In defining ‘significance’, reference needs to be made to both intrinsic ‘importance’ and to ‘quality’; the latter having a comparative dimension. It is possible to judge a collection as *important* by virtue of containing a number of notable items, while assessing it to be of lesser *quality* than another collection in the same subject area, because (for example):
- it did not present a fully comprehensive range of relevant material;
  - there was little depth of associated or contextual information;
  - it was not *the* key representative collection of such material.
- 5.6 The significance criteria here proposed as the basis for a recognition scheme have therefore drawn on those used in the National Audit to define importance, with the addition of characteristics which assist in defining quality:



### **Importance**

A *significant collection* will be of outstanding importance, whether in an international, UK or national (Scottish) context, as a material record of:

- social, economic, political or cultural life;
- developments in science, technology, agriculture or industry;
- the natural environment;
- the history of art or design;
- the life and works of a person or group.

### **Quality**

A *significant collection* will demonstrate most or all of the following attributes:

- *comprehensiveness*: of sufficient size and richness of relevant material to enable it to be regarded as representative;
- *depth*: artefacts and/or specimens are supported by strong associated or contextual information;
- *uniqueness and authenticity*: demonstrating rarity, intactness or integrity of individual items or groups of items;
- *reputation*: an acknowledged key source for study of a given subject.

**Q3: Do you agree that proposed significance criteria are appropriate?**

### ***National, UK or International Significance***

- 5.7 The definition of ‘importance’ in the criteria above is neutral in terms of whether a collection is outstanding in international, UK, or Scottish terms. That is not to say that these categories should be given equal weight in the practical application of the criteria. In the case of fine art, it might be argued that international significance carries a premium, while in industrial history it might be that it is Scottish significance that is the most critical factor.
- 5.8 It has been acknowledged that there is a need for further work to develop approaches to assessing these relative categories of significance, and in particular on the concept of significance in the Scottish cultural context. Rather than specify a pre-determined formula it is proposed that it should be for the applicant to establish their own weighting as means of demonstrating achievement of criteria.

**Q4: Do you agree that the definition of ‘significance’ should not attempt to distinguish between importance in national, UK or international terms?**

*Size of collection as a factor of significance*

5.9 It is unlikely that a collection of a few significant items in a single institution would have sufficient breadth and depth to meet the criteria of any significance recognition scheme. While there is, of course, no direct relationship between significance and size, and pre-determining absolute thresholds for collection size would be inappropriate, it is proposed that the guidance for the scheme should indicate the scale of collections that will be considered, for example, over 3,000 items in the case of archaeology, natural sciences and archives where material tends to be gathered in large quantities. Such indicative thresholds would not rule out cases where the size of individual items, and/or responsibility for significant sites and buildings, will be as much factors to be considered as the total collection size.

**Q5: Do you agree that indicative sizes of collections to be considered for Recognition should be established as guidance to applicants?**

*Evidence to be provided*

5.10 It will be for an applicant institution to make the case for Recognition by providing hard evidence that it meets these criteria. The range of evidence that should be submitted will include:

- A. Description of the collection including reference, as appropriate, to:
- the subject covered, and assessment of the importance of the collection for the study of this subject;
  - assessment of importance in an international, UK or Scottish context;
  - its size, and key categories of material held;
  - strengths and weaknesses;
  - associated or contextual information, e.g. archives, field records, photographs;

- provenance, where this is a key factor in importance;
- reference to rare or unique items, or groups of items;
- reference, in the case of natural science collections, to the presence of type, figured or cited specimens;
- comparison with related collections elsewhere, whether international, UK or Scottish.

- B. Copy of published acquisition policy, and where relevant, information about acquisitions made during (say) the past 5 years.
- C. A list of catalogues or other publications which describe or cite the collection.
- D. Written confirmation or testimony of the quality of the collection from independent experts who are acknowledged authorities in their field.
- E. Information about:
- research use of the collection;
  - use of the collection in the context of the museum's life-long learning programmes and activities;
  - loans made from the collection.

5.11 An institution's success will rely on the evidence being presented in a way that is both authoritative and has been subject to external endorsement. While the views of the applicant's staff will be sought, its influence is likely to be in direct proportion to those persons' acknowledged expertise in the subject area(s) which the collection(s) represent. Museums who believe they have significant collections, but which are curated by generalists with no expertise or connections in the subject area concerned, may be at a disadvantage. This is inevitable but could, over time, be addressed by Recognised museums sharing their expertise and building linkages and partnerships with other local museums. Indeed, the Scheme might be a driver for such developments.

- Q6: Do you agree that the range of evidence proposed in support of a case for Recognition is appropriate?**
- Q7: Is there additional evidence that should be provided in support of a case for Recognition?**

## **6 Criteria for Collections Management and Public Services**

6.1 It is proposed that the equivalent of the essential criteria for collections management and public services adopted for the Designation scheme in England should be mandatory requirements in a Scottish scheme. It is not suggested that the 'desired standards' within that scheme should be mandatory for Recognition, but that they should be incorporated as standards to which museums with recognised significant collections would be expected to aspire. Reaching these standards may be requirements in the context of funding agreements and grant terms.

6.2 The proposed criteria are:

### **Care of Collection**

- must meet Museum Registration/Accreditation standards;
- must have carried out an assessment using *Benchmarks in Collections Care* (Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA)) and show that they are working to improve standards.

### **Documentation, cataloguing, internal research and communication**

- at least one appropriately experienced member of staff;
- documentation to Registration/Accreditation standards;
- published material on the collection.

### **Access and learning related to the collection**

- physical access compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995;
- able to offer services to those wishing to learn from the collection;
- aims to improve learning opportunities within the standards framework of *Inspiring Learning for All* (MLA)

### **Promoting study and understanding of the collection**

- provides facilities for study, research and an enquiry service;
- able to demonstrate understanding of the range of subject matter to which the collection is relevant, e.g. through a research strategy;

- can outline plans to realise the potential for greater use of the collection, whether directly or indirectly;
- evidence of contact with a wide range of experts and appropriate partners within and beyond museums.

#### **Role in the sector**

- Links with other museums and related institutions in Scotland, UK or overseas.

#### **Partnership working**

- Recognition in strategic aims of benefits of partnership working in developing care of and access to collection.

#### **Management and long-term strategic planning**

- Comprehensive long-term strategic plan covering all of above areas.

**Q8: Are all the criteria for collections management and public services appropriate?**

**Q9: Are there additional criteria that should be incorporated in relation to care of collections and public services?**

## **7 Potential Numbers and Scope for Partnerships**

7.1 It is not proposed to launch a scheme with a specified limit for the number of collections to be Recognised, as was the case in England where the Designation scheme was initially required to work within a ceiling of thirty collections. This was an acknowledgement of the size of the English museum sector, with over 1,400 Registered institutions.

### ***Partnerships***

7.2 Some Scottish collections, which may be on the margins of significance if treated individually, might together constitute a critical mass that that would justify Recognition as a single entity based on a partnership arrangement.

7.3 The term ‘partnership’ has a broad usage in today’s public sector that embraces relationships ranging from an regular annual liaison meeting to discuss a matter of common interest, to a legally-distinctive special purpose vehicle created for a public-private partnership. Many ‘partnership’ relationships are transitory and risk-neutral.

7.4 Effective partnerships require *all* the following characteristics to be present:

- a shared vision of the relationship;
- mutual (and usually long-term) benefit;
- status in decision-making for all partners;
- common resources;
- shared risk; and
- reciprocal trust between the partners.

7.5 It is proposed that any group-application under the scheme should provide evidence that these criteria will be met, and represented by a formal, binding long-term Agreement that includes an element of shared governance. The English Designation Scheme offers a precedent, with joint or partnership applications requiring:

- a joint partnership agreement, embracing joint strategic planning;
- a research strategy demonstrating the coherence of the whole collection and showing that this is stronger than barriers between institutions; that researchers require access to all the separate institutions to do work on the

collection, and that the academic community considers the collection to constitute a coherent whole; and

- evidence that the institutions are working towards sharing curatorial and other skills, an integrated approach to public access to the collections, and an easy inter-institution loan system and regular loan arrangements.

**Q10: Do you support the principle that the Scheme should enable the Recognition of a significant collection in the ownership of more than one institution?**

**Q11: Do you agree with the requirements that should define a partnership for the purposes of Recognising a significant collection in the ownership of more than one institution?**

## **8 The Process of Recognition**

- 8.1 The Significance Recognition Scheme would be owned by the Scottish Executive but would delegate its day-to-day management and administration to the Scottish Museums Council (SMC), which is funded by the Executive to develop and support local museums in Scotland. This would bring with it both the benefits of professional museum expertise and SMC's strong linkages with the national, regional and local museum communities. The scheme would be so constructed that its management would be capable of being discharged by another body should the circumstances of SMC change in the future.

### *The Committee*

- 8.2 SMC would recruit and appoint a committee that would make recommendations on Recognised status. Its remit would also include the provision of strategic advice on the operation of the Scheme in general, including any associated funding regime. It is suggested that the Committee might have a chair and eight members, who would be appropriately skilled and experienced independent people, appointed for (renewable) three-year terms.
- 8.3 Committee membership would reflect both expertise and judgment, and facilitate working with other relevant bodies as well as drawing new, informed people into strategic thinking about the sector. Thus it is probable that the Committee might include people who also sit, say, as trustees of National institutions, or understand the issues faced by local authorities in Scotland, or have academic or practical experience which includes heritage designation schemes or assessment of significance.
- 8.4 SMC would provide the Committee's secretariat, and would be responsible for the day-to-day administration of the Scheme, including arranging and producing high-level reports for Committee meetings, co-ordinating and commissioning independent advisers, implementing the communications strategy, and directing resources as necessary.
- 8.5 The Committee's proceedings would be open and transparent through:
- publishing an annual report in hard copy as a self-contained element within that of SMC, and on SMC's website;
  - though much of its business would be of a confidential nature and inappropriate for open meetings, summaries of those meetings and the decisions reached would be published on SMC's website;
  - after the first round of Recognitions, visiting those institutions in association with their meetings, providing opportunities for contact with participants and



the wider stakeholder group, including local authorities and other local museums.

- 8.6 It is anticipated that the Committee would meet twice a year. Following the first Recognition announcement, one meeting each year might include a visit to a museum with Recognised collections.

### *Expert Advisers*

- 8.7 The Committee would receive expert advice on applications, in particular relating to assessments of significance against the published criteria. While much advice might come from appropriate SMC staff (especially in the area of verifying information provided with applications) and from the National Museums and Galleries, the advice of other specialists would be sought as appropriate.

### *Application Process*

- 8.8 Applications would be invited on publication of an application pack setting out the criteria for the scheme, the assessment process, key dates, and the appeals procedure. A period of several months would then be allowed before the first closing date for applications.
- 8.9 Assessment would not be a 'tick-box' process, though in its initial stages it may be possible to identify a number of applicants who do not meet some of the absolute criteria (eg Registration/Accreditation status) through such means. However, the main assessment requirements for the Recognition process will be sound advice and good judgement.
- 8.10 Applications would be subject to a two-stage assessment process which would take around three months at each stage, to reflect the requirements for visits, providing papers at adequate notice to the Committee and maintaining the appropriate level of contact with the Scottish Executive.
- 8.11 The first stage would comprise a review of all applications received. Those applicants that on the basis of the evidence provided clearly did not meet the criteria would be rejected at this stage. The Committee would meet to review this process, and agree those applications which were not to go further. The applicants would then be advised of the Committee's decision, advised of the re-application rules and the appeals procedure.
- 8.12 At the second stage, arrangements would be made for independent expert assessment of the short-listed applications, which would involve visits to the applicants to verify information provided with applications. The size of an assessment panel would vary from application to application but, it is suggested, should never be less than two people. Applications that related to a number of subject areas would include advice on all (or the majority) of those subjects.

- 8.13 Each adviser would present a written report in a pre-approved format to the Committee, which would make a recommendation as to whether or not Recognition would be appropriate in that case. The Committee would consider those recommendations, and come to a view about which applications met the Scheme criteria.
- 8.14 The recommendations of the Committee would then be passed on to the SMC Board and to the Minister. A public announcement of the collections to be Recognised would be made subsequently, allowing for potential appeals.
- 8.15 It is expected that there would be at least three rounds of applications, probably at ten month intervals, depending on the volume of applications. A review following the first round may permit the process to be compressed into a single stage.

#### *Period of Recognition*

- 8.16 It is suggested that Recognition status should be reviewed every fifth year, with a presumption of continuance, unless the grantee was in breach of any of the duties that come with participation in the scheme.

#### *Appeals Procedure*

- 8.17 Any applicant who disputed the facts on which the Committee took a decision, or believed that the assessment process was carried out in a way that was unfair, would have the right, within two months of the date of the letter advising of the decision, to appeal the Committee's decision. Such appeals would be conducted by an independent panel of no less than three persons appointed by SMC's Board who would review the application to ensure that case-files and other records demonstrated a clear decision-making process, and were not tainted by biased or unsubstantiated decisions.

**Q12: Do you agree that the arrangements proposed for implementation of the Significance Recognition Scheme are appropriate, and offer a fair and transparent process?**

## **9 A Funding Stream for Recognised Collections**

- 9.1 The broad range of benefits likely to flow from Recognition, as evidenced by the English Designation scheme, were outlined at 3.7 above.
- 9.2 The scheme would recognise those museums whose collections represent as much a national as a local asset, and where the scale of responsibility in caring for, and in developing the widest audience for, significant collections could be reasonably said to justify providing an element of national support to partner local resources. On this basis the Scottish Executive is minded to consider allocating a stream of funding for investment in the care of recognised significant collections, and in enabling their full potential in terms of public access, learning and enjoyment to be realised.
- 9.3 It would be premature to allocate specific resources in advance of implementing a scheme, and it is therefore intended that there should be a clear separation between the process of Recognition and any subsequent funding arrangements. The Executive nevertheless wishes, through this consultation process, to seek views on how such funding might be most effectively deployed.
- 9.4 The owners of Recognised collections are likely to represent a range of situations, and though most may well have difficulties in sustaining their core operations, this cannot be taken as a general rule. Some may have difficulty meeting the routine costs of good housekeeping; others may have difficulty only in securing funding for small developments and one-off projects. In other cases expert curatorial capacity may be the predominant need.
- 9.5 It is considered that any funding regime would need to have sufficient flexibility to meet these different situations, and to enable wise investment. A mix of fixed-term core support and project funding is likely to be best suited, represented by a twin-track operational structure. One strand might be to support significant collections that are of no great scale, using project grants to enhance both access and collections management. Another (somewhat smaller) group, made up of museums either with significant collections across a broad range of holdings in different subject areas, or museums whose whole function is based on a single highly-significant collection, might be candidates for more general support over a fixed term.
- 9.6 Funding agreements would make it clear that investment was being targeted at the significant collection(s) concerned. However, there would be opportunities for individual museums to use this funding to lever additional resources for capital or programme grants that might benefit other collections, and there might be peripheral benefits arising from such spend. For example, a capital grant to improve collections storage would benefit everything in that store, which might not only be significant material; and if core costs were to (say) fund the

appointment of a natural science specialist, that expertise would be to the benefit of the collections as a whole, not only those that are significant.

### ***Fixed-term core support***

- 9.7 Fixed-term core support is likely to be deployed to museums with Recognised collections where they demonstrate need because:
- the range of subject areas in which collections are significant is so broad, and the total size of the collections is such, that the level of expertise and resources required to maximise their public benefit is greater than that which the museum can reasonably be expected to fund wholly from local sources of financial support; or
  - the scale of a single collection is of such substance that the resources required to maximise its public benefit are greater than that which the museum can reasonably be expected to fund wholly from local sources of financial support.
- 9.8 Fixed-term core support would be provided specifically to maintain and develop the Recognised collections, and would not be a general subsidy towards running costs. Nor should such investment provide a substitute for funding from other sources. Benefits to non-Recognised collections or other activities should be incidental.
- 9.9 Funding would be awarded on a rolling three-year cycle, based on costed forward and business plans, with one year's notice of termination being applied.

### ***Project Funding***

- 9.10 Project funding (whether for capital works or programmes of activity) would be available to all museums with Recognised collections (whether or not in receipt of fixed-term core support) who could demonstrate need in developing or enhancing the care of collections and knowledge about them, or their accessibility to the public. It could also be used to lever partnerships between museums with Recognised collections and other relevant institutions where such relationships would increase the public benefit of the recognised collections. There might also be opportunities to develop links between collections of National museums and Recognised collections in other museums through funding projects to enable joint exhibitions, whether at the national or Recognised museums.
- 9.11 Funding would be awarded for finite and well-defined projects for periods of up to three years.

### *Funding Agreements*

9.12 As noted, all awards would be subject to Funding Agreements which would require the grantee, amongst other things that include the usual reporting and acknowledgement conditions, to:

- treat the funding as additional and not to use funding to substitute for existing commitments;
- make available their expertise in the areas of the Recognised collections to other museums in Scotland;
- favourably consider loans of that material to other museums in Scotland, subject to the usual safeguards of conservation and security; and
- permit and encourage the further training and development of staff dealing with the Recognised collections through attendance at appropriate conferences and seminars and visits to relevant museums within and without Scotland and, in the case of local authorities, not limited to their own administrative areas.

### *Administration*

9.13 SMC would administer funding for Recognised museums as a separate strand within its grants programme. The Minister would agree the objectives, nature and extent of funding, having taken advice from SMC.

9.14 The Significance Committee would consider and make recommendations on funding bids at its first meeting at the beginning of the second annual round of the scheme, and would make recommendations to the SMC Board.

**Q13: Do you agree that the funding proposals are appropriate, particularly in relation to the balance between fixed-term core support and project funding?**

## **10 Responses**

The deadline for responses is **Friday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2005**

Please send responses to:

**Jane Robinson**  
**Assistant Director (Stewardship)**  
**Scottish Museums Council**  
**20/22 Torphichen Street**  
**Edinburgh**  
**EH3 8JB**  
**E-mail: [janerob@scottishmuseums.org.uk](mailto:janerob@scottishmuseums.org.uk)**

If you would like a paper copy of this consultation document, or if you would like a copy of it in an alternative format or in a community language, please contact us using the contact details given above.

It would be helpful if those responding could explain who they are and, where relevant, whom they represent.

Scottish Museums Council  
15<sup>th</sup> April 2005

## **ANNEX A: SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS**

- Q1: Do you agree that these are the key principles that should underpin the Scheme?**
- Q2: Are there different or additional principles that you believe should be adopted?**
- Q3: Do you agree that proposed significance criteria are appropriate?**
- Q4: Do you agree that the definition of 'significance' should not attempt to distinguish between importance in national, UK or international terms?**
- Q5: Do you agree that indicative sizes of collections to be considered for Recognition should be established as guidance to applicants?**
- Q6: Do you agree that the range of evidence proposed in support of a case for Recognition is appropriate?**
- Q7: Is there additional evidence that should be provided in support of a case for Recognition?**
- Q8: Are all the criteria for collections management and public services appropriate?**
- Q9: Are there additional criteria that should be incorporated in relation to care of collections and public services?**
- Q10: Do you support the principle that the scheme should enable the Recognition of a significant collection in the ownership of more than one institution?**
- Q11: Do you agree with the requirements that should define a partnership for the purposes of Recognising a significant collection in the ownership of more than one institution?**
- Q12: Do you agree that the arrangements proposed for implementation of the Significance Recognition Scheme are appropriate, and offer a fair and transparent process?**
- Q13: Do you agree that the funding proposals are appropriate, particularly in relation to the balance between fixed-term core support and project funding?**