

APPENDIX THREE

Existing models

Across the UK there are many existing models of museums working in partnership or as members of a regional network. In the interests of avoiding wheel reinvention, this section summarises some of the key points which can be drawn from the websites of a range of relevant initiatives.

A major caveat, at the outset, is that in England one agency, Arts Council England, has responsibility for both arts and museums, and a number of these examples of partnership have benefitted from ACE funding which has aimed to bring arts and museums more closely together. There is therefore, in the bigger scheme of things, perhaps a case to be made for closer working between MGS and Creative Scotland, such as existed between their predecessors, Scottish Museums Council and Scottish Arts Council, in the 1990s.

The Fens Museum Partnership

<http://www.fensmuseums.org.uk/category/index.aspx>

The Partnership is made up of 24 museums, both independent and Local Authority. There is an overarching theme of ‘Histories of Fen life told through local museums’. A three year collaborative project ‘Fenland Lives and Land’ resulted in 4 exhibitions and a film which toured the membership over a two year period. As well as showcasing the member museums, the Partnership website also presents a series of ‘stories’ drawn from individual museum collections.

However, the Partnership website is a number of years out of date, so it is possible that completing this major collaborative project exhausted the energy for such collective working.

Cumbria Museums Consortium

<http://cumbriamuseums.org.uk/>

Three museums services which have been working together since 2012, and have benefitted thereby from ACE funding. Their website states that ‘Learning is at the heart of everything we do’, and this includes training and peer-to-peer support, harnessing digital technologies, and CPD for teachers. The Consortium is organising a conference on ‘celebrating excellence in rural and remote museums on 5th June 2018 <http://cumbriamuseums.org.uk/success-in-the-sticks/>’. A highlight of the Consortium website is ‘Trails of the Unexpected’: ‘a new way to explore our internationally significant collections, artworks and artefacts—each with a story to tell. There are six walking trails to follow in Cumbria and the Lake District, each one gives you an opportunity to explore a world of cultural treasures in an epic landscape.’

Visit Bristol

<https://visitbristol.co.uk/destinationbristol/about-us/cultural-destinations-project>

Not a museums partnership as such, but an interesting approach to promoting ‘cultural destinations’, with an aim to ‘build capacity and economic impact by improving collaboration and partnership working across the cultural and tourism sectors in Bristol and Bath.’

Association of Nova Scotia Museums

<https://ansm.ns.ca/>

This is made up of a comprehensive network of regional museum networks, of which, for example, that of the Cape Breton region is similar in size to the HMF Membership. A crucial point is that this is a Province-wide Association, with no regional ‘gaps’—that is, it is not dependent on individual regional networks being formed, bottom up. ‘Nova Muse’ is a website resource not unlike SCRAN, but with the key difference that it starts from, and therefore highlights, individual museum collections.

Cornwall Museums Partnership

<https://www.cornwallmuseumspartnership.org.uk>

This may be the closest model in the UK for what the HMF might develop. It employs 4.4 FTE staff, providing advice, organising collaborative projects, raising funds and advising on income generation, managing grant programmes, providing training and skills sharing, and offering consultancy services. Its membership includes independent, Local Authority and National Museums. It came out of Cornwall’s first Museums Strategy, described at the time by ACE as ‘a flagship project for rural areas throughout the UK’.

The Partnership website states: ‘We are changing the culture of museums by helping them to be more open, to be better connected to one another and to their communities. We broker partnerships between museums and arts organisations, public, private and voluntary sector bodies to help them to reach new people and develop new skills.’ The Partnership also supports a separate ‘Museums in Cornwall’ website with over 50 entries, including historic houses and heritage centres. In 2018 the Partnership has launched the first Cornwall Museum Awards <https://www.cornwallmuseumspartnership.org.uk/heritage-awards/apply/> and aims to demonstrate that ‘museums matter’ through highlighting their social, educational and economic impacts.

Happy Museum Project

<http://happymuseumproject.org>

Launched in 2011, this initiative currently comprises 22 museums across England and Wales, from national institutions to small independents. It describes itself as ‘a leadership framework for museums to develop a holistic approach to wellbeing and sustainability...reimagining the museum’s purpose as steward of people, place and planet’. It is halfway through a 5 year programme launched in 2015 exploring a set of principles that includes *creating the*

conditions for wellbeing; value the environment and be a steward of the future as well as the past, be an active citizen, etc <http://happymuseumproject.org/about/why/principles/> . This concept of a ‘manifesto’ for museums may be worth exploring in a Highland context.

Tayside Museum Forum

Like HMF, the Tayside forum is currently exploring ways in which members could work more closely together and is planning to hold a meeting of Scottish museums forums and networks this summer to share plans and ideas.