Updating the Cultural Heritage Blueprint – Museums Association consultation

Arts Council England response

The Arts Council
Arts Council England is the lead body charged with developing the arts, museums and libraries in England and our mission is Great art for everyone. Our expanded remit sees us championing, developing and investing in museums and libraries, so that people’s lives can be shaped and enriched by artistic and cultural experiences and knowledge. We focus our activity, working with and alongside many partners, to achieve a small number of long-term goals.

These are set out in our 10-year strategic framework Achieving great art for everyone, which focuses on our ambitions for the arts. In September 2011 we published Culture, knowledge and understanding: great museums and libraries for everyone, in which we adapted the substance of our goals to reflect the needs and priorities of museums and libraries and to sit alongside our existing goals for the arts. These frameworks guide our work with these sectors.

Given the cross-cutting nature of workforce development, all our goals are relevant to this consultation, but one deals directly with these issues:

Goal 4: The leadership and workforce are diverse and highly skilled

Why this goal?
Unless the museums workforce is diverse and highly skilled it will not reach its potential. To make an enduring contribution to civic life, museums and libraries must be staffed by people who both reflect and can inspire the communities that they serve. Diversity in the workforce is important to museums and libraries building diverse collections and developing new perspectives. And the ongoing development of an ever-wider range of skills is essential to enabling these sectors to adapt and change. (Culture, knowledge and understanding, pages 24/25)

Our goals are supported by 13 priorities that will direct our work over the next four years, set out in our Plan 2011-15. For Goal 4 these are:

- building a network of arts leaders who value sharing their knowledge and skills, for the benefit of the arts and civil society
- creating equal opportunities to enter the arts workforce
Overview
We welcome the opportunity to respond to the consultation being conducted by the Museums Association to update the *Blueprint* published by Creative and Cultural Skills (CCS) in 2008.

We recognise the need to reflect the changes in the political and economic environment since the development of the original document, although as the work demonstrates, the fundamental challenges remain relevant.

We support the collaborative approach to skills development and knowledge sharing that underpins this work. The Arts Council is keen to ensure that mainstream funding responds to the needs of museums and libraries. Arts Council England has supported the development of the National Skills Academy Creative & Cultural (NSA) since inception. In April 2012 the NSA will become a National portfolio organisation and this status recognises the vital role they play in linking with the skills sector and brokering and enabling local partnerships between further education colleges and arts and cultural organisations. We are pleased to see the proposed expansion of the NSA to the museums sector which is developing in parallel to this consultation. The revised *Blueprint* will help to inform the plan that structures this work. We recognise that sector ownership is a key factor in the success of NSAs, and we would suggest that greater sector engagement with the *Blueprint* will be an important element in ensuring maximum benefit from this initiative.

Consultation Questions:

1. **Are the five key challenges identified in the draft update the right ones?**
   (If you don’t agree please let us know what you consider to be the key challenges at the moment)

The Workforce Development meeting chaired by Arts Council England in December 2011 confirmed that the challenges were essentially still those described in the original *Blueprint*, although with some shifts of emphasis. In particular the issues of:

- curatorial specialisms (Aim 6, now Objective 5)
- volunteer management (Aim 4, now Objective 1)
- organisational resilience and sustainability (Aim 5, now Objective 2)
- business Skills (Aim 5, now Objective 2)
were highlighted, supporting the information presented in the *Cultural Heritage Blueprint Review Progress* report published by CCS in October 2011.

In addition, opening up entry to the sector workforce and improving its diversity were highlighted as key ongoing issues. (Aims 1 and 2, now combined into Objective 3).

2. **Do you think particular challenges should take priority over others at the moment?**

Yes.

*If you have answered yes please say which ones and why*

The Arts Council’s focus for leadership and workforce development in the museum sector is described in *Culture, knowledge and understanding* (What we will do, page 25). Main elements include:

- acting as a champion of diversity, with a particular focus on equal opportunities to enter the workforce
- encouraging skills development, collaborative working and knowledge sharing, seeking to ensure that mainstream funding responds to museum and library training needs and encouraging them to embrace a wider range of skills
- renewed commitment to leadership development
- learning from museums’ and libraries’ work with communities, especially those that embed these skills in new, more responsive and diverse governance and delivery models
- building advocacy skills so that the arts, museums and libraries can be more confident in winning support for the contribution that they make to society

Our *Plan for 2011-15* prioritises workforce entry, diversity and leadership for the arts. In the Museum Development strand of our Renaissance funding programme we have particularly targeted Goal 3 (Museums and libraries are sustainable, resilient and innovative).

We recognise the current challenge of tackling youth unemployment. The sector needs to scale up its efforts to create fairer entry routes in order to address the risk that a generation of young people might be excluded from it, a generation of future arts and cultural leaders might be lost, and the economic growth of this hugely valuable sector might be damaged.
3. For each of the challenges identified, what additional recommendations should the *Blueprint* update include?

For the section headings below we have included all our comments on the update paper, rather than simply focusing on additional recommendations.

**Strengthen leadership and management**

The Key challenges show a recognition of the importance of leadership founded on sound organisational management, rather than resting solely on dominant individuals. Well managed organisations ensure that governing bodies as a whole develop and own the vision and direction, setting a resilient and sustainable course that is not dependent on an individual to maintain, update and adapt it.

**Recommendations**

- ‘Strategic bodies and funders should prioritise activities and initiatives that support the development of leadership skills’ (Recommendations page 3, bullet 1) – These skills should be more closely defined in line with our comments above and the focus reflected in bullet 4 ‘Boards and governing bodies must to be supported to develop leadership skills’

- ‘Arts Council England Major Grants must include a requirement of systemic and structured leadership and management development including boards’ – The guidance for major grant applications was underpinned by our five goals and delivering great museums for everyone. As with our National portfolio organisations, the funding agreements for Major partner museums will be built upon some common expectations. These include that they should nurture talent and promote a positive approach to diversity; provide collective leadership of the museum sector and be role models in their museological and organisational practices; act as powerful advocates for the sector in a way that goes beyond their own organisations and work with the Arts Council and other organisations to share skills and expertise

- ‘The skills needed to manage volunteers should be prioritised and existing best practice around volunteer management should be shared widely’ (Recommendations page 3, bullet 6) - This is a focus of the 2011 edition of the Accreditation Standard

- ‘The need for management skills should be better reflected in existing sector qualifications’ (Recommendations page 3, bullet 7) and

- ‘Where there are specific gaps in management skills, such as line management, resources and qualifications should be developed eg a certificate in line management’ (Recommendations page 3, bullet 8) – For
museums to be effective they must be well managed. This applies to all aspects of their work, and this should be reflected in sector qualifications. It is important to remember, however, that generic skills such as line management may already be supported by provision outside the sector, and here the focus should arguably be on ensuring access to established resources and qualifications, not developing new ones. In addition, for both management and leadership development, the value of mentoring should be recognised. This could draw on experience and expertise within the wider arts and creative industries and beyond.

**Develop business, enterprise and entrepreneurial skills**

The Key challenges make reference to ‘Funding for museums in England through the Renaissance programme...changing with fewer museums receiving substantial funding’ (bullet 2). It is worth emphasising that, as with National portfolio organisations, it was important that we be able to support successful applicants to a sufficient level to allow them to succeed rather than spreading the resource too thinly.

The acknowledgement of the need for broader partnerships in the context of wider agendas and commissioning (bullet 4) is key as museums and the cultural sector often appear fragmented to commissioners, and it will be important to work with providers that they can understand.

It is worth noting that moving to ‘trust status’ is not the only alternative model of delivery to direct local authority provision (bullet 5) and that whilst ‘advocacy’ is important (bullet 8), genuine community engagement encompasses many more factors.

**Recommendations**

- ‘Arts Council England Major Grant recipients and national museums must link with smaller museums to address these areas of skills and knowledge’ (Recommendations page 4, bullet 2) – see the note above about expectations of Major partner museums
- ‘Advice and guidance on new business models and approaches should be developed, particularly relating to: museums moving to trust status and getting involved in local authority commissioning’ (Recommendations page 4, bullet 6) - This should not duplicate existing publications and resources, for example *The opportunity of devolution for museums, libraries and archives* (MLA 2010) and
Local Government Improvement and Development resources on *Improving Strategic Commissioning in the Culture and Sport sector*

See Question 5 for a fuller list of links

- This area of development should be a key focus for Museum Development organisations and Renaissance funded Museum Development in general (Recommendations page 4, bullet 8) – As noted, Goal 3 (Museums and libraries are sustainable, resilient and innovative) was a particular focus on our Renaissance Museum development funding strand.

**Open up entry into the sector and diversify the workforce**

This is a priority for us in 2011–15. The Key challenges pick up the need for good practice guidance around recruitment and training. We recognise the importance of promoting and supporting paid internships, apprenticeships and the Arts Award scheme.

The Arts Council has already undertaken joint work in this area with CCS, for example *Internships in the arts – a guide for arts organisations*. We expect organisations receiving funding from us to model good practice in this.

We will continue to invest in Arts Award because it reaches out to a very wide range of young people up to 25 years of age, developing arts and leadership skills, nurturing creative talent, and opening the doors on careers in the arts and cultural sector. At present 32 museums are Arts Award centres and we aim to achieve further expansion into the sector. Around half of these have taken young people through to moderation so far.

**Recommendations**

Much of this, including work-based entry training opportunities and partnerships with Further Education can be supported through the development of the NSA approach for museums and galleries. The Arts Council has been closely involved with the development of the NSA Creative and Cultural, which has focused on theatre and live music.

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) *Evaluation of National Skills Academies* (July 2011) is very positive about NSA Creative and Cultural’s impact, for example in encouraging a wider range of young people into the sector via vocational routes, which was ‘seen to represent a cultural shift for the sector, which had up to now been dominated by graduate entry jobs’. It seems to have avoided the concern (found with some other NSAs) that the voices of small and medium sized enterprises are not being heard in their work. As an Apprenticeship Training Company in its own right, it has also been able to respond more flexibly to
employer demand, bringing in more SMEs who do not have to commit to funding an apprentice for the full three year period.

The evidence to date suggests that the NSA approach could make a major contribution to addressing the issue for the museums sector. It should be ensured that the Higher Education sector, which has traditionally provided much museum training, is not ignored in this picture. Similarly, it should not be assumed that people only enter the museums workforce at the start of their working lives – there should be recognition of the reality of people joining the museums world after experience in another area, and the potential diversification of the workforce this could bring.

Commit to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for all staff
The key changes make the important point that development can be achieved through a much wider range of routes than formal training and qualifications. Arts Council England is encouraging peer support and skills sharing through, for example, its Renaissance Museum development funding strand and its support of Subject Specialist Networks (SSN).

Recommendations
- ‘The provision of online training and development resources and opportunities need to be improved
  o A large number of resources have been developed in the last few years, they must be retained and shared across the sector
  o A central point or digital platform should be created to signpost these developmental resources
  o The use of online networking and social media as a way of developing and sharing skills and knowledge needs to be improved, it needs to be more interactive’ (Recommendations page 6, bullet 1) and
- ‘A museum training database listing courses and training should be developed and available on line’ (Recommendations page 6, bullet 3) – the Arts Council already funds the Collections Trust to provide the Collections Link website, which includes information about SSNs and has a calendar function which could be more fully utilised to post details of sector training events. Collections Link provides access to a range of resources, and could be the point of access for further existing developmental materials. Generally we would encourage the use and adaption of existing relevant tools
- ‘The revised Museum Accreditation scheme should reflect the need for organisational commitment to staff development’ (Recommendations page 6, bullet 6) – the Accreditation Standard (2011) reflects this already within
1.7.4 ‘The museum must have appropriate development opportunities for its workforce’. In addition, we would flag the network of Museum Mentors as an example of a structured CPD model/opportunity, supported by a challenge fund.

**Develop sector-specific skills**

The Key challenges pick up many of the issues that our national programmes like Designation and Subject Specialist Networks play a part in tackling. We would emphasise the role that collections knowledge and expertise play in underpinning high quality, sustainable museum providers.

**Recommendations**

- ‘Strategic bodies should be encouraged to continue to invest in the development of sector specific skills and knowledge’ (Recommendations page 6, bullet 1) – Subject Specialist Networks do have a role for developing and sharing knowledge and expertise, as well as identifying intelligence about specialist collections which may require additional support. In addition, we also support this through Collections Link, Museum Mentors, Accreditation and Designation.
- ‘Subject Specialists Networks need to have a more strategic role in developing and sharing specialist skills and knowledge’ (Recommendations page 6, bullet 2) - The Arts Council is committed to funding Subject Specialist Networks to support the sharing element of their work.

4. **Recent research shows that the following are the most regularly identified skills needs for the sector, do you agree? If not what do you consider to be the most pressing skills needs for the sector to thrive and be sustainable?**

- Business and financial planning
- Leadership
- Management
- Fundraising
- Advocacy skills
- Marketing
- Use of technology/ digital skills/ social media
- Volunteer development – recruitment, training, management
- Developing partnerships
- Basic collection and curatorial skills
Please see Question 2 response above.

5. If you know of successful approaches that are currently being used to support any area of workforce development please tell us about them.

We would flag the work of the NSA Creative and Cultural, the development of whose work has been supported by the Arts Council (and which has now become a National portfolio organisation).

We would also highlight specific recent work such as:

Internships in the arts guidance November 2011

‘Kitemark’ Accreditation for artists working with children and young people

Arts Council is working with Creative and Cultural Skills to develop a framework of qualifications for artists working in formal and non-formal educational settings. The aim is to create a framework which clearly signposts appropriate and recognised accreditation for artists and practitioners at any stage of their career. This will help professionalise the sector and provide a kitemark which schools, parents and young people can recognise.

(See our response to Cultural education in England: An independent review by Darren Henley, page 9 - Recommendation 17: New qualifications for cultural practitioners)


Turning Point Network (TPN) activity,
http://turningpointnetwork.squarespace.com/statement/ and the recent report for TPN and Arts Council England on Business models in the visual arts, May 2011, designed to help arts organisations respond to the current, challenging economic environment and to generate debate about different approaches and new ideas to making arts organisations more resilient:

www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication_archive/business-models-visual-arts/

New Business models and approaches – some existing resources and training:
