

Briefing Note: Scotland's Museums and Galleries Strategy 2023-2030

Introduction

Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS) is the national development body for Scotland's museums and galleries, supporting the sector through strategic investment, advice, workforce development, and advocacy.

In February 2023, MGS released an [updated strategy for the sector](#). The strategy is the result of extensive consultation and will guide the collective work of the sector. The vision is that:

Scotland's museums and galleries are thriving, connected, and resilient organisations which are agile in embracing change. Trusted and valued by the widest diversity of Scotland's people, our collections, and the shared stories we tell, are accessible and inclusive to all.

This vision was devised in response to three driving forces: the need for greater inclusivity, the need for urgent climate action, and the ongoing financial crisis.

This briefing note provides an overview of the strategy and identifies points of connection to the goals of the [Strategic Framework for Heritage Science in the UK 2018-2023](#).

Strategy Summary

The strategy is organised into three interlinked strands, each with several priority areas attached. Each priority sets out specific actions for the sector as a whole and for MGS specifically. The aims of the strategy align with Scottish Government ambitions.

1. Connection

Museums and galleries can generate social change, and positively impact community education, health, wellbeing, and sense of place. They should foster inclusivity and remove access barriers.

Inclusion

Working with and supporting a diverse range of people, and creating environments that are safe, welcoming and engaging for all.

The sector will develop more inclusive programming and embed inclusive values into organisational cultures. The MGS will develop training to support organisations in making these changes, share advice on working with communities of origin, and help museums to understand their global context.

Health and Wellbeing

Positively impacting the physical and mental health and wellbeing of people in Scotland.

The sector will achieve this through programming, use of space, and reduction of exclusion. The MGS will share learnings from the pandemic with the sector, offer wellbeing training, and foster partnerships with health and social care providers.

Education

Providing opportunities for lifelong learning.

The sector will build educational relationships and programs; assist schools in teaching students to become effective global citizens; and support progressive change in the curricula. The MGS will facilitate the building of these relationships and offer relevant training and advice.

Place

Addressing local needs and contributing to Scotland's cultural life.

The sector will celebrate local stories, as well as understand regional and global connections, especially as they relate to colonialism. It will engage with place-based climate change initiatives, and care for local heritage. The MGS will create and celebrate successful collaborations, and facilitate the safeguarding of Scotland's Intangible Cultural Heritage.

2. Resilience

The sector needs to build its preparedness for change by improving collection sustainability, establishing good financial controls, meeting net zero targets, and advocating for funding.

Financial Resilience

Operating on sustainable business models with good financial practice.

The sector will undertake effective planning and governance, increase and diversify income streams, and improve advocacy for the value of museums. The MGS will share training and guidance on how to achieve this and attract funders.

Climate Action

Improving sustainability and meeting net zero targets.

The sector will improve carbon literacy and sustainability, reduce its carbon footprint, and help visitors engage with the climate emergency. The MGS will provide relevant tools, resources, networks, and training.

Collaboration

Collaborating inside and outside the sector to solve problems and maximise opportunities and efficiency.

The sector will share expertise and resources across networks, and better understand how museum resources can meet community needs. The MGS will collaborate with partners and the Scottish Government and facilitate sector connections.

3. Workforce

Supporting the training and professional development of employees and volunteers, and promoting fairness, diversity, and safety in the workplace.

Fair Work

Offering positive working experiences.

The sector will provide staff and volunteers with development opportunities and ensure fair pay and working conditions. The MGS will provide resources and other support.

Diversity

Diversifying the workplace and prioritising those who have been underrepresented, including in leadership.

The sector will improve its recruitment processes, build inclusive workplaces, and value a variety of career routes. The MGS will develop partnerships and provide training to help achieve this.

Skills and Confidence

Ensuring equal access to skills development opportunities.

The sector will prioritise these opportunities, especially in meeting skills gaps, and encourage good leadership. The MGS will support this by providing accredited learning, programs, and opportunities for collaboration and sharing knowledge.

Key Points for Heritage Science

The MGS strategy has several important points of connection with the [Strategic Framework for Heritage Science in the UK 2018-2023](#).

Education

MGS want the sector to **‘Engage and build relationships across disciplinary areas to support learning in STEM/STEAM, literacy, and social studies, helping schools to support pupils to become effective global citizens’**.

The NHSF shares this ambition, being specifically interested in increasing engagement with heritage science at school age. Recent research shows how heritage science can support the UK national primary [curricula](#), and break down silos between the teaching of arts and science. There is potential here for Scotland’s museums and galleries and the heritage science community to build one of these cross-disciplinary relationships and support STEAM learning in schools.

[Click here to read our full report on Aligning Heritage Science to the Science Curricula.](#)

Collaboration

MGS wants the sector to **‘share expertise and resources in and across local, national, and international forums and networks’**.

This could be greatly facilitated by engagement with the Research Infrastructure for Conservation and Heritage Science (RICHeS) programme. Currently under development, this will be a network of facilities and expertise that will bring UK heritage and research organisations together, providing them with access to state-of-the-art research and innovation infrastructure to analyse, digitise and preserve the UK’s treasures.

[For more information about RICHeS, click here.](#)

Skills and Confidence

MGS wants the sector to **‘Support the development of core museum skills to meet identified skills gaps – currently in collections care’** and MGS plans to facilitate this by delivering accredited learning and other programs.

Clearly, heritage science and collections care are deeply intertwined. The NHSF has also sought to meet these skills gaps by [conducting research into careers in heritage science](#), drawing attention to [training opportunities](#), and running [technical skills workshops](#). It is an ongoing commitment of the NHSF’s Community Working Group to build a heritage science community that has the technical skills and knowledge necessary to address the present needs and future requirements of heritage.

Research Priorities for the Sector

The MGS priority areas overlap significantly with the [societal challenges](#) that the NHSF Research Working Group have identified as important areas of focus and collaboration for heritage science research. There are many opportunities here for heritage scientists to collaborate with museums and galleries in Scotland to jointly achieve these goals.

Wellbeing

MGS would like to **‘understand how museums and galleries can have a positive impact on health and wellbeing by identifying learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic and sharing them with the museum sector’** and would like the sector to **‘use indoor and outdoor spaces to encourage people to lead active lives, to better understand and explore mental and physical health, and to challenge stigma around the mental and physical ill health’**.

The heritage science community is well-positioned to support this. The cultural heritage sector is currently developing a stronger understanding of specifically how it improves wellbeing and how it can maximise the impact and accessibility of these benefits. Heritage science could engage with work to quantify the contribution of heritage to wellbeing, including analysing learnings from the pandemic.

Climate Emergency

MGS want to help Scotland’s museums and galleries meet net zero targets through improvement of carbon literacy and sustainability, and mitigation of environmental impact. Heritage science research can play an integral part in this. Here are just a few examples:

- Carbon mitigation – e.g. reducing the carbon footprint of the historic built environment, promoting a culture of re-use, guiding the siting of renewable energy, promoting low carbon land use patterns
- Adaptation – e.g. contributing to disaster risk reduction, reducing vulnerability
- Dealing with loss and damage – e.g. preparing for loss, managing the process of physical loss, and quantifying ‘non-economic losses’
- Climate science and communication – e.g. heritage science can help understand how climate has changed over time and past adaptation efforts

Equality and Inclusivity

MGS want the sector to **‘conduct research to understand the demographics of who is currently accessing museums to understand under-representation in current users’**, within a general ambition to make Scotland’s museums and galleries inclusive, safe, welcoming, and engaging places. Heritage scientists can also work towards creating an inclusive research environment, as well as support understanding of different heritage values and provide evidence of improved understanding of different histories and cultures.

Click here to read our paper, Heritage Science and Societal Challenges: a [blueprint for action](#).

[Read the full MGS Strategy here.](#)

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About the National Heritage Science Forum (NHSF):

The National Heritage Science Forum facilitates collaboration and knowledge-exchange to enhance the contribution that heritage science makes to society. The Forum is a charity and membership organisation that connects communities of practice. Find out more at: www.heritagescienceforum.org.uk.