

# Cultural Heritage and Partnership: Public Policy and Museums and Galleries in Scotland

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**Abstract:** Across the UK, contemporary debates on the organisation and delivery of public services are replete with 'New Labour' references to the value of partnership as an essential element of governance, public policy formulation and implementation. Essentially, partnership involves co-operation between people or organisations for shared benefit, and is concerned with the added value that is alleged to accrue when a coalition of interests drawn from more than one sector is employed to organise and deliver public services. Since the election of 'New Labour' in May 1997, partnership has come to play an important part in the delivery of public policy goals across a wide range of subject areas, including mainstream areas of public service such as health care, education, transport, and housing. Since 1999, devolution has led to a decentralisation of responsibility for the delivery of services to devolved assemblies for Scotland and Wales. Nevertheless, the partnership agenda has been maintained with both the Cardiff and Edinburgh 'governments' demonstrating a continued commitment to its implementation. This article offers an early engagement with the role of partnership in relation to the sphere of cultural policy within one devolved part of the UK, namely Scotland, and considers its scope within the particular area of the museums and galleries sector. It provides an overview of the way in which the cultural policy agenda has developed in Scotland since devolution in 1999, and discusses the way in which partnership has informed the Scottish Executive's emerging policy agenda for museums and galleries.

**Keywords:** Partnership, cultural heritage, museums and galleries, public policy, Scotland.

## Introduction: New Labour and the 'Partnership' Agenda

"Partnership: 'The bringing together of representatives from different sectors/communities of interest to agree and work together towards set goals. Effective working partnerships require extensive investment of time and effort in planning, including clear details of roles, resources, and expectations. Museums regularly work in partnership with a wide range of bodies, including schools, colleges, tourist boards, other cultural agencies, and local authorities'."

*(Scottish Museums Council, 2004a)*

There is little doubt that a 'partnership' ethos has come to occupy a central role in the public policy and governance agendas of the 'New Labour' Government in Britain, with a particular emphasis placed on the development of partnerships between the public and the private sector for the purpose of enhancing the quality of public service provision (see, for example, Osborne, 2000; Akintoye et al, 2003). In many ways, this New Labour commitment to partnership is no surprise.

“It was Labour local authorities that first advocated the notion of improving public service provision through partnership and co-operation with the private sector. Moreover, Labour Leader Tony Blair is intellectually sympathetic to a move away from the heavy reliance on the state as a central feature of Labour thinking and . . . has advocated strongly the value of partnership between the public sector and private enterprise.”

*(Falconer and Ross, 1998: 133)*

Moreover, as O'Brien (1997: 32) reminds us

“The origins of partnership are to be found under the last Labour administration (1974-1979). Business and the voluntary sector were working together with state and city. Peter Shore, then environment secretary, visited the US in 1978 and saw how government intervened to regenerate depressed communities. He decided to see if such novel groupings could be stimulated in Britain, but after the 1979 election it fell to the Conservatives to take the concept forward. It was thus both accidental and enormously significant that partnership was born as a cross-party concept.”

The approach adopted toward partnership by New Labour following its election victory in 1997 was underpinned further by the revision of the Party's Constitution, promoting as it does.

“a dynamic economy, serving the public interest, in which *the enterprise of the market and the rigour of competition are joined with the forces of partnership and co-operation . . . with a thriving private sector and high quality public services*, where those undertakings essential to the common good are either owned by the public or accountable to them.”

*(Labour Party, 1995; emphasis added)*

The development of partnership as a guiding principle of 'New Labour' also derives from the Party's changing posture toward the business sector. A political party which at one time held firmly to the view that the State should play a leading role in the workings of the nation's economy now adopted a view that very little could be achieved in government without the active support of the private sector. For Labour, partnership is central to the success of public service delivery and it is through partnership activity that both the infrastructure of the public sector and the quality of public services are maintained and improved. Pollitt (2003) provides an interesting and useful overview of the various motivations that drive arguments in favour of partnership (see Table I), indicating that partnerships will be advocated for a wide range of purposes, from the desire to attract private sector funding for public services to the more general co-operative goal of sharing expertise and talent across areas of policy and service delivery.

**Table I: Motives for Partnership Formation**

<b>Attracting private finance</b>	By partnering, will be able to attract private finance, enabling them to pursue projects which could not be afforded from public budgets alone.
<b>Management reform and modernisation</b>	By working in partnership, public managers will learn how to run programmes more efficiently and effectively.
<b>Public legitimacy</b>	Participation in a partnership is seen as a good in itself – symbolic of a pooling of talents in the pursuit of worthy public purposes.
<b>Risk shifting</b>	In public-private partnerships, private partners assume part or all of the risk associated with projects.
<b>Downsizing the public sector</b>	Like contracting-out and privatisation, partnership may be seen by those who favour downsizing the public sector as a way to get tasks which were formerly performed by public sector staff handed over to the staff of commercial or voluntary organisations.
<b>Power sharing</b>	Partnerships may be seen a promoting more 'horizontal', less authoritarian and hierarchical relationships.

Source: Pollitt (2003: 58)

An examination of Labour's public policy rhetoric illustrates clearly the way in which the language of partnership has permeated across the wide spectrum of government: at the national, devolved and local level; between the public, private and voluntary sectors; and, between service providers, communities and citizens (see for example Fairclough, 2000; IPPR, 2001; Pollitt, 2003; Stoker, 2004; Ludlam and Smith, 2004). As an important element of New Labour's *Modernising Government* agenda (Cabinet Office, 1999), partnership involves 'a fundamental shift of thinking, putting behind us the ideology and dogma of the past. In the modern world, governments are judged not on what they own, or on how much they spend, but on whether they deliver' (HM Treasury, 2000: 5). For Labour, modernisation rests largely on the credo 'what matters is what works', and the partnership agenda offers a highly pragmatic approach to the provision of public services through the best use of what public, private and voluntary sectors have to offer. In this regard, an interesting question arises concerning the extent to which, and in what form, partnership has informed debates on cultural heritage policy within the devolved polity of the UK? In an early attempt to engage with his question, the article now turns to Scotland (that part of the devolved UK with, arguably, the strongest 'self-government' arrangements) and to the specific subject of cultural heritage policy and museums and galleries.

### **The Cultural Policy Agenda in Scotland**

With the creation of the Scottish Parliament and a devolved system of government came the hope that the area of culture and heritage would be able to be developed quickly and more easily than had previously been the case. However, at the time of devolution, cultural policy was not high on the agenda of Scotland's political parties, compared to other areas of public policy. It seemed

that an opportunity would perhaps be missed ‘to give a high and exciting profile to an area of policy which can only gain in importance with the coming of Scottish self-rule’ (McMillan, 1999: 13).

Prior to the creation of the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Arts Council and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) had in 1998 jointly produced a document entitled, *Creative Scotland: The Case for a National Cultural Strategy*, which called for the development of an explicit cultural strategy for Scotland. Following the elections to the Scottish Parliament in June 1999, which resulted in a Labour-led coalition administration, work commenced on a national cultural strategy, culminating in the publication, in August 2000, of *Creating Our Future . . . Minding Our Past: Scotland’s National Cultural Strategy* (Scottish Executive, 2000). In this document, a definition of ‘culture’ is adopted in accordance with that agreed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO),

“In its widest sense, culture may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterise a society or group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human beings, value systems, traditions and beliefs.”

(*Scottish Parliament Information Centre, 2001: 1*)

As established, Scotland’s National Cultural Strategy was formed around four principal strategic objectives, as set out in Table II.

**Table II: Scotland’s National Cultural Strategy: Strategic Objectives and Key Priorities**

Strategic Objective	Key Priorities
1. Promote creativity, the arts and other cultural activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate a climate supportive to those working in the cultural sector</li> <li>• Enhance Scotland’s creative industries</li> <li>• Celebrate excellence in the arts and other cultural activity</li> </ul>
2. Celebrating Scotland’s cultural heritage in its full diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote Scotland’s languages as cultural expressions and means to access Scotland’s culture</li> <li>• Conserve, present and promote interest in, and knowledge of, Scotland’s history and culture</li> <li>• Promote international cultural exchange and dialogue</li> </ul>
3. Realising culture’s potential contribution to education, promoting inclusion and enhancing people’s quality of life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote and enhance lifelong learning in and through arts, culture and heritage</li> <li>• Develop wider opportunities for cultural access</li> <li>• Maximise the social benefits of culture</li> </ul>
4. Assuring an effective national support framework for culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a modern national framework of support for cultural provision</li> <li>• Improve the quality and management of cultural provision</li> <li>• Target funding to achieve clear priorities</li> </ul>

Source: Scottish Parliament Information Centre (2001: 2-3)

In regard to the delivery of this programme, the Scottish Executive announced its intention to 'work with a wide range of partners to implement the actions identified in the strategy' (Scottish Executive, 2000: 64), though the focus was less on the development of public-private partnership or the explicit question of generating private finance. Rather, the priority was more on the potential for closer co-operation between the various institutional stakeholders involved in the cultural policy domain: the Scottish Executive and Scottish Parliament; local authorities; the Scottish Arts Council; Scottish Screen; Historic Scotland; the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland; the National Trust for Scotland; the Scottish Museums Council; the National Museums of Scotland; the National Library of Scotland; the National Galleries of Scotland; and, those companies with national roles - Scottish Opera, Scottish Ballet, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra (see, for more detail on these various organisations, Scottish Parliament Information Centre, 2001).

With specific reference to the museums and galleries sector, the strategy paved the way for a national audit of Scotland's museums and galleries. In this respect, reaction to the National Cultural Strategy was generally supportive. For example, the Scottish Museums Council expressed its delight that the document,

"recognises . . . that there is a lack of strategic direction across the museum sector as a whole. The Government support for the national audit of museums and gallery collections . . . which will identify what is of national and local importance . . . is a great step forward for Scotland."

*(Scottish Museums Council, 2000)*

The national audit (Scottish Museums Council, 2002) represented the first-ever national survey of Scotland's cultural heritage as located within its museums and galleries, and was promoted as 'a first step towards a coherent national funding and policy framework for museums in a devolved Scotland' (Scottish Museums Council, 2002: 2).

According to the National Audit, there are over 400 museums and galleries in Scotland, including: the National Museums of Scotland (NMS) and the National Galleries of Scotland (NGS); museums and galleries operating under the auspices of local authorities; independent museums and galleries; university museums; and, regimental museums. The national museums and galleries, and the local authority museums receive the majority of their funding from a single identified source, with the Scottish Executive providing around 76 per cent of the funding for the NMS and NMG, and local government accounting for some 83 per cent of income for museums under their purview. The independent museums have a pattern of funding that does not rely on a single dominant source of income, though the single most important source of funding

is from admission charges which account for around 21 per cent of total income. Other sources of income include financial support from trusts, local government grants and various commercial and trading ventures. University and regimental museums receive a high percentage of their income from a single source. Military museums attribute over 40 per cent of their funding to private sources, while university museums receive 84 per cent of their income from grant-awarding bodies such as the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (Scottish Museums Council, 2002: 5; Scottish Executive, 2003a: 2).

The National Audit was merely the first stage, albeit an important one, in the development of public policy toward the museums and cultural heritage sector in Scotland. While making no formal recommendations, it did offer guidance on what were perceived to be key issues for development. In so doing, it identified that any policy formulated for the sector would have to recognise the role and contribution that would come through enhanced partnership activity.

### **Partnership and Museums and Galleries in Scotland**

In August 2003, the Scottish Executive published the results of a major consultation exercise conducted in the wake of the National Audit of cultural heritage. This document, *An Action Framework for Museums – Consultation and Response* (Scottish Executive, 2003), provided the Executive's response, delivered within the context of the Partnership for a Better Scotland (PABS) agreement of 15 May 2003, the Labour-Liberal Democratic governing coalition's programme for government. This agreement set out the Scottish Executive's commitments for the next four years of Scotland's governance and gave commitments to emphasise the importance of cultural heritage. Among the key issues addressed in this action plan was the promoting of partnership through a range of initiatives:

- A formalisation of the outreach role of the national museums and galleries, through which they would adopt a greater role in support of the non-national sector, providing advice, expertise and other assistance;
- The creation of a regional development network in order to enhance the capacity and sustainability of the cultural heritage sector through partnership;
- The establishment of regional centres of excellence;
- The creation of partnerships between all heritage and enterprise agencies.

In advancing this agenda, the Scottish Executive stated its intention to work with 'key partners' to (Scottish Executive, 2003a: 1)

“identify existing and planned research to articulate the enriching role heritage plays in the lives of Scottish people, the value they place on it, and to find

reliable measures for the most significant cultural, economic and social impacts of museums.”

In emphasising the partnership ethos, it was noted that museums and galleries have a wider role to play in various policy agendas, such as education, social justice and social inclusion, economic policy and links between museums and the tourism sector. In this regard, one particular element of the action plan for museums is worthy of further examination - namely - the proposed role of regional development networks. The establishment of a regional development framework was viewed by the Scottish Executive as essential to the formation of critical social and economic partnerships and was geared toward the development of the cultural heritage sector through.

“active partnerships: across local authority boundaries; between local authority and independent museums; enabling a new level of productive interaction with the Nationals and providing opportunities for museums to link into, and be part of, other initiatives within developing regional partnerships. In particular:

- A network of regional museum development officers with some strategic funding will be created. These officers will work across local authority boundaries, at an appropriately senior level to ensure effectiveness and influence, developing capacity and skills through regional public / voluntary / private sector partnerships.
- They will take on a general role of developing the local presence of museums – as educational and cultural facilities and as visitor attractions.
- They will help local museums to plug into the processes of community planning. They will be points for the development of funding proposals and education.
- Through their connections to each other and to central support from the Scottish Museums Council and the Nationals they will promote benchmarks for quality and ensure access to relevant expertise.
- In developing the capacity of regional ‘clusters’ they will enable the improved interface between the Nationals and non-nationals.”

*(Scottish Executive, 2003a: 8)*

The value of these regional networks had long been recognised by the museums and galleries community. For example, the Scottish Museums Council had been advocating the establishment of such arrangements for local museums for some years and had, in 1998, stated that support for museums should be focused on regional groupings which should be designed,

“to cross local authority boundaries, creating opportunities for formal and informal benchmarking . . . There should also be support for specialist networks,



including staff of NMS and NGS whose expertise should be viewed as a national resource and funded accordingly.”

*(Scottish Museums Council, 1998: 7)*

The Scottish Executive proposed financial support for this framework in the form of a ‘Regional Development Challenge Fund’, formally launched on 22 December 2003. As announced, the fund was aimed at encouraging,

“the development of partnerships at regional level, cross local authorities, between museums of all types and other agencies . . . (It) will facilitate the development of ‘regional clusters’ and infrastructure which will . . . encourage the building of cross-sector partnership working in areas of learning, tourism, community planning and workforce development.”

*(Scottish Executive, 2003b)*

As established, the Fund was made available from April 2004 and is administered on the Scottish Executive’s behalf by the Scottish Museums Council. In providing this support, the Executive envisaged the creation of around six to ten partnerships across Scotland which will be expected to include, as lead partners, either an independent or local authority museum. As envisaged, these networks would be able to use funds in order to promote the development of regional cultural tourism, regional partnerships between museums and non-museums organisations, cross-regional initiatives and the enhancement of the educational capabilities of museums. The importance accorded to the ‘partnership ethos’ is clear from a reading of the four main themes identified as comprising the strategic focus of the fund,

- “Learning – development of partnerships between museums and the formal and informal learning sector, resulting in improved resources and services for learning through museums.
- Access – development of partnerships between museums and other agencies or community planning partnerships, which increase access to museums for excluded groups.
- Tourism – development of partnerships between museums and other agencies to promote regional tourism initiatives.
- Workforce development – regional initiatives, aimed at developing the museums’ workforce, paid and volunteer, for example through training and skills development.”

*(Scottish Museums Council, 2003: 2)*

### **Museums, Partnership and the Future of Cultural Heritage Policy in Scotland**



Toward the end of 2003, the Scottish Executive commented that significant progress had been made in relation to cultural policy development, and insisted that a 'strong and vibrant cultural identity for Scotland' was being promoted by its strategy (Scottish Executive, 2003c: 1). Around the same time the First Minister (Jack McConnell MSP) used his St Andrew's day speech to present his vision of a new direction for cultural policy in Scotland. With a theme of 'cultural rights', the First Minister stated that (Scottish Executive, 2003d: 1),

"Culture cuts across every aspect of government . . . each member of the Scottish cabinet will use the power of cultural activity to help them in their work – culture will not be an add on, it will be at the core of everything we do . . . I want to see imaginative and new proposals coming forward from all ministers . . . The planning system can be a powerful tool to encourage creativity in our open spaces and the built environment. Our health team will look at the range of ways the arts have been used around the world as therapy and see how we might apply them here in Scotland. One of the biggest barriers to people attending cultural events is transport – changing that is a challenge for the transport team as much as it is for the cultural sector . . . Scotland's local authorities have long recognised many of the benefits of cultural investment, but we will ask them to examine how they can take that even further."

In 2004, the First Minister announced the launch of a further review of cultural policy through the establishment of a Cultural Commission, headed by James Boyle, former chairman of the Scottish Arts Council, and comprising eight other members<sup>1</sup>. As established, the remit of the Commission covered the full canvas of cultural policy, including museums, galleries and heritage. The full remit of the Commission is summarised in Table III. Commencing its work in June 2004, the Commission produced an interim report in October 2004 (Boyle, 2004), with a final report due in June 2005.

In regard to the relationship between museums, the review of cultural policy and partnership, there is a clear vision among the museum sector that partnership will continue to play an increasingly important role. For example, responding to the Cultural Commission's Interim Report, the Scottish Museums Council advocates,

"a dynamic structure (for the museums sector) that will see the national and non-national museums working together in an innovative partnership. This vision is underpinned by a desire to see museums and galleries play an increasingly important role in Scotland's cultural life and for the sector to become an international model of best practice."

*(Scottish Museums Council, 2004b: 1)*

The Scottish Museums Council proposes the establishment of a Scottish Museums Partnership, supported by a museum strategy agency to create a structured approach to the development of the museums sector that,

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**Table III: The Remit of Scotland's Cultural Commission**

Area	Remit
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Redefine the institutional infrastructure and governance of the Scottish cultural sector to enable it to deliver the entitlements that spring from rights</li> </ul>
Cultural Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define a set of cultural rights that will have application across Scotland</li> <li>• Consider the issue of entitlements and how these might be delivered</li> </ul>
Wider Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide guidance and advice on initiatives which affect the wider objectives of Scottish government</li> <li>• Provide specific guidance on how cultural bodies should relate to other Scottish Executive policy areas. in particular education, enterprise, sport, tourism, major events</li> <li>• Provide specific guidance on the responsibilities of other public sector agencies and local authorities</li> <li>• Comment on guidance for the private and voluntary sectors in this regard</li> <li>• Assess the merits, and potential, of cultural planning in this regard</li> </ul>
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the current institutional infrastructure in terms of being fit for purpose, impact on sector, cost effectiveness and best value, relationships with other institutions, relationships between sectors (i.e. public, private, voluntary)</li> <li>• Consider the designation 'National' and how it might be more appropriately determined</li> <li>• Give special consideration to the national companies and how their potential might be realised more effectively</li> <li>• Comment on the role and potential of the cultural sector's international presence</li> <li>• Consider the role of new and emerging technologies and the IT infrastructure on the sector and the potential for engagement</li> <li>• Assess the need for, and nature of, a cultural 'think tank'</li> <li>• Assess the adequacy of the current built infrastructure of the cultural sector</li> <li>• Suggest more effective alternatives for the institutional infrastructure in light of the above</li> </ul>

Source: Scottish Executive (2004: 1-4)

“would be capable of delivering a measurably enhance museums service across Scotland in as little as five years’ time. The Partnership would provide the means by which Scotland could be placed at the forefront of museum organisation and deliver internationally, by working as a sustainable network that shares collections, resources and expertise.”

*(Scottish Museums Council, 2004: 1)*

Indeed, in its submission to the first phase of consultation on the Cultural Commission, the Scottish Museums and Galleries Working Group emphasise the important role envisaged for the widespread use of partnership in the development of the sector,

“Like the wider cultural sector, museums are no strangers to partnership. At their best, partnerships share best practice, develop skills and enable win-win collaborations. Most deliver at least some of their services through a variety of partnerships, both within the museums community and cross-domain. These range from partnerships between non-national museums and NGS and NMS for loans, research, fieldwork and conservation; international collaborations involving university museums and NGS and NMS; partnerships with libraries and archives for exhibitions and learning resources; projects with regional Social Inclusion Partnerships for delivery of community based learning programmes; partnerships with agencies such as Scottish Arts Council for arts based projects; relationships with the private sector for sponsorship and other support.”

*(Scottish Museums and Galleries Working Group, 2004: 5-6)<sup>2</sup>*

For the Working Group, the critical issue now facing the future of the museums sector is the need to develop a broad strategic policy framework within which partnerships, and the proposed Scottish Museums Partnership in particular, will have a central role to play (see Scottish Museums and Galleries Working Group, 2004: 8-10).

## **Conclusions**

The evolution of public policy toward museums and galleries in Scotland clearly demonstrates the increasing prominence accorded to the role of partnership activity. Through the development of Scotland’s national cultural strategies and the response of the museums sector to these developments, partnership arrangements are increasingly viewed as a positive way forward in the drive for a more efficient and effective museums and galleries policy agenda. Although the use of partnership as a driving force in public policy has, to date, been more prevalent across other public policy areas (such as health and education) it seems clear that as the Cultural Commission continues its work in Scotland, the cultural heritage sector too will increasingly move forward in the coming

years within the organisational context of more partnership and network-oriented working.

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<sup>1</sup> The members of the Cultural Commission are: James Boyle (Head), former chairman of the Scottish Arts Council; Craig Armstrong, composer; Ian Ritchie, a Director of the Edinburgh International Film Festival; Lucy Mason, Chief Executive of Dance Base; Shonaig Macpherson, President of Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise; Gordon Jeyes, Director of Children's Services at Stirling Council; George Black, Chief Executive of Glasgow City Council; Brian Lang, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of St Andrews University; and, Colin Marr, Director of Eden Court Theatre (Miller & Duncan, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> The Scottish Museums and Galleries Working Group comprises the NMS, NGS, Association of Independent Museums, Group for Scottish Local Authority Museums, University Museums in Scotland, Glasgow Museums and the Scottish Museums Council.

