

Evaluation of the Recognition Scheme and Fund

Summary Report
May 2014



Introduction

In October 2013, Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS) commissioned DC Research to carry out an Evaluation of the Recognition Scheme and Fund. The overarching aim was to carry out an *"evaluation of the impact of the Recognition Scheme and the Recognition Fund on the museums and galleries sector in Scotland"*.

More specifically, the evaluation was to:

- **Assess the extent to which the aims and objectives** of the Recognition Scheme, in the context of the National Strategy for Scotland's museums and galleries, **are being met**.
- Include a **critical evaluation of management, operation, impact and value for money** to inform future development.
- Identify **clear recommendations** on how to enhance both the Scheme and its Funding.

The approach and method adopted for the evaluation included direct engagement with holders of 39 of the current Recognised Collections¹ - carrying out visits to all of the Recognised Collections, spending time on-site consulting with representatives of each of the 39 Collections. In addition the method included face-to-face consultations with **MGS staff and senior management, current and previous members of the Recognition Committee, external advisers, and other key Recognition stakeholders and partners**. The approach also included a survey of the wider museum sector in Scotland, and a range of desk-based research and analysis tasks.

Recognition Scheme and Fund

The **Recognition Scheme** formally recognises and invests in collections of national significance in non-national museums in Scotland. A Recognised Collection of National Significance is one that is of such importance and quality that it merits formal recognition and support by national government. Through a formal Recognition Process, the Scheme identifies and awards special status to Recognised Collections of National Significance held in non-national museums and galleries.

The Recognition Scheme has seven objectives:

- i. To raise awareness of the Recognised Collections locally, nationally and internationally
- ii. To raise standards of collections management and care
- iii. To raise standards of public service delivery in those organisations that hold collections recognised through the scheme
- iv. To safeguard continuing levels of investment in the Recognised Collections from existing funding sources, including local authorities and universities

¹ Face-to-face visits took place with the 39 existing Recognised Collections as at the start of the evaluation. Coverage of the two new Recognised Collections (November 2013) took place via telephone discussions with a representative from each of these collections.

- v. To increase public access to the Recognised Collections as sources of creativity, learning and enjoyment
- vi. To increase the social and economic impact of the Recognised Collections
- vii. To encourage the museums and galleries which hold Recognised Collections to make an increased contribution to the Scottish museums sector through collaboration and partnership working.

To date a total of **41 collections** have been recognised, the first tranche (Round 1) in June 2007 and the most recent tranche (Round 8) in November 2013. The **Recognised Collections represent a diverse mix of collection types, geographies, organisation types, sizes of collections, and number of museums hosting the collections.**

Holders of the Recognised Collections are eligible to apply for funding from a designated **Recognition Fund**. Through the Fund, MGS (on behalf of the Scottish Government) aim to celebrate, promote and invest in the Recognised Collections by encouraging and supporting strategic projects which pursue excellence in line with the Scheme objectives and the National Strategy - *“Going Further: The National Strategy for Scotland’s Museums and Galleries”*. The award of Recognition Funding for the Recognised Collections is predicated on the seven Recognition Fund objectives.

In the last three years (2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14) there has been **an underspend on the Recognition Fund**. Of particular note, in both 2012-13 and 2013-14 this under-subscription has been in excess of £250,000, leading to 45% and 47% of the Recognition Fund not being awarded.

Consultations with the Recognised Collections strongly indicates that **organisational capacity to bid for, and capacity to deliver (within the timescales) Recognition Funded projects** are the main reasons for both an under-subscription to the Recognition Fund and also a slow draw-down for some projects.

There is **general acceptance about the rationale that underpins the seven Recognition Objectives**, however there is an emerging consensus from across all types of Recognition stakeholders that there is now a **good opportunity to restate and/or rationalise some of the Objectives to help refocus the key aims of Recognition** as well as provide greater clarity about the Objectives of Recognition (especially around the uses of Recognition Funding).

The Benefits and Impacts of being Recognised

There is **overwhelming support and appreciation of Recognition** by the Recognised Collections and it is **regarded as a very good scheme**:

- Recognition provides **profile, prestige and validation** to the Recognised Collections. **All 32 of the Recognised Collection holders consulted noted that this was important.**
- **Profile and reputation within the sector and with host institutions** are identified as one of the most important benefits by the Collections.

- A key aspect of this is the **advocacy tool** that being Recognised can provide to the Collections, where it can *“help establish identity of the [collection/museum]”*.
- **Recognition was particularly helpful in raising the profile of museums residing in larger ‘host’ organisations.**
- It is important to the Collections that the **funding (from the Recognition Fund) supports the aspects of museum work that other funders are not interested in.**
- Many collections **admit that even in the absence of funding** (i.e. if there was no Recognition Fund), **they would still have sought Recognition for their collection due to the other benefits that it provides.**
- Going through the application process has **enhanced the holder’s own knowledge about, and their approach to the management of, the Recognised Collection.**

Additionality of Recognition Fund

Recognition Funding has allowed the Collections to carry out a range of projects and activities – **‘vital’ and ‘critical’ activities that the Collections (especially related to collections care and management) do not think they would have been able to do at all without Recognition Funding.**

For the majority of the Collections, the **additionality of Recognition Funding is high.** Many of the Collections fall into the category where they **would not have been able to carry out the projects or activities at all without Recognition Funding**, and as such, the collections state that they *“cannot underplay the importance of the Recognition Fund and the Scheme”*.

The **Recognition Fund has supported a range of types of project:** Access for Audiences; Conservation and Preservation of the Collection; Display of Collection; Documentation; Improving and Redeveloping Space in the Museum; Organisational Development and Sustainability; and Storage Improvements.

26% of awards (by value) are cross-cutting, 23% fall within the Access for Audiences category, 12% are Documentation projects, and an additional 12% are Storage Improvement projects, with 11% relating to Improving and Redeveloping Space in the Museum.

The scale of cross-cutting projects shows the multi-faceted nature of many of the Recognition Funded activities, showing that **many projects contribute to multiple Recognition Objectives rather than simply contributing to a single Objective.** This multi-faceted nature of many of the projects should be positively recognised, as it shows that both the Collections and MGS are aware of the inter-connectivity between the Recognition Objectives, and the cross-cutting contributions that Recognition Funded projects make to these Objectives.

A quantitative assessment of the additional economic impact of the Recognition Fund was carried out drawing on the qualitative evidence about additionality from the Recognised Collections, alongside information from MGS about the scale of economic activity achieved through Recognition Fund projects.

The analysis included assessing the direct, indirect (i.e. supplier linkage effects) and induced (i.e. income multiplier effects) economic impacts of the Recognition Fund on the Scottish economy. The assessment involved applying the approach as set out in the recognised guidance, specifically HM Treasury 'Green Book' and Scottish Enterprise Guidance.

The economic impact assessment focused on the Recognition Fund expenditure between 2007-8 and 2012-13, covering 113 awards at a total value of £4.6 million. These awards were used to support a wide variety of projects, and the analysis sought to separate out the employment impacts from the procurement expenditure impacts.

In terms of the **direct employment impacts of Recognition Funded projects**, between 2007-8 and 2012-13, a total of **46 (fixed term) posts were supported** by Recognition Fund awards. In total these 46 posts covered 466 months of employment, which can be expressed as the **Recognition Fund having directly supported the equivalent of 38.8 twelve-month posts between 2007-8 and 2012-13**. The results of the additionality analysis show that the **indirect and induced employment impacts of the 38.8 direct twelve-month posts is an additional 27.5 twelve-month posts between 2007-8 and 2012-13**.

The results of the additionality analysis of the £3.8 million expenditure on purchases of goods and services (above and beyond the employment impacts) show that the **indirect and induced expenditure impacts of this £3.8 million expenditure is an additional £1.3 million expenditure between 2007-8 and 2012-13**.

Impacts & Achievements on the Recognition Objectives

In terms of impacts and achievements, the evaluation has found that **it is the collections themselves that are at the core of Recognition** - and the **development, management, conservation, storage, and care** of the Recognised Collections **is where the focus of much of the funded activity and impact has been** so far.

In addition, **increasing access to the Collections** - through **improvements in collections storage** (which have provided increased access to the collections), as well as **exhibitions, cataloguing, publications, and digitisation** (which has enhanced online access) - has also been a **key area of activity and impact**.

There has been **clear success in terms of Recognition Objective 1** (raising awareness) both within the museums sector, and also with many key stakeholders, partners and funders for all of the Recognised Collection holders. This finding is supported by evidence from the survey of the non-Recognised Collections which showed that almost 60% of respondents described themselves as generally aware or very aware of Recognition.

Objective 2 (raising standards of collections management and care) is the area where there has been the **greatest impact across all of the Recognised Collections**. There have been clear achievements and impacts here for all the Collections, and the majority of these achievements are attributed to the use of Recognition Funding to carry out activities and projects around this Objective.

Overall there are **mixed views** from the Recognised Collections **about the role and impact of Recognition for Objective 3** (raising standards of public service delivery). Much of this is **influenced by the lack of clarity about what is meant by public**

service delivery in the context of this Objective which has led to different interpretations and understandings emerging across the Recognised Collections.

In its broadest sense, public service delivery could encapsulate everything about Recognition (i.e. it could include the activities around many, if not all, of the other Objectives), and as such **all aspects of Recognition can be regarded as helping to contribute to raising standards of public service delivery.**

However, Collections do not typically make a strong, explicit connection between Recognition and any raising of the standards of public service delivery, with **any changes in public service delivery being attributed to a wide variety of factors – and whilst this can include Recognition, Recognition is not identified as a major contributor.**

Where it is recognised that there has been a **raising of the standards of public service delivery** due to Recognition Funded projects, these **typically have resulted from projects that are directed at other Recognition Objectives** (in particular, Objective 2 and Objective 5), and as a result of these there has been a raising of public service delivery standards as an indirect impact.

Achievements in terms of safeguarding the levels of investment in the Recognised Collections (**Objective 4**) has been a **clear success for more than 40% of the Recognised Collection holders.** In addition, Recognised Collection holders also feel that they have had clear success in terms of leveraging in new, additional resources and suggest that the wording could be adjusted to reflect both aspects of investment for the Recognised Collections.

Objective 5 (increasing public access) is the other area, alongside Objective 2, where there has been **substantial impact across many of the Collections.** For almost half of the Recognised Collection holders (47%) **this is the Objective where they feel they have achieved the greatest impact**, with the majority of the remaining Recognised Collection holders mentioning Objectives 2 and 5 as being equally important in this regard.

Notwithstanding the issues for **Objective 6** (increasing social and economic impact) about lack of clarity of definition etc., **there are examples of both economic and social impact that can be attributed to Recognition**, and more specifically to impacts resulting from Recognition Funded projects.

Aside from the economic impacts highlighted above, the very low awareness of Recognition amongst the general public means that **Collections find it difficult to evidence or attribute any direct visitor-driven economic impact as a result of Recognition.**

In terms of social impact, many of the Collections do appreciate that social impact can be increased, mainly through the projects delivering against Recognition Objective 5 as well as those projects captured under the Access for Audiences categories (depending on the specific dimensions of social impact being considered). **Any evidence of social impact is therefore typically expressed by the Collections as an indirect impact** of a project focusing on other Recognition Objectives.

For **Objective 7** (increased contribution to the Scottish museums sector through collaboration and partnership working) many Recognised Collections report on the **wide range of partnership working and collaboration that already happens** and that they

have been involved in for some time, through which they make a contribution to the wider Scottish museum sector. Across many Collections, the general consensus is that this partnership and collaborative activity was already taking place and **Collections find it difficult to identify many examples where Recognition has added to what is already going on.**

Recognition Scheme and Fund Processes

The application process for the Recognition Scheme is widely acknowledged as a rigorous and detailed process, by Recognised Collections as well as the current and past members of the Recognition Committee and MGS staff involved in Recognition. A number of the Recognised Collections found the application process for Recognition provided a range of **'unintended positive outcomes'**, especially in relation to enhancing and developing their own understanding of their collection.

There is a very **high level of appreciation about the availability and importance of the Recognition Fund for the Recognised Collections.** In particular, that the Fund can be used to focus on the care, management and preservation of the collection is regarded by Recognised Collections as a critical asset.

There is, not surprisingly, **a very strong consensus to maintain the 100% funding principle that underpins Recognition Funding.** Many collections relate this back to the ability to use Recognition Funding for 'collections focused' projects, and the lack of other external funds that support such activities would, for some, make it difficult to provide match funding.

There is **consensus from applicants that the application processes for the Recognition Fund work well.** In particular, both the initial application process and the end of project reporting are commonly accepted to be fairly (or very) light touch compared to other schemes.

It is well recognised by all stakeholders that **changes could be made to Recognition Fund processes to improve and more effectively capture the impacts of the Recognition Fund in a regular and systematic way.**

Management and Governance

The **Recognition Committee** has responsibility for the decisions on the recognition of collections (the Recognition **Scheme**), whilst the responsibility for the decisions on the funding of the Recognised Collections are made by the **MGS Board** (the Recognition **Fund**). Given this split of responsibilities, there is thought to be **potential for greater/improved communication and information sharing with the Committee about the Recognition Fund applications and awards.** Currently, there does not seem to be any regular, systematised process or procedure for this to take place.

Many Recognition stakeholders would appreciate additional or enhanced clarity about their roles and responsibilities within Recognition – and one route to achieving this would be for a **document to be developed that clearly and succinctly set out the roles and responsibilities of each of the Recognition stakeholders** - i.e. the Recognition Committee, the Recognised Collections, MGS, Scottish Government, and other partners and stakeholders.

In terms of the day-to-day management of the Scheme and Fund **MGS are seen as being approachable** and the Recognised Collections, especially local authority museums, tended to feel that **MGS understand and empathise with the difficulties facing museum services**. The flexibility that MGS is able to offer around the Recognition Fund is very well appreciated.

Partnership Working

In terms of the Recognition Scheme, there is **only one partnership Recognised Collection** – The National Burns Collection, a partnership between eight different museums. Consultations with a selection of the museums involved in this partnership indicate that the **key aspects that helped the successful development of this application** included: having a **dedicated person with the right skills** and attributes in post within the partnership; the partnership being a **pre-existing partnership**; and the **amount of background work that had already been carried out** in previous years.

Well recognised barriers to the development of Recognition Scheme partnerships included lack of capacity, the extra time commitment required, the institutional energy involved, and the additional practical issues that can face partnership working.

Barriers to Recognition Fund partnerships again include the capacity, the extra time commitment and institutional energy involved. In addition, the limit of only being able to submit one Recognition Fund application per round, perceptions that partnership takes longer but is no more likely to lead to success, the financial disincentive from adopting a partnership approach, and the need for any partner to also be a Recognised Collection.

Promotion and Marketing of Recognition

The **Recognition Scheme is currently recognised as a sector-facing, and within that a curatorial/collections-focused, scheme**. Whilst this has been a key factor in helping to achieve some of the impacts it **does mean that careful consideration would need to be given to any attempts and efforts to promote and market the Recognition Scheme to the general public**.

One of the **key questions** that needs to be addressed is **whether or not it would be appropriate and effective to dedicate time and resources to promoting and marketing the Scheme to the public at all** – the answer to which will be found in identifying what benefits would accrue by doing so, and understanding which aims and objectives of Recognition would be achieved as a result. It will be important that this issue is fully considered.

Emerging thinking about this from MGS has highlighted that the **key element that has the potential to have resonance with the public is that the Recognised Collections are of national significance** as opposed to the sector-facing aspects and objectives of the Scheme. This is an essential starting point for consideration of any future activity and effort around the promotion and marketing of Recognition by either MGS or by the Recognised Collection holders.

Recommendations

The evaluation has identified a number of areas where the Scheme and/or Fund could be enhanced and a number of recommendations for consideration have been identified:

- It is recommended that a **review of the current Recognition Objectives** is carried out. This will help to ensure that the rationale for each Objective is clearly set out and understood by all Recognition Stakeholders. The review could seek to rationalise the number of Objectives, and should ensure that each Objective is SMART (i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, realistic/relevant and time-based).
- It is **recommended that the findings of this evaluation are given due consideration in the forthcoming review process for Recognition.**
- It is **recommended that a 'roles and responsibilities' document setting out the role and responsibilities of each of the Recognition Stakeholders is developed.**
- **It will be important to address the under-subscription of the Recognition Fund.**
- For the time being (i.e. until the under-subscription of the Recognition Fund has been addressed) it is **recommended that the current, core Recognition Fund grant to support collections-specific activities is maintained** in its current form.
- Alongside this, it will be **appropriate to retain the 100% funding for the time being** (again, until the current under-subscription has been addressed).
- It will be important to **ensure that the 24 month timescale for Recognition Funded projects is understood by all of the Recognised Collections.**
- **Ensuring that the timescales for applying for Recognition Funding are communicated as early as possible to the Recognised Collections** will help forward planning by Collections, and should help to address the under-subscription.
- It is **recommended that processes and systems are put in place to more effectively capture the impact from Recognition Funded projects.**
- Following the recommended review of the Objectives, it is **recommended that the end of project reporting for Recognition Fund projects should be revised to ensure that a more robust approach to capturing impact is developed and implemented, with** such an approach ensuring that it captures (and where possible quantifies) impact against each Objective.
- **Impact findings, end of project evaluation findings, and lessons learnt, should be shared and communicated with all key Recognition Stakeholders** - within the specific Recognition Collection holder organisation itself, with MGS staff, the Recognition Committee, MGS Board, other Recognised Collections, Scottish Government, and other partners and stakeholders as appropriate.
- **The more robust approach of capturing impact should be used to enable good practice case studies to be developed and widely promoted.**

- **It will be important to ensure that systematic communication and information sharing, both to and from the Recognition Committee, about the Recognition Fund applications and awards takes place.**
- **Finally, it is recommended that all of the key issues and questions about promotion, marketing, and awareness of Recognition raised in this report are given due consideration** by the relevant Recognition stakeholders (MGS, the Recognised Collections, the Recognition Committee, and other partners such as VisitScotland) **and that a route forward is developed and agreed.**

