

Empire, Slavery & Scotland's Museums
Steering Group Meeting Agenda

Tuesday 30 November 2021, 10am-12noon

Chair: Sir Geoff Palmer

Steering Group members

Abeer Eladany (University of Aberdeen)

Parveen Ishaq (Edinburgh and Lothians Regional Equalities Council)

Steph Scholten (The Hunterian, ICOM Ethics Committee, MGS Board Member)

MGS/Project Staff

Sheila Asante (Museums Galleries Scotland)

Lucy Casot (Museums Galleries Scotland)

Miles Greenwood (Glasgow Life)

Devon McHugh (Museums Galleries Scotland)

Gillian Shaw (Museums Galleries Scotland)

Apologies

Lewis Hou (Science Ceilidh and The Anti-Racist Educator)

Churnjeet Mahn (Strathclyde University)

Elena Trimarchi (David Livingstone Centre)

Lisa Williams (Edinburgh Caribbean Association)

Zandra Yeaman (The Hunterian)

Jatin Haria (Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights)

Duncan Dornan (Glasgow Life)

Silence Chihuri (Fair Justice System for Scotland Group)

1.	Introduction and apologies
	<p>GP welcomed everyone noting that many of the Steering Group members had been unable to attend the meeting but that as no decisions were to be made during it, it did not need to be quorate.</p> <p>GP noted apologies as above.</p>
2.	Formal Agreement of Minutes of previous meeting and Matters Arising
	<p>Steering Group members asked for clarification on specific points raised at the last meeting:</p> <p>(2.1) DM reported that there had been a meeting with UMIS and noted that responses were in the main consistent across different sectors – demographic and functional.</p> <p>(5.8) SA reported that translations of surveys were offered but had not been requested by anybody.</p> <p>SA agreed to circulate the presentations of the surveys to the wider Steering Group</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.</p>
3.	Public Survey
	<p>SA summarised the Diffley Public Consultation Interim Report as submitted to the Steering Group. Steering Group members asked about demographics and the balance of people of colour amongst all survey respondents. This was particularly with regard to the 5% of respondents who did not feel welcome in museums.</p> <p>The Steering Group suggested that people who did not feel comfortable visiting a museum might not be inclined to fill in the survey and that this could account for the low percentage of respondents who said they did not feel comfortable. SA explained that this was not a concern as the ScotPulse panel were a finite group who were commissioned to always complete the surveys they were sent.</p>

	<p>SA reassured the Steering Group that Diffley was mindful of the danger of the survey findings being 'hijacked' by responses from political groups, and that their analysis would take account of this.</p> <p>Overall it was noted that the volume of responses was very helpful and mainly supportive and that the responses from YoungScot were particularly encouraging. The Steering Group was heartened to note widespread support for its work and looked forward to receiving more in-depth analysis.</p> <p>The Steering Group asked that Diffley's further analysis interrogated why 5% of ScotPulse respondents did not think everyone had the right to access culture and who the 5% were who did not feel welcome in museums.</p> <p>SA agreed to ask Diffley to ensure the full report pulled out data on people of colour amongst all survey respondents, and on the 5% of respondents who did not feel welcome visiting a museum in Scotland.</p> <p>Given the widespread public support for ESSM, Steering Group members questioned why more was not already being done to address the legacies of empire, slavery and colonialism. There was discussion about the perceived insecurity within the museum sector workforce and it was suggested that this could be addressed through upskilling and workforce diversification. It was agreed that the findings of the public survey could be persuasive in encouraging museums to understand their responsibilities to the public to educate people on the legacies of empire, colonialism and slavery.</p>
4.	Museums Sector Focus Groups
	<p>DM summarised the interim findings from the workforce focus groups led by MGS and reported that an in-depth analysis would be undertaken which would draw out detailed qualitative findings.</p> <p>DM and SA were impressed by the interest the focus groups generated. DM noted that the number of participants was limited to 250 purely because of timescales and availability. It was noted that in some case the focus groups had provided a first opportunity to discuss</p>

the legacies of empire, slavery and colonialism with colleagues and peers.

A headline finding demonstrated that the sector workforce was very keen to work with a decolonised curriculum and that participants recognised that their visitors were not necessarily representative of the population as a whole and that this was something to be addressed.

DM reported that throughout the focus groups, participants stressed the need for strong internal organisational direction and clarity at a national level. They sought a strong lead from MGS and other development bodies around expectations. DM noted that the focus groups went beyond museums staff – she and SA spoke to colleagues in related sectors: HES staff; archival colleagues; and, representatives from tangential arts and arts education fields.

Questions and Comments

The Steering Group discussed the importance of education on ESSM.

There was discussion around doing work differently as opposed to doing different/additional work – embedding ESSM into day-to-day practice as a core activity. It was agreed that in addition to organisational direction, personal responsibility was important.

The Steering Group talked about the tendency to talk in 'silos' (eg about specific departments being responsible for specific issues) and this can inhibit personal and organisational responsibility.

SA reminded the Steering Group that MGS was holding a remunerated evening session for front of house staff.

The Steering Group recognised how time-consuming collections research is and emphasised the need to ensure this was taken into account in project plans and funding.

There was discussion about the need to ensure the ESSM project did not become a one-off issue and became embedded within ongoing museum practice.

	<p>Steering Group members asked for DM's perspective on responses to the <i>museums are racist</i> statement. DM explained that the statement was a direct quote from a subgroup. She reported that the responses had varied widely and that the statement had generated lots of debate and comment. There was discussion around what the responses which were neutral on the question could indicate.</p> <p>There was discussion around the complexities of recompensing participants for their time and SA and DM offered to share their recent experience of this working on the focus groups.</p> <p>GP thanked Steering Group members for their comments and summarised the two main points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neutrality – need to check on rationale for this. - Barriers – need to identify what these are and address them
5.	<p>Priority Community Focus Groups</p>
	<p>SA summarised the interim report from IYS. The main themes were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concern around tokenism; - Education around colonialism needs to be mainstreamed and embedded within the curriculum; - Should be BPoc led; - Alienation. <p>It was noted that the Museum Proposal elicited both positive and negative responses.</p> <p><u>Questions and Comments</u></p> <p>Some Steering Group members were surprised as to the level of scepticism especially in comparison to the public survey and focus group responses. Steering Group members suggested that this scepticism could indicate that a museum as proposed by the Scottish Government would not address the issues. It was noted that concern around tokenism could suggest scepticism that the establishment of a museum would prevent a real and holistic change taking place throughout the sector.</p> <p>It was noted that some of the concerns raised could be based on previous experience – for example in some cases museums can be</p>

	thought to align with the government too closely, examples include the opening of Luxor Temple to Karnak Way.
6.	Report Writing Planning
	SA summarised the timeline and DM noted that both she and SA recognised how demanding this was.
7.	General Timeline Update
	SA ran through a reminder of the consultation strands and key dates which will be circulated to the group.
8.	ESSM Communications
	<p>SA pointed to the MA decolonisation guidance as a useful resource for the sector: https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/decolonising-museums/supporting-decolonisation-in-museums/</p> <p>The Steering Group recognised the need for an online resource/hub and noted that MGS has started this with the ESSM resources on the website.</p> <p>SA gave an update on recent contacts that MGS had developed with the Scottish Government Education Department and Steering Group members noted the importance of these in establishing the ESSM work in the curriculum. Steering Group members noted that the government needed to be aware of the ongoing commitment required to ensuring that fears around tokenism (expressed by the priority communities) were not substantiated.</p>
9.	AOB and date of next meeting
	<p>The value of the public sector survey was noted and Steering Group members present were impressed by the evidence gathered, noting that further analysis was ongoing including demographic responses.</p> <p>Date of next meeting: Tuesday 25th January, 10.00am to 12.00pm</p>
10.	End of meeting



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