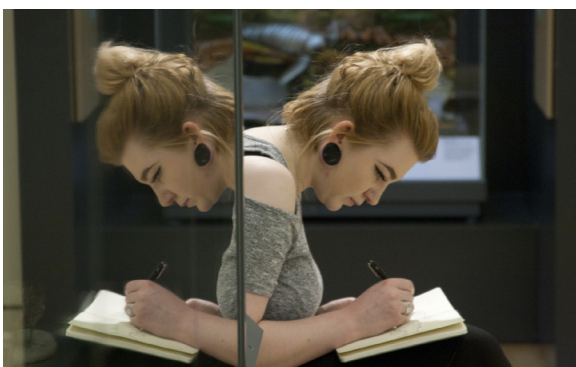
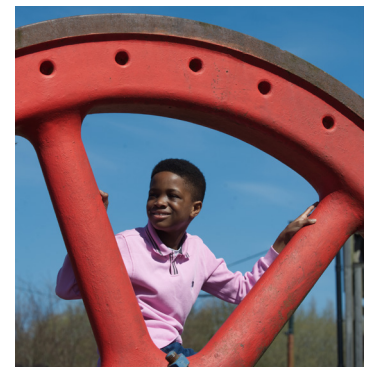
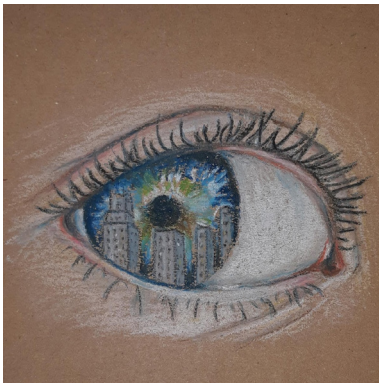


# MUSEUMS AND EDUCATION:

HOW SCOTLAND'S MUSEUMS INSPIRE, EDUCATE AND IMPROVE ATTAINMENT





# Foreword

**Ray Macfarlane**  
**Chair, Museums Galleries Scotland**

Education is central to the work museums do. Through formal engagement with schools and young people, and more informally through family visits, Scotland's museums and galleries play a vital role as stimulating, playful and inspirational places to learn.

Museum practitioners understand implicitly the power of this work. But it is also important that we can demonstrate the value and impact in an evidence-based way. Museums Galleries Scotland commissioned a literature review to establish the extent of peer-reviewed academic research on the social impact of museums. The evidence we found was compelling.

Museums can have a transformative impact on education. Engagement with museums can improve attainment and allow teachers to find more creative ways of engaging with curriculum subjects. **Crucially, the benefits are most significant for children from disadvantaged areas.** Museums can therefore contribute not only to improving education for all but to tackling the attainment gap.

This report summarises the evidence base of museum impact and shines a spotlight on some of the important work done by museums across the country.

The Scottish Government's Culture Strategy rightly commits to embedding culture across government portfolios. **Museums are a rich educational resource with proven positive outcomes.** While important as cultural institutions in their own right, it is increasingly important that we empower and resource museums to have a much wider social impact.

There is an enormous amount of work already being done within the sector that should be celebrated. We should see this as proof of impact and resolve to maximise the benefits that museums can bring to our children and young people.



**Summary of research**

**Our literature review of peer-reviewed, academic studies has found that engagement with museums can lead to a range of educational benefits.**

IMAGE 1:  
 Festival of Museums at the University of Aberdeen

IMAGE 2:  
 Handling loan boxes for schools, Highland Museum of Childhood



- » Visible improvement of student learning, from 4–16-years-old.
- » A positive impact on attainment.
- » Better understanding of curriculum subjects.
- » Improved examination grades, written and practical work.
- » **Children and young people from disadvantaged areas benefit most from visiting museums.**
- » Increased confidence and improved social and communication skills.
- » Increased levels of interest and motivation.
- » Developing critical and ethical thinking.
- » **Teachers are more confident finding creative ways to deliver the curriculum.**





## What museums can offer

In a survey for the National Museum of Scotland

**80%** of teachers believed visiting the museum had contributed to their school's work on narrowing the attainment gap.

(2019-20)

IMAGE:  
The People's Story project,  
The McManus: Dundee's  
Art Gallery & Museum

### Curriculum for Excellence

Scotland's museums hold world-class collections with dedicated and passionate staff skilled in their curation, interpretation and learning programmes. As educational resources, museums can support the Curriculum for Excellence as a resource for interdisciplinary learning and to approach subject areas in new and engaging ways.

### STEM

Museums hold substantial and diverse collections related to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. These collections offer opportunities to engage children and young people with these subjects outside of the classroom.

### The attainment gap

All young people can benefit from engaging with museums – but the evidence shows that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds benefit the most. Museums can support schools in their work tackling the attainment gap.

### Supporting teachers

Through school visits, outreach and peer-to-peer learning, museum practitioners can support teachers to deliver education and to improve their own pedagogy.

### Learning resources

Not all learning must take place on site in a museum. During lockdown museums produced a wide range of digital resources for use by teachers and learners. With support, museums can do much more.

### Object-based learning

Museum collections can support learning through the structured investigations of objects based on observation, exploration, and questioning. This approach can help nurture an understanding of history and sense of chronology; develop important scientific skills such as observing, comparing, classifying, and questioning; and can more widely be used to encourage creativity and imaginative thinking.

## Case studies

### Lockdown learning

IMAGE:  
Launch of *Vote 100: The Moving Story* at the Glasgow Women's Library

PHOTO CREDIT:  
Suzanne Heffron



Museums across Scotland provided a range of digital resources to support home learning during the Covid pandemic. This included videos, digital tours, resources for teachers and online activities.

**Glasgow Women's Library** produced *Vote 100: The Moving Story*, a multimedia toolkit exploring the history of suffrage aimed at students aged 14-16.

**The Hunterian** created a series of resources called *Learning from Objects*, including interactive resources on the Antonine Wall and a storytelling app about a Roman soldier living in Scotland.

The **V&A Dundee** created a *Schools Design Challenge* to encourage S1 and S2 pupils to use design for social change. Participants worked in teams to find solutions to challenges that directly affect them, accessed through a Design Busters phoneline.

The **National Mining Museum Scotland** produced learning resource packs linked to the Curriculum for Excellence. Key themes included STEM, social studies, literacy, arts & crafts and outdoor learning.



# Case studies

continued

IMAGE:  
Mayfield Explorers, The National Mining Museum Scotland



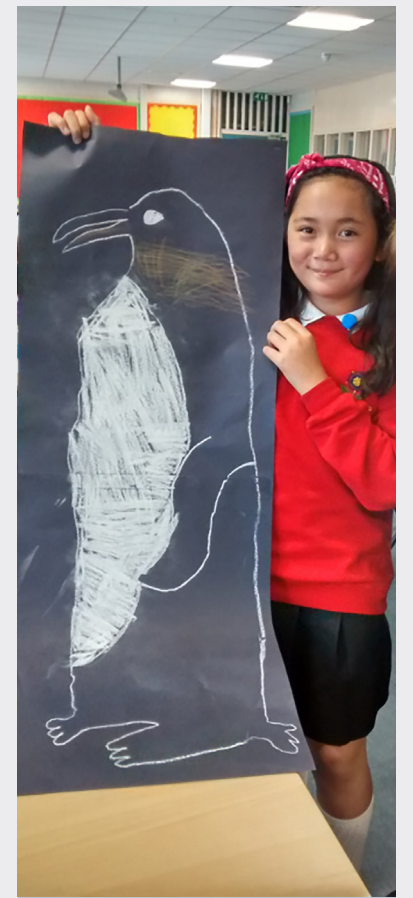
## University museums and widening access

**Capturing Lives in Scotland's Communities** ran over the school summer holidays in June and July 2020, led by the **University of Edinburgh Museums/Edinburgh College of Art** and involving the collections and expertise from **five different University Museums in Scotland**. Aimed at young people aged 11-18 from across Scotland and particularly targeted at those with Widening Participation backgrounds, the project encouraged them to explore their local communities during Covid through different mediums of art. Combining online guided sessions exploring university museums' collections and archives, elements of self-guided creative activity, mentoring and talks from professional organisations, those who completed the course would achieve an Arts Award Explore qualification.

The project aimed to engage those that had never interacted with a university or university museum before and to provide the participants with an opportunity to develop their artistic skills and knowledge. Mentoring through the project was provided on a voluntary basis by current students of the participating universities.

## Reaching young people outside formal education

The **National Mining Museum Scotland** partnered with Y2K, a local youth charity, on the **Mayfield Explorers** project. The project worked with young people who do not regularly engage with formal education and live in socially and economically deprived areas. The project was youth-led and saw the young people explore their local history through workshops, photography, a visit to an abandoned colliery and inter-generational work by interviewing ex-miners. The young people involved developed a sense of place and ownership and curated an exhibition at the museum.



## Working with young carers

The **Young Carers in Charge** exhibition at the **People's Story Museum** saw a group of carers aged 9-16 develop their own exhibition reflecting how childhood in the city had changed over time. The group worked with staff at Museums & Galleries Edinburgh to learn about the collections held by the city and how curators plan and organise an exhibition. The exhibition was designed and named by the young people, and featured both objects from the city's collections and significant items from their own lives.

## School in Residence at the RRS Discovery

The **Dundee Heritage Trust** worked with Rosebank Primary School as their first **School in Residence** at the RRS Discovery. Pupils used Discovery's narrative as their underlying theme for their studies, which included both a variety of visits to the ship as well as workshops with the Trust's Education Officer within the school. Engagement with museum collections has included using sledging flags from the collections as inspiration for their own flags to be used on the 270 mile 'Antarctic' walk undertaken throughout the year. Pupils also used Polar Medals within the collection for ideas to create their own designs via 3D printing as part of a BBC digital project.

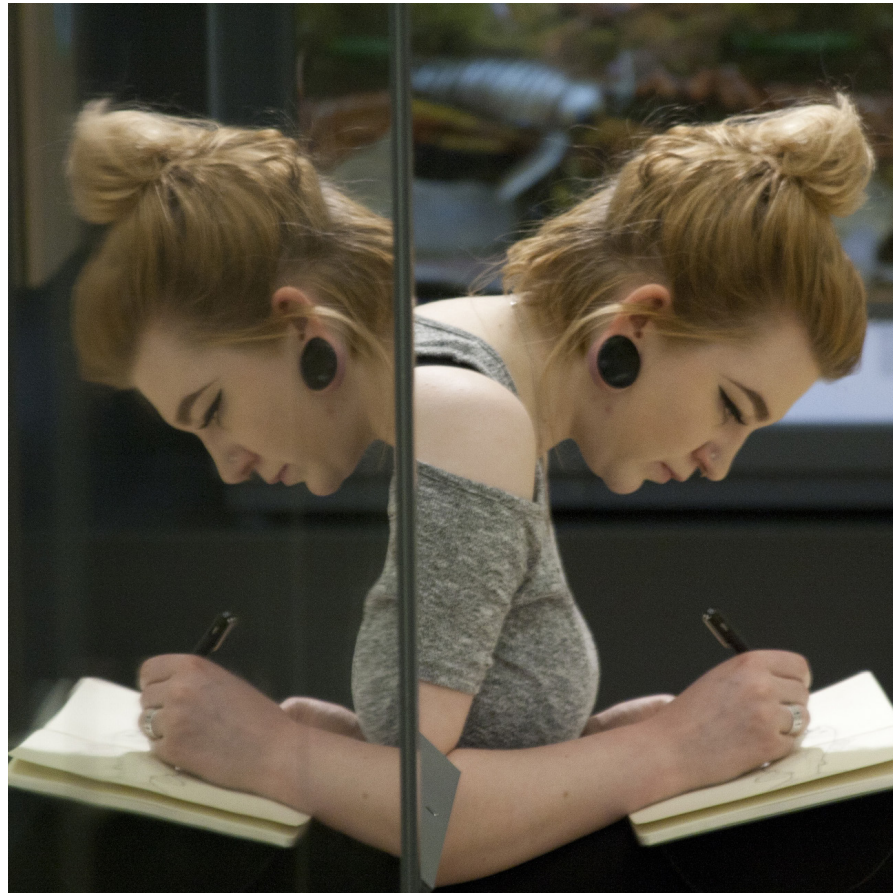
IMAGE 1:  
Schools in Residence, Dundee Heritage Trust, at the RRS Discovery  
PHOTO CREDIT:  
Graeme Hart Perthshire Picture Agency  
IMAGE 2:  
Schools in Residence, Dundee Heritage Trust



# Case studies

continued

IMAGE:  
The People's Story, McManus Youth Action Group, The McManus: Dundee's Art Gallery & Museum



## Building links between teachers and museums

**Museums Galleries Scotland** partnered with **Education Scotland** to deliver **Blether Together** sessions where museums, galleries and heritage organisations could engage directly with teachers and Community Learning and Development (CLD) practitioners. Work is ongoing to map the Curriculum against museums collections and to develop education and learning programmes to support teaching inside and outside the classroom, in museums and as outreach services.

## Additional support needs and creative writing

**People's Story** was an ambitious outreach project run by **The McManus: Dundee's Art Gallery & Museum** in collaboration with **NHS Tayside Occupational Therapy**. The project delivered a series of sessions with a hard-to-reach group of young people with a wide range of additional support needs and learning disabilities. The group met for 6 sessions and developed works of creative writing and poetry inspired by the museum collection.

The sessions were designed to identify opportunities for personal reflection, confidence building and for the group to meet and experience learning together. 100% of the group participated in the project and created either a short story or a work of poetry, or both, which was then recorded and held in the Museum's Oral History Archive.



IMAGE:  
Campbeltown Museum's Glenrea education project

## Employability in schools

In partnership with **Developing the Young Workforce, Museums Galleries Scotland** is piloting a programme of interactive workshops **targeted at schools in areas of multiple deprivation** to encourage careers in the cultural sector.

Schools will work with museum professionals in their local area to learn about cultural careers and create a temporary exhibition at the end of a school term. Children and young people will learn about cultural careers as well as developing their critical and creative skills.

Awareness of the cultural sector as a career path will be increased and learning materials will be refined and developed throughout the lifespan of the programme to further engage with schools.

## Engaging with archaeology and natural history

**Campbeltown Museum's Glenrea** education project used the museum's archaeological and natural history collections to engage with pupils of Campbeltown Grammar School. The Kilmartin & Campbeltown's museum education team, in consultation with museum curator Elaine Chesney and teacher Frank Chinn, developed activities using 17th and 19th century objects, activities designed to make the objects more accessible, enjoyable and to achieve learning outcomes for the school pupils.

The museum education team wanted to inspire new school children in Kintyre to understand the importance of the significant

archaeological and historic landscape that is their past and local natural environment. The team worked primarily with teacher Frank Chinn and all the teaching and support staff of the Special learning support unit in Campbeltown Grammar School, providing unique opportunities for these young people to work with a field archaeologist, professional landscape and wildlife photographer, archivist, a professional craftsman and a musician. Peer-to-peer support for the younger pupils attending the unit was provided by the 5th and 6th year pupils. The project also helped to tackle stigmatisation and social exclusion.



# Case studies

continued

IMAGE 1:  
Monarch of the Glen  
art and drama project,  
Culture of Perth and Kinross

Image 2:  
Handling loan boxes for schools,  
Highland Museum of Childhood



## Art and community

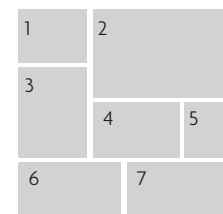
**Culture Perth & Kinross** worked with 53 pupils and Gaelic Medium Education pupils aged 5-12 in Aberfeldy on their **Monarch of the Glen** art and drama project. The project encouraged students to create original work in response to themes which emerge from 'The Monarch of the Glen' painting and to generate contemporary responses to this iconic nineteenth century image of the Highlands. The project involved a visit to the painting, facilitated by National Galleries of Scotland, and the creation of banners for Perth Museum. Pupils were encouraged to reflect on their community, how it has changed over time and how they relate to it personally.

## Loan boxes and rural schools

The **Highland Museum of Childhood** developed 3 handling loan boxes containing objects, photographs and learning resources for loan out to schools on a regular basis. The project resulted in increased engagement with schools despite challenges around travel costs and geographical access.



### Front cover images



- 1/3. Participant's art work, Capturing Lives in Scotland's Communities, University of Edinburgh Museums/Edinburgh College of Art
2. The People's Story project, The McManus: Dundee's Art Gallery & Museum
4. Elgin Museum, Credit: Graham Kelshaw
5. Summerlee Museum of Scottish Industrial Life – Credit: Rob McDougall
6. The People's Story, McManus Youth Action Group, The McManus: Dundee's Art Gallery & Museum
7. The Festival of Museums, Low Parks Museum, Hamilton

**For further information** on what museums are doing and how to support or get involved, please get in touch with Museums Galleries Scotland.

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