

THE MAYOR'S COMMISSION ON
AFRICAN AND ASIAN HERITAGE

Embedding Shared Heritage

The Heritage Diversity Task Force Report



MAYOR OF LONDON

Mayor's foreword

Boris Johnson



I welcome the final report from the Heritage Diversity Task Force, an independent group that was set up by Mayor Ken Livingstone, and which I was pleased to support during its final year.

As London prepares to be the host city for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, this is an ideal time to reflect on the rich diversity of London and its strong sense of internationalism. Over 300 languages are spoken in London every day and the capital is home to a myriad of communities. We will be in a position to truly welcome the world, as we are indeed, home to a world of cultures. London has long been a hub of global interchange, and new communities have settled here over the centuries, helping to shape our city's success.

It has taken time for the museums, galleries and heritage institutions of this city to recognise this diversity and give it the weight it deserves. Much of our city's history remains unexplored and there are numerous stories yet to be told. Likewise, there are many communities in London who would like to see the collections in our heritage institutions better reflect their contribution to our city.

For this reason, under my administration, we inaugurated a new annual festival in June 2009 – *The Story of London* – to encourage greater engagement with heritage in the city across all communities. With over 520 events and over 150,000 visitors, this event reflected the wide

range of people and communities who have shaped the history of the capital. The festival showed that London's many different stories overlap and created a unique opportunity to bring people from different groups together to explore elements of their shared past.

I am also pleased to give my support to a number of projects that conserve and display the significant historical legacy of individual communities in London. In 2008 I gave funding, through the London Development Agency, towards the development of a new building for the Black Cultural Archives in Brixton, which will house one of the most important and interesting community archives in the UK. This year I am pleased to back the Memorial 2007 campaign to erect a memorial in London to commemorate the abolition of slavery.

My office is also working closely with key cultural agencies and funders to explore the issues of internships and training so that work opportunities in the cultural and heritage sector can be made more accessible to a wider range of people.

We will consider the recommendations presented in this report and how to implement them in our own strategic events and initiatives. However, as Prakash Daswani writes in this report, whilst regional and national government can initiate and support initiatives, the real change must come from heritage and cultural institutions themselves. The Task Force has worked hard to engage with people working within the heritage sector and I am pleased that a number of them will continue to lead on this policy work. I hope the Task Force's work will help to encourage more discussion and thinking in this field and enable Londoners, of all backgrounds, to feel a stronger connection to our shared past.

Boris Johnson
Mayor of London

MAYOR'S COMMISSION ON AFRICAN & ASIAN HERITAGE

Subcommittee for Diversifying Audiences

Report & Recommendations

Heritage Diversity Task Force Meeting 11 June 2009

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MAYOR'S COMMISSION ON AFRICAN & ASIAN HERITAGE (MCAAH)

Subcommittee for Diversifying Audiences

REPORT & RECOMMENDATIONS

29 May 2009

I INTRODUCTION

The *Diversifying Audiences* (DA) subcommittee was the last of 6 such working groups¹ formed since March 2007 by the MCAAH's Heritage Diversity Task Force (HDTF), in order to review and implement various recommendations arising from the 2004 *Delivering Shared Heritage* (DSH) Report.

The DA subcommittee comprised 15 senior and middle managers from 14 heritage organisations across London (listed on page 22). Time constraints limited the number of opportunities available to it to convene in plenary in time for the 11 June 2009 HDTF meeting. To compensate for this, as co-Chairs we conducted in-depth interviews with each subcommittee member to understand their situation(s) in more detail, including the particular barriers faced and solutions applied by each of them and to draw general lessons from these for the benefit of the sector as a whole.

A number of Core Principles surfaced time and again during these discussions. These are outlined below, first in summary form, and later more fully, along with the Key Recommendations for future action.

Context

The DA subcommittee's brief has been to address the Actions outlined in **Recommendation 4** of the DSH Report:

"Heritage sector organisations should develop and share audience research that provides African and Asian perspectives on collections, exhibitions, interpretive material and programmes with a view to diversifying audiences". (pp 78-9)

Action 1: DCMS, MLA, HLF & EH should.. jointly... assess and proactively monitor implementation of collections etc to

- a) develop a more refined understanding of specific community needs and interests and proactively inform heritage practice and programming
- b) systematically share best practice relating to qualitative audience research
- c) increase access to London's heritage resources
- d) improve support of community-based organisations and enhance partnership opportunities between them and the mainstream

Action 2: Develop and implement standards and systems to collect and monitor quantitative data to ensure consistency so as to allow cross-sectoral analysis and evaluation".

¹ The other 5 subcommittees have focussed on: i) *Diversifying Collections*; ii) *Archives Diversification*; iii) *Governance*; iv) *Equitable Partnerships* ; v) *Workforce*.

- Whilst the subcommittee could scarcely disagree with the high-minded sentiments and purposeful suggestions contained within these recommended Actions, several of the proposals outlined were felt to be too unspecific to be of much practical use without further definition - how, for instance, does one gauge at what point “*understanding*” is sufficiently “*refined*”, (Action 1a), or when “*support of community-based organisations*” can be said to have been adequately “*improved*” (1d)?
- The subcommittee therefore worked to refine some simple, but nonetheless worthwhile and manageable SMART¹ steps that would help turn “*airy aspirations... into specific commitments*”²
- Other aspects of the proposals risked blurring the issue in a different way. By only naming particular Government Departments, like DCMS, and sector-wide NDPB’s, like MLA and HLF, in relation to Action 1 (line1), it could be read by some as if these bodies, rather than frontline heritage organisations themselves, should take primary responsibility for ensuring delivery of what is proposed.
- This might reduce frontline organisations’ own sense of agency by allowing them to feel that they need do little more than be periodically accountable to an officially promulgated lowest common denominator (itself, in practice, often weakly scrutinised), thus triggering yet another epidemic of tokenism.
- The reality, of course, is that the more prescient among our heritage organisations have taken direct responsibility for setting their own internal standards for excellence in this area for some time. These often exceed the statutory minimum and typically also embed these higher standards throughout their organisations, so as to guarantee their long-term impact and continuity. In doing so, they simultaneously raise the bar for others across the sector.
- How best to square this “circle of accountability” has been a key preoccupation of the DA subcommittee; that is to say, how to sustain a more effective symbiosis between strictly enforced compliance with statutory targets and funding requirements, without stifling the emergence within individual organisations of pioneering initiatives that have the potential to benefit all.
- A number of organisations have begun to come forward as leaders in this area. Others are still playing catch-up. Some, meanwhile, inadvertently snuff out their fledgling “diversity” initiatives due to well-intentioned, but often poorly thought through, attempts to “mainstream” it across their organisations (a few, of course, do this deliberately, for more the cynical reason of “reducing costs”).

¹ Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely

² M Barber *Instruction to Deliver* London; Politico (2007)

- The rest appear to remain blissfully unaware that any pro-activity is actually necessary, that whatever changes might be required will somehow fall naturally into place, of their own accord, and in their own sweet time.
- Subcommittee members concurred that diversifying audiences could not be considered in isolation from any of the other diversity concerns that the earlier subcommittees had dealt with: for there to be a meaningful and sustainable increase in “reflective diversity” at the level of audiences, an holistic approach was needed, one that addressed just as emphatically the corresponding need for comparable levels of diversity in the inter-related areas of governance, workforce, collections/archives, and partnerships.
- The issue of sharing power was identified as being central to all of these.
- There was a broad consensus that only when a commitment to diversity is more deeply ingrained in the organisation’s – and eventually the wider Heritage sector’s – DNA, can there be genuine, lasting and more equitable engagement with the city’s and the nation’s heritage assets, by all sections of the wider community. The subcommittee understood full well that this would be no overnight task. Yet it re-asserted that there could be no meaningful change in the long term unless a series of progressive and synchronised steps were taken with immediate effect. These steps are detailed below.
- The subcommittee also recognised the need for its work to continue once the MCAAH process ended. Its members were prepared to take lead responsibility for these future steps themselves, rather than expect others to do so. Members committed themselves to do all they could, both alongside their CEOs and other work colleagues and in concert with others on the subcommittee, to share and further develop models of good practice together, both for their own mutual benefit and on behalf of the sector as a whole.
- They felt that this could make a decisive contribution to some outstanding progress already being made by other key change agents in the sector, including many, if not yet all, of those in charge of the organisations in which they worked as well as some within the various sector-wide agencies.
- For their inputs to be sustainable over the medium and long term called for new and more formalised channels of mutual support - and mutual accountability – amongst them and with those key decision-makers. This is further outlined in the subcommittee’s Recommendations to HDTF below (pp 7-9).

2 SUMMARY³ OF CORE PRINCIPLES

1. Seek out the hidden dots - and join them with the already visible ones to reveal the bigger picture

The “bigger picture” is that all our heritages are mutually entangled with one another in some way, and always have been at the most fundamental level. Critical aspects of this remain obscured, however.

Similarly, the broader mission to implement progressive change depends on heritage organisations seeking actively to make the most of *all* the resources they have at hand, the obvious and not-so-obvious ones alike, so as to overcome the kinds of institutional dysfunction to which they are inherently vulnerable, particularly the larger or longer-established ones among them.

Excellent internal dialogue allows for healthy synergies, including open and mutual collaboration across departments. It also has the collateral benefit of communicating the organisation’s integrity and sincerity to the outside world. These values generate the levels of trust essential for engaging with - and retaining - audiences from hard-to-reach groups. Poor internal communication and barely concealed inter-departmental disharmony tend to have the opposite effect.

2. Share power to increase it

Heritage institutions that have begun to share power, both internally and with their broader constituencies of interest, also seem to have made the greatest advances in recent years in connecting meaningfully to the changing world around them.

They allow complementary, non-traditional forms of authority, both within their own workforce, at governance level, and in terms of inviting potential new audiences to help them re-interpret their existing collections. They have found that far from diluting the quality of what heritage institutions have to offer, privileging the voice of the outsider, of the unfamiliar, of the previously assumed amateur, more often than not expands it, thereby enhancing their own particular quest for “truth”.

³ These Core Principles are presented in expanded form in Section 4 below (pp 10-21)

Those that focus power more narrowly, whether in terms of how they are run as organisations and/or where they deem curatorial or other professional expertise exclusively to lie, usually find themselves being forced to reconsider just how well this actually serves their fitness for purpose in the longer term.

3. Believe in those who work for you and develop their capacity to take more of a lead.

Given the dead hand of institutional-itis that afflicts so many heritage organisations, sapping the morale of potential change agents within them, it is perhaps all the more surprising to find an indomitable sense of belief among middle and senior managers that progressive change *can* take place.

To tackle institutional and cross-sector barriers and so drive forward this change, a fresh approach to peer interaction is essential, amongst departments and between organisations, whether at CEO level and/or at the various rungs below. For example, a new professional body, comprising a thriving network of dedicated and talented middle and senior managers, including those already in the DA subcommittee in this instance, could be set up quite easily, and at minimal cost, to play a leading role in taking this agenda forward on HDTF's behalf, over an agreed timeframe.

Whilst it is essential for CEOs of heritage organisations and heads of sector-wide agencies, many of whom sit on the HDTF, to give this their formal seal of approval, thereby validating its status and competence as an independent resource, the equally essential energies to lead it are already there, among subcommittee members and their peers. So is the commitment among them to invest time - up to 3 years in the 1st instance - in creating and cultivating a critical mass of evidence and best practice for the benefit of all.

4. Carrot and stick

Drift and hand-wringing are barriers to progress. Systemic change is likely to need both *carrot*: for instance, public badges of excellence that formally spotlight and congratulate good practice - and *stick*: stronger accountability mechanisms to ensure compliance with statutory instruments and funding requirements, coupled with higher levels of peer interaction and greater transparency.

Heritage organisations can and should set their own targets and reward their departments and the individuals in them for helping them progress towards these. Sector-wide agencies, meanwhile, are far better positioned to create and promulgate new, industry-wide and nationally recognised, forms of benchmarking and accreditation – and have a duty to set an example as leaders by acquiring these themselves.

5. The genie is out of the bottle: “Diversity” is ubiquitous - and inevitable. Embracing it therefore makes perfect business sense.

Some 40% of Londoners have their origins in other parts of the world, a sizeable minority indeed. An even larger percentage probably plays the Lottery, thereby guaranteeing in its own, yet usually unheralded way, a continuous flow of significant revenue into the sector. Similar demographics apply or have begun to in other UK sites of diasporic convergence.

Heritage organisations that fail to take sufficient account of these emerging realities and their likely consequences risk misreading the market and, as a result, seeing their own stock erode in value. London-based ones are probably more exposed to this than those in other parts of the country.

6. Re-arrange the furniture from time to time

There is a widespread recognition among the more progressive of our heritage organisations that aspects of both tangible heritage, such as monumentally impressive buildings, as well as intangible heritage, like “Englishness” and the very term “heritage” itself, can be over-imposing, intimidating and thus exclusionary to those who start from a position that they’re somehow unable to belong, yet nonetheless wish to, albeit on more mutually acceptable terms.

Conversely, an open public space exists within many, and potentially all, heritage institutions. In this space, the often oppressive weight of a monumental or selectively narrated past can be re-cast allowing it to be opened up, debated, challenged, de-constructed and re-scripted.

3 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION I

Authorise the creation and support the maintenance of a new sector-wide professional working body (PWB) or group

- i Such a body would harness the enormous reserves of enthusiasm, talent and commitment present among all members of the subcommittee, and exploit its full potential as a force for co-ordinated change across the sector. Subcommittee members comprise middle and senior managers currently involved at the frontline of audience engagement.
- ii All individual subcommittee members wish to be part of this PWB, meeting a minimum 4 of times per annum: probably twice in 3 small and interchangeable groups, such as Action Learning Sets⁴ of 6-8 members, and twice in plenary. The details can be further discussed amongst the putative PWB and with members of the HDTF.
- iii The body would serve the sector as a whole, and be accountable both to individual heritage organisations through their representatives on it and to sector-wide ones as a group. The organisations involved would initially be those represented on HDTF but could eventually extend beyond that, and hold these accountable for delivering on the guiding principles and broad targets outlined above as well as others that emerge during discussions.
- iv Its initial aim would be to produce and deliver the equivalent of a new set of “*7 Habits of Highly Effective Audience Diversification*” applicable in each of their organisations, and to prepare the ground to roll this out sector-wide, over a 3-year period to begin with, September 2009-August 2012.
- v The PWB would draw upon its members’ existing front-line and sector-wide strategic experience and knowledge, developing and unifying this into a critical mass of know-how and contacts, available to individual heritage organisations and the sector more generally. As it comes to be seen as an invaluable heritage resource in its own right, the PWB could be entrusted with increasing levels of responsibility for setting out, monitoring and continually raising the standards for best practice.
- vi Central to the PWB’s mission would be to build upon the success that all of its individual members have already had, in connecting hard-to-reach groups with a seemingly remote and often exclusive heritage sector. It would seek to develop more sensitive and intelligent ways of speaking – and listening – to potential new audiences so as to enable them to participate more fully in decisions about their place in the city’s and the nation’s heritage.

⁴ Appendix I: Note on Action Learning Sets with outline costs

vii Its initial objective would be follow through on key elements of Actions 1 and 2 referred to in Recommendation 4 of the original DSH Report, namely:

- a) *develop and implement standards and systems that enable it to collect, monitor and share quantitative data so as to allow sector-wide analysis and evaluation; use specific measurable, realistic and achievable criteria and work within an agreed and regularly monitored timeframe.*
- b) *alongside this, systematically share best practice relating to qualitative audience research, with a clear understanding of terms of reference.*
- c) *improve SMART support of community-based groups and individuals and enhance partnership opportunities between them and mainstream heritage organisations.*

Subcommittee members additionally suggested the following detailed objectives for the PWB:

- i) STANDARDS: *Identify a set of indicators that can be used to identify whether Diversifying Audiences is taken seriously within an organisation and goes beyond an 'outreach project' approach. For instance: 'A good diversity policy is... endorsed by board/governing body, involves people from across the organisation, has a named senior responsible officer, addresses the following areas, and so on.*
- ii) *These indicators can be passed onto sector-wide bodies (MLA/HLF/DCMS) and external funding agencies (e.g. trusts and foundations) for use in grant assessments and to inform accreditation processes. The indicators therefore need to be short, clear, well defined, and easy to establish and to monitor. Whilst they might not cover the full complexity of an all-embracing diversity standard at first, they are likely to be useful tools for funding bodies and policy makers".*
- iii) RESEARCH *Develop an AHRC bid(s) to examine what works in relation to long-term diversification of audiences in a London context. Organisations need answers to some knotty questions about visitor behaviour. Do we or don't we turn people we work with on targeted projects into self sufficient museum users? If not, why not? We need to look at this from a museum end and a visitor end. We may not like some of the answers but we need to know!*
- iv) INTERACTION *increase this among and between peers via, for instance, such portals as the one on English Heritage's Our Place website at www.ourplacenetwork.org.uk EH describes the purpose of this as being "to support people who work in broadening access to heritage, creating a one-stop shop with information, news and resources. The content is created by members for members so you can upload your good practice project case studies, events and join in conversations with peers about the challenges of trying to engage communities with heritage".*

- v) **ADVOCACY:** Engage in regular dialogue with, and support the efforts of strategic regional bodies such as HLF, MLA, ACE and GLA, yet also help ensure that they, in turn, are meeting their stated objectives, for instance, that the latter's Cultural Strategy Group ensures that its actions vis-a-vis Heritage and Culture are consistent with the words outlined in the 2009 *Cultural Metropolis* manifesto.
- vi) **BENCHMARKING** *There is a strong case for a published Framework document to provide a robust and persuasive evidence base to measure impact and best practice in diversifying audiences and collections. The Framework should seek to identify where the sector adds value, strengthening the case for investment. It is essential that the benefits of cultural collaboration are communicated in a language in which business managers can recognise strategic benefit.*

Examples already exist in the; “Outcomes framework for Museums, Libraries and Archives”, MLA 2008; “Museum impact assessment”, Colin Mercer (SWMLAC) and the MLA outline of the benefits of the Accreditation scheme.

http://www.mla.gov.uk/en/what/raising_standards/improvement/~media/Files/pdf/2008/outcomes_framework_v2.ashx

<http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/assets/userfiles/index.php?file=000115.pdf>

http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/raising_standards/accreditation/about_accreditation

RECOMMENDATION 2

- a) Renew accreditation standards that recognise and reward good practice;
 - b) use compliance with legislation and conditions of funding to eliminate bad practice
- i The why and how for both a) and b) are outlined in **Core Principle 4** “Carrot and Stick” (Summary, p5 above; expanded below pp17-19).
 - ii In addition to the points contained therein, CEO's of both individual and sector-wide Heritage organisations could usefully consider forming an informal, or more formal, group themselves, to complement the PWB outlined in Recommendation 1 above.
 - iii This CEO group could meet periodically, both to monitor and support the work of the PWB and to network with other large-scale institutions active in the UK cultural field more generally, e.g. the British Council, ACE, Cultural Leadership Programme and so on, to refine and continually raise standards of good practice in response to new developments as they arise.
 - iv Peer interaction of this kind can provide the foundations for ensuring the greater transparency and stricter accountability necessary. This, together with each leader's own individual conscience and professional codes of conduct - such as *Nolan's 7 Principles of Public Life* that set and safeguard professional integrity - is essential to help underpin and compare progress for systemic, sector-wide, change.

4 CORE PRINCIPLES

I. **Seek out the hidden dots - and join them with the visible ones to reveal the bigger picture**

- i) “Diversifying” audiences is not an end in itself but a means to the higher end of engaging under- or otherwise imperfectly represented, heritages in the broader national narrative.
- ii) A complex but essential first step in this is to comprehend the full extent to which Britain’s population now contains many new elements, not all of them yet visible or properly understood, much less the full measure of how relations amongst them, and between them and the dominant culture, are at present, or how they are likely to evolve over time.
- iii) As these elements start to be more clearly identified and better valued, the next step must be to re-incorporate them more meaningfully and more equitably into the expanded body of a re-narrated national story, one that has long been diminished and distorted by their chronic exclusion. Without this, the broader objective of deep-structure systemic change is likely to remain permanently out of reach.
- iv) Well-established institutions, with their wealth of intellectual, physical and financial resources, along with their reputations for excellence and integrity and the relationships of trust that they have developed over long periods of time, appear ideally placed to lead on this front - in theory at any rate.
- v) Yet they are also equally prone to suffering from poor internal communication, due partly to over-compartmentalisation of skills, over-specialised knowledge, historic vested interests and rigid hierarchies.
- vi) These shortcomings, along with their sheer organisational size and complexity, make such institutions appear slow, at times seemingly unwilling, to adapt to changing circumstances, such that they fail to send out the signals of inclusivity and openness essential for engaging formerly excluded sections of the population, whose interests they have an equal obligation to serve.
- vii) If they are to find the missing dots in the outside world, as it were, and join them to the ones they can already see and thus get the whole picture, they first must look to unite the dots, visible and invisible, within. Failing to do this can - and does - corrode internal efficiency and morale and harms public perceptions of

their integrity and sincerity, thereby reducing their current significance and potentially jeopardising their future existence as a public good.

- viii) Most approaches that attempt to increase the volume and frequency of ethnically diverse audiences for “heritage” have tended, to date, to be piecemeal ones.
- ix) Partly this is due to the imperative for such attempts being relatively recent, with the rationale for them either not yet fully developed, or still contested. Partly it results from the characteristically short-term nature of statutory and other official support for diversity initiatives, including funding. And partly it has been to do with the nature of heritage institutions themselves.
- x) The ways in which such institutions structure and organise themselves internally can project itself also onto their perceptions of how the world outside is configured and how they then go about relating to it. More often than not, heritage institutions, especially the big or long-established ones, operate as linear hierarchies (they are, after all, but one small part of a larger one themselves).
- xi) This usually has a conditioning effect on their own internal modes of communication and mechanisms for mutual support: typically, as separate compartments, often working in silo-like isolation from each other.
- xii) Unsurprisingly perhaps, the task of engaging of new audiences, in this context those “diversified” on ethnic or faith grounds, tends to be seen in similarly compartmentalised ways: the challenge being reduced to little more at times than one of how to get more people to come through their doors from **x** national community or **y** faith group to experience a different, **z**, “established” heritage or version of “received wisdom”.
- xiii) This, in turn, is typically curated, ordered and presented by that particular institution, according to conventions and priorities developed in a earlier age, when the quality and extent of relations between the world’s peoples were different from those that obtain nowadays. Where that is still the case, they often remain inherently alienating to “guest” visitors from **x** or **y** communities.
- xiv) Approaches of this kind rarely provide more than fragile foundations for long-term strategic and systemic change. Only a far more holistic approach can succeed in achieving this aim. This has to start with improved internal communication and collaboration within the heritage organisation until it fully incorporates its higher values, such that it faithfully reflects its own institutional integrity – and inspires a reciprocal integrity in its intended new participants.

- xv) This can then emanate outwards from a now more integrated centre to embrace individuals in the complex matrix of human groupings that exist outside. The objective is to engage these individuals or groups in a set of multi-lateral dialogues with the organisation that takes account of each of their individual identity characteristics – whether determined by race, faith, class or education and so forth - yet always allows for their right also to transcend these when they so choose.
- xvi) A key indicator of whether and how much a heritage institution has matured in this area is the extent to which its public offer has begun to unveil formerly hidden histories that bear true witness to previously airbrushed triumphs and tragedies, thus allowing not just a higher degree of reflective diversity but, just as importantly, encouraging widespread participation in sometimes painful, sometimes uplifting mutual dialogues, that are always, ultimately, both liberating and healing.

2. Share power to increase it

- i) In heritage institutions, as elsewhere, authority is usually concentrated in the hands of the few, ostensibly on behalf of the many, and takes a variety of different forms.
- ii) Here also, it applies to organisational decision-making and control, particularly in respect of allocating resources. Yet since “heritage” operates primarily in the realm of ideas, customs and values, authority in the form of scholarship or other kinds of erudition also hold sway; these, however, are usually based in particular, often culturally-specific, forms of knowledge or belief.
- iii) Hierarchical assumptions are usually present here too. These are often based on a body of learning and experience acquired over several hundred years, the assumed pre-eminence and certainty of which has nonetheless come under increasing challenge in modern times.
- iv) All these forms of power are essential to a greater or lesser degree in enabling the institution to clarify and deliver what it is “for”. Yet, seen in a different light, they can also prevent it from being more responsive to changes in the world beyond its sphere of influence, or where different epistemologies are at play, and/or among populations more closely aligned to other belief or value systems. Or, to those whose dominant identity narratives simply contain different heroes and villains.

- v) When power is over-concentrated or when meaningful access to it is effectively closed to all but a very select handful of people, this suggests that it is being thought of as a limited resource, subject to a kind of “zero-sum game”: the more there is for you, the less for me. To open up power to others is then seen as simply strengthening the hand of one’s potential rivals, and doing so at one’s own expense. Though this was King Lear’s tragic experience, if handled more wisely the reverse tends to be true: the underlying premise of scarcity is replaced by one of abundance.
- vi) Inspirational leaders know the benefits of de-centering power, spreading it, and training others in how to use it effectively as part of a shared mission. This increases the number of people newly em-powered by it, hence enlarging the overall levels and breadth of leadership resources that then become available to the mission as a whole.
- vii) It takes considerable self-confidence and flexibility on the part of those used to being the central source of authority – and a fair amount of courage too – both to adjust successfully to the increased volume of power that now surrounds them, *and* to manage the far larger range of individuals or groups - whether work colleagues in their own organisations or potential new partners in the wider community – now granted a more or less equal say on matters that they had previously controlled directly themselves.
- viii) Yet being able to rise successfully to this challenge actually reinforces their own position as respected leaders, and expands their existing circle of influence for the benefit of all.
- ix) Heritage institutions that have begun to share power and to allow complementary, non-traditional forms of authority, both within their own workforce, at governance level, and in terms of inviting potential new audiences to help them re-interpret their existing collections or add new ingredients to them, appear to have made the greatest advances in recent years in connecting meaningfully to the changing, and nowadays increasingly unpredictable, world around them.
- x) Those that focus power more narrowly, whether in terms of how they are run as organisations and/or where they deem curatorial or other professional expertise exclusively to lie, usually find themselves being forced to reconsider just how well this serves their fitness for purpose as public assets in the long term.

3. **Believe in those who work for you and develop their capacity to take the lead**

- i) Organisational hierarchies, particularly linear and pyramidal ones, are inherently prone to disorder, and risk becoming unruly unless counter-balanced by stabilising mechanisms.
- ii) Such mechanisms include a formal, typically quite fixed, prioritisation of resources along with a fine calibration of functions and roles to ensure equilibrium and continuity. The marshalling of human capital, including how, where and why individuals are positioned according to their key competencies, is an important part of this.
- iii) When roles and resources are well balanced with each other, decision-makers at the top of the pyramid assume a greater sense of the control and co-ordination they deem essential for them to be able to apply the collective weight of the organisation, such that it can succeed in achieving its mission in relation to the world outside and thereby, hopefully, guarantee its long-term future.
- iv) Yet forces other than these are also at play within organisations, bringing together or dividing the people working in them, and attracting or repelling their intended constituencies of interest.
- v) Leading US organisational theorist Karen Stephenson observes⁵ that the various layers of human capital on which formal organisational structures are based are complemented by informal, often invisible, “social capital”, alongside which they exist in a state of dynamic tension.
- vi) This social capital is not only the world beyond work but also the informal, usually unremarkable, chats, jokes and whispered asides that take place within organisations, by the coffee machine or photocopier, and momentarily transcend intra-departmental loyalties or casually suspend them. These can and usually do act as the essential lubricants for cross-organisational dialogue, helping to overcome the silences between the silos, whilst also serving as barometers of an organisation’s climate at any given time.
- vii) The inherent power of such social capital is often greatly under-estimated in more formal settings. When seemingly random information exchange of this kind coalesces into more articulate and focused networks of mutual interest, these are capable of either reinforcing or disrupting the status quo, even if only temporarily so.

⁵ Karen Stephenson *Deciphering Trust* NESTA 20/3/09

- viii) The former outcome contributes to a sense of common purpose that proves helpful in building organisational solidarity. The latter, though potentially destabilising, can also have the more positive effect of creating the conditions in which newness enters the world and innovation thrives.
- ix) Professor Stephenson adds: “over time, hierarchies endure... but at any single point in time, a network is more powerful than a hierarchy” ⁶
- x) Institutional hierarchies operate in what Bill Schwartz⁷ has termed “monumental time” with a view to long-term durability and strength – and as statements of power.
- xi) Social networks operate in a different time, time-as-it’s-lived time, so to speak, making them potentially better suited to being more responsive and adaptable to the wider complexities of our new, now more intensely globalizing, age and thus more in tune with all the attendant issues these also have for embracing “those, belonging elsewhere” into a broadened sense of “us, all belonging here”.
- xii) Those running mainstream heritage institutions recognise well-enough how large a turning circle is required by “monumental” organisations when they need to adapt to rapid and/or unexpected change.
- xiii) This intrinsic slow-footedness is most keenly sensed by those directly charged, either as middle or senior managers, with such an amorphous, thus unusually complex, shifting and seemingly thankless task as “engaging new audiences from diverse communities”.
- xiv) It tends to be experienced as a morale-sapping frustration; this is made all the more acute when their fundamental belief in (often even felt as a love for) their institution’s public offer, and in its formally stated conviction to make it more broadly available is, more often than not, undermined by an organisation-wide and patronising indifference to their efforts.
- xv) When, moreover, such roles are also placed at the far extremities of heritage institutions, rather than at the very heart of the organisation’s top-level decision-making, and when in even the most generously staffed concerns they are set up as part-time, short-term and easily dispensable, posts, then public claims of community-wide engagement sound insincere.

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ Bill Schwartz: *Strolling Spectators and Practical Londoners – Remembering the Imperial Past*: in *The Politics of Heritage* Littler & Naidoo (eds) Routledge 2005

- xvi) Whilst this doesn't describe the situation across sector as a whole, it is sufficiently widespread among the many individual organisations that go to make it up. All the more surprising then, perhaps, to find such a firm conviction among middle and senior managers that change *can* take place, despite the dead hand of institutional monumentalism.
- xvii) To drive forward this change, a fresh approach to peer interaction is essential, within departments and between organisations. A new professional body, comprising a thriving network of dedicated and talented middle and senior managers, including those already in the DA subcommittee, could be set up quite easily to take this forward on HDTF's behalf, over a fixed timeframe.
- xviii) Whilst this necessarily has to be validated from the top, that is to say by CEOs and heads of sector-wide agencies, many of whom are represented on the HDTF, the energies and the will to lead are already present among those at the frontline. So is the long-term commitment - over 3 years in the first instance - to invest their time in creating, cultivating and sustaining such a body.
- xix) For it to be truly effective, however it needs to be given the authority, not merely to *support* the heads of their respective organisations to achieve change, but to *challenge* them and their other colleagues when necessary, holding them accountable - yet also being accountable to them - when they are failing, whether jointly or individually, in this collective mission.
- xx) Even though there is already a degree of peer interaction, it tends to be irregular. When it does take place in a systematic way, it seems to do so more at CEO than senior or middle management levels, such that sector-wide sharing of good practice tends not to penetrate throughout organisations.
- xxi) Modest seed funding would help cover the relatively minimal costs involved in formally unleashing the potential of various forms of social capital necessary to mobilise change. For example, 12 or so facilitated Action Learning Sets, across 2 years, and involving all 14 organisations currently involved, would cost each less than £300 per year.
- xxii) Yet the more important investment is a fundamental, sector-wide shift in attitudes, sanctioned at the highest levels and facilitated by the various change agents working in their cellular networks, both within and beyond their institutions.

4. Carrot and stick

- i) Drift, rhetoric and hand-wringing are commonplace in all kinds of institutions. All too often they substitute for active progress and provide insidious barriers to it.
- ii) Effective change needs both carrot and stick. These perhaps work best when each takes on some of the characteristics of its opposite, with carrot containing subtle sanctions for failure, and stick helping to chart a course towards delivering excellence.
- iii) **Carrot:** this might take the form of new types of accreditation, ones that publicly acknowledge, spotlight and reward good practice. Heritage institutions should be free to invent their own internal reward schemes for this, but it is also essential for sector-wide agencies to take a lead in setting industry standards, even if, ironically, some of them might scarcely meet such standards themselves at present.
- iv) Benchmarks do already exist, for example, HLF recognises Green Flag Status and now Heritage Green Flag Status when assessing funding bids from Parks. A new public badge of excellence, say, *Investors in Diversity* or, perhaps, by building on the title of HLF's own *Your Heritage* grants programme and removing the initial "Y", to create a perhaps more fitting and inclusive industry-wide standard of *Investors in Our Heritage*.
- v) DCMS, and/or a coalition of NDPB's, could build on the HLF model and create a series of award levels for this standard, say Bronze, Silver, Gold to encourage the kind of progression successfully trialled over the last few years by such organisations as the British Council, in its case using its own, internally generated and now globally institutionalised, performance indicators, to track movement along a continuum of benchmarks, from *Embarking* (Level 1) to *Leading* (Level 5)⁸.
- vi) The pinnacle of excellence, Gold, could, in similar fashion, indicate a heritage organisation having achieved excellence in all areas of diversity, not just in terms of audiences, but also governance, senior workforce, collections, visitor voice/co-curating etc. Silver might be in most, Bronze in some. Heritage institutions might set themselves progression milestones, for instance, to be at Silver by August 2012.
- vii) Few heritage organisations could honestly claim to be at this stage already, the best are probably at or approaching Bronze.

⁸ Appendix 3 British Council Diversity Assessment Framework & Equal Opportunities and Diversity Framework
© British Council 2004

- viii) The setting of challenging yet achievable official targets, without this descending into an obsessive, and justly criticized target-olatry, remains vital in enabling organisations to develop practical road maps to chart their rate of progress towards the necessary changes. Without these maps, it can become almost impossible to gauge when to refuel between the milestones.
- ix) Sector-wide bodies could help by acknowledging that diversity-linked funding, like much project funding as a whole, tends to be short-lived, thereby subliminally implanting short-termism in the mindset of even the most progressive of heritage organisations. Yet there are helpful examples of a longer-term vision embedded in some funding requirements.
- x) For example, despite the fact that it is unable to fund projects on a revenue basis and usually for no longer than 3 years, HLF nonetheless requires some of the larger or more complex heritage initiatives that it does fund to provide 10- and sometimes 25-year management plans for particular types of projects.
- xi) An analogous assessment framework, applied to diversity, could encourage a longer-term vision and more strategic thinking. Organisations could perhaps set out a SMART, 10-year Diversity Plan with targets and milestones, and outline in detail how a particular 3-year award from HLF or PSA settlement with DCMS would move them along towards these. Having such a Plan could itself be a criterion for awarding a higher level badge
- xii) The PWB referred to in Recommendation I, might, in time, be recruited to play a leading role in monitoring such an award scheme on behalf of the sector.
- xiii) **Stick:** CEO's of heritage institutions are duty bound to abide by various government targets, along with conditions of funding set by sector-wide grant-giving agencies like HLF. They also often find such targets and conditions invaluable as drivers for organisational change.
- xiv) Yet CEOs, senior and middle managers can find it much harder to sustain the momentum necessary for such change where statutory drivers in relation to diversifying audiences (or boards, or collections, or workforce etc) are too weak or are absent altogether, or when regular scrutiny by funders is too lax.
- xv) In organisations already sincerely dedicated to embedding diversity into the organisation's DNA, this is problem enough. In those that are not so committed, it can be almost impossible for senior and middle managers successfully to implement a progressive diversity agenda without such drivers to hand.
- xvi) In such cases, legal sanctions and withdrawal of major funding represent the nuclear missiles in the formal weaponry available to enforce organisational

change. Their effectiveness is reduced however, by the degree of collateral damage that would be caused if exercised for any but the gravest of transgressions. These must therefore be measures of last resort.

- xvii) Realistically speaking, greater transparency (as our Parliamentarians are currently discovering), increased benchmarking, monitoring and peer interaction, plus more enforced adherence to DCMS Public Service Agreement targets and NDPB funding conditions, are likely to be the most effective ways of reducing the majority of failings; as long, of course, as sector-wide bodies become more efficient themselves in carrying out the levels of detailed monitoring for which they have a public duty and which, by many accounts, seems routinely to be overlooked.

5. The genie is out of the bottle: “Diversity” is ubiquitous and inevitable. Embracing it make not only guarantees survival, it also makes perfect business sense.

- i) Around 40% of Londoners are from, or have their origins in, other parts of the world, a sizeable “minority” indeed. An even larger percentage probably plays the Lottery, thereby guaranteeing, in its own, yet usually unheralded way, a substantial and continuous flow of revenue into the sector. Similar demographics apply or have begun to in other UK sites of diasporic convergence.
- ii) Heritage organisations that fail to take sufficient account of these emerging realities and their likely consequences, risk misreading the market and, as a result, seeing their stock erode in value. London-based ones are probably more exposed than those in other parts of the country.
- iii) As Stuart Hall memorably puts it: *“For ‘Brits’ to prepare their ‘own’ people for a global and de-centred world by continuing to misrepresent Britain as a closed, embattled, self-sufficient, defensive, ‘tight little island’ would be fatally to disable them”*.⁹
- iv) This kind of denial, rooted in what Paul Gilroy recently diagnosed as Britain’s “*post-colonial melancholia*”, is fast receding as a defensible position for the sector as a whole, not just on moral but also on business grounds. Acceptance, on the other hand, paves the way for a fresh re-interpretation of the priceless historical places, artefacts and orature that have contributed thus far to the nation’s sense of itself, re-enlivening them and allowing their full significance to be re-valued and made more relevant.
- v) This has all the ingredients of a new, exciting and more inclusive national journey.

⁹ Stuart Hall “*Whose Heritage?*” in *The Politics of Heritage* Littler & Naidoo (eds) Routledge 2005

- vi) It also allows for those who wish to engage with heritage but feel excluded for all manner of tangible and intangible reasons to be, in Lola Young's eloquent words, *"...able to see themselves as part of a continually unfolding historical narrative that validates their existence and their experiences, and enables them to participate in the interpretation and making of history"*¹⁰.

6. Re-arrange the furniture from time to time

- i) There is a widespread recognition among the more progressive of our heritage organisations that aspects of both tangible heritage, such as monumentally impressive buildings, as well as intangible heritage, like "Englishness" and the very term "heritage" itself, can be over-imposing, intimidating and thus exclusionary to those who start from a position that they're somehow unable to belong, yet nonetheless wish to on more mutually acceptable terms.
- ii) Partly this is to do with the relative permanence of the built heritage and the implicit intention of this to convey the immutable status and power of the builder or owner.
- iii) Partly it relates to how the nation's history is continually re-packaged by the heritage "industry" into commodified and marketable narratives and products aimed at very specific kinds of consumer taste, and therefore needing to be edited down in particular ways, typically into safe, unthreatening and glossily desirable remembrances of an affectionately re-fabricated past, or souvenir icons of particular forms of excellence.
- iv) And partly it relates to who tells whose stories: the narrators typically employed in such a task tend to take up the tried and tested perspectives of particular "trusted" authorities; these perhaps need re-visiting.
- v) It is worth quoting Stuart Hall at length on this: *"What has come to be known misleadingly as 'the British way of life' is really another name for a particular settlement of structured inequalities.*

Many of the great achievements which have been retrospectively written into the national lexicon as primordial British virtues - the rule of law, free speech, a fully representative franchise, the rights of combination, the welfare state - were struggled for by some and bitterly resisted by others. Where, one asks is this deeply fractured history, with its interweaving of stability and conflict, in the Heritage's version of the dominant national narrative?

[No-one should really need reminding] how deeply intertwined were the facts of colonisation, slavery and empire with the everyday life of all classes and conditions of

¹⁰ Lola Young "Our Lives, Our Histories, Our Collections" Museum of London website 2005

English men and women...in general “Empire” is increasingly subject to a widespread selective amnesia and disavowal...and when it does appear it is largely narrated from the viewpoint of the colonisers...this formative strand in the national culture is now represented as an external appendage, extrinsic and inorganic to the domestic history of the English social formation.

Even at the centre of the grand master-narratives of Englishness, like the two World Wars, falls the unscripted shadow of the forgotten Other”¹¹.

- vi) Conversely, an open “public space” exists within many heritage institutions or has the potential to. In this space, the imprisoning grip of a monumental, or selectively narrated, past can be re-cast as an elliptical, rather than an all-pervasive, presence, (perhaps not unlike, in some ways, the skull in the foreground of Holbein’s Ambassadors), allowing it to be re-opened, debated, challenged, de-constructed and eventually re-scripted.
- vii) Members of the DA subcommittee offered several examples of how new audiences could be offered multiple points of entry into heritage assets, alongside the “main” one, which is often sensed as an intimidating statement of supremacy and exclusion, as was often the owners’ original intention.
- viii) This could help any particular heritage organisation to be newly perceived as an open public space, one that allows a mix of heterogeneous perspectives to co-exist alongside each other, and one that is, by implication, willing to listen new voices and engage in new forms of conversation. As one subcommittee member observed: *“Inviting the unpredictable goes to the heart of what museums are for”¹².*
- ix) Or, to put it another way: *“[There is now]...a growing reflexivity about the constructed, and thus contestable, nature of the authority which some people have to write the culture of others...and...[a] concomitant rise in the demand to re-appropriate control over the writing of one’s own story as part of a wider process of cultural liberation... in short a general relativisation of “truth”, reason and other abstract Enlightenment values and an increasingly perspectival and context-related conception of truth-as-interpretation and of truth as an aspect of... the “will to power”¹³.*

This points to the task at hand - and, indeed to “heritage” itself - as a continually evolving, outward-facing and mutually nourishing work-in-progress, one in which all who are committed to strengthening our common life will find it rewarding to be more fully engaged in coming years.

Prakash Daswani

¹¹ Hall ibid

¹² Additional observations by members on this and related points are summarised in Appendix 4

¹³ Hall, ibid

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6 A Reflection

- *If we want to reconcile our humanity with our economics, we have to find a way to give more influence to what is personal and local, so that we each feel that we have a chance to make a difference, that we matter, along with those around us. We have no way of charting a way through...[the]...paradoxes unless we feel able to take some personal responsibility for events. A formal democracy will not be enough.*
- *We have to find another way, by changing the structure of our institutions to give more power to the small and to the local. We have to do that, with all the untidiness which it entails, while still looking for efficiency, and the benefits of co-ordination and control.*
- *More is needed, therefore, than good intentions to “empower” the individual to do what we want him or her to do. The structures and systems have to change, to reflect a new balance of power. That means federalism.*
- *Federalism is an old idea, but its time may have come again, because it is designed to create a balance of power within an institution. It matches paradox with paradox. Federalism seeks to be both big in some things and small in others, to be centralised in some respects and decentralised in others. It aims to be local in its appeal and in many of its decisions, but national or even global in its scope. It endeavours to maximise independence, provided there is always necessary interdependence; to encourage difference, but within limits; it needs to maintain a strong centre but has to be managed by the parts. There is room in federalism for the small to influence the mighty, and for individuals to flex their muscles.*
- *[These are ideas that]... few institutions or societies develop until they are forced to. It is a very different and very uncomfortable way of thinking about organisations. It is messy, untidy and always a little out of control. Its only justification is that there is no real alternative in a complicated world.*

Charles Handy *The Empty Raincoat* (pp 97-99)

Appendix 1

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Cross sector set participants always report substantial personal and organisation benefits from the cross-fertilization.

The logistics

It can take some time to bring together the right people to form an action learning set – so you need a little patience while we put together the right mix. Once we have agreed the people who will join your set it can also take some time to fix the date of the first meeting – one of five full day meetings held over a period of around 12 -15 months. Set members form a contract with each other and make a strong commitment to attend all meetings. At the end of the initial contract set members may decide to continue to meet, either with a facilitator or on their own, some members may leave and be replaced by new members or the set may decide to disband.

Most of our cross-sector sets meet in our work space in central London (near London Bridge) - an ideal quiet space for reflective learning.

The cost of the five full day sessions is £1,500 + VAT (includes refreshments and lunch). We offer reduced rates for smaller charities and campaigning organisations and if necessary, payments can be made over two financial years.

If you are interested in joining an action learning set or would like to talk to Director, Ruth Cook about what action learning can offer you then please call us on 0207 407 1971 or email info@actionlearningassociates.co.uk.

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Appendix 2

The Diversity Assessment Framework

As an international organisation, we face the issue of managing the balance between ‘central’ and ‘local’ decision-making and accountability. In relation to diversity, ‘relativists’ hold that, because every country operates within its own specific socio-political context, there is nothing to be gained from, nor is it possible to develop, common tools. This is a position that we are seeking to challenge. Organisations *do* have to set certain standards regardless of culture, nationality and other areas, in order for core issues and values relevant to them to be addressed across contexts. This helps to support necessary organisational coherence and cohesion. The task is therefore to develop approaches that can reinforce our position and support the message that diversity is an important core organisational value and activity with requisite standards, without being over-prescriptive or ethno-centric. The Diversity Assessment Framework (DAF) is a tool which has been developed for this purpose.

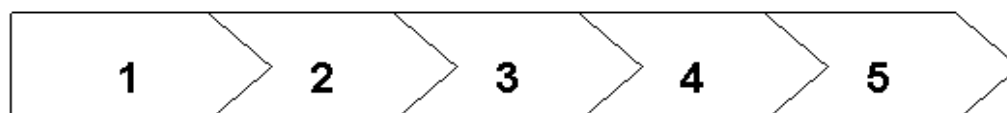
Why do we have the DAF?

The purpose of the DAF is to evaluate progress in the mainstreaming of Equal Opportunity and Diversity (EO&D) across the organisation. It shows up strengths and weaknesses, highlights development opportunities and supports risk management with respect to EO&D. It also supports the organisation’s Diversity Strategy and assists in the achievement of common standards, as well as contributing to the monitoring of progress against the Integrated Equality Scheme.

It enables us to manage the ‘balance’ between the ‘central’ and ‘local’ decision-making and accountability referred to earlier and contributes both to the supporting of our core standards and to the evaluation of our related activities. The DAF is also linked to our Performance Scorecard, with results being captured on an annual basis from all our directorates, aggregated to produce an overall organisational result, reflected in the leadership score.

How does it work?

The DAF takes the form of a continuum of five levels, each consisting of a number of indicators reflecting performance around a specific area of EO&D. The levels range from Level 1, *Embarking*, to Level 5, *Leading*.



Level 1: Embarking	Level 2: Progressing	Level 3: Performing	Level 4: Mainstreaming	Level 5: Leading
There is <i>basic</i> evidence of EO&D performance	There is <i>adequate</i> evidence of EO&D performance	There is <i>strong</i> evidence of EO&D performance	There is <i>substantia l</i> evidence of EO&D performance	There is <i>comprehensive</i> evidence of EO&D performance that is seen internally and externally as exemplary

Countries assess their performance against these indicators, providing evidence to demonstrate the indicator has been met. Using a scoring system of 0-3 points for each indicator, countries obtain a level by achieving a threshold set each year by the organisation. As the scale is a cumulative one, countries must pass Level 1, before they are able to progress to Level 2 and so on.

The Process

The DAF process is not static but continually evolves in response to the changing internal and external environment. However, the core structure remains constant, with 3 main stages:

The submission is **compiled** by the country office (led by a DAF co-ordinator) over the course of the year. Each indicator is individually addressed with an explanation of how has been met, supported by evidence. The submission is then **assessed** by an in-country panel of at least three people, one of whom is external (i.e. not a BC employee). The panel review the evidence and score each indicator in accordance with the guidance notes. The points are then added up, with the total for each level determining how the country has scored overall. The completed self-assessment form is then sent to the Diversity Unit, along with all supporting evidence which is centrally **moderated** to ensure rigour and consistency across the organisation.

For more information on the 2009 DAF process, see the 2009 Self-Assessment Guidance Notes.

What happens to the results?

The moderated results are then fed into the organisational Performance Scorecard, ensuring that EO&D forms part of the evaluation of the organisation's overall performance. Individual reports are sent to country directors and a final report is compiled bringing together all the results from across the organisation and summarising the key points. This report is discussed and finalised with Martin Davidson, who champions the DAF. It is then made available across the organisation, with results then being analysed at a regional and country level, as well as organisationally.

What are the outcomes?

The outcomes of incorporating diversity assessment and evaluation into the scorecard include greater clarity about our performance and progress towards mainstreaming. Every DAF report is analysed and action plans produced with a view to the future. Action plans at a country and regional level help us to identify areas of improvement, to widen our reach, provide better customer service and increase our understanding of diversity on a UK, international and local perspective. Our approach to diversity, through our operational work and employment practices, is a core foundation to achieving the organisational outcomes. Approaches to monitoring and evaluating diversity globally are new and undeveloped and, partly because of this, particularly challenging. Now in its 4th year, the DAF is breaking new ground and attracting external interest and recognition. Our continuing success in developing a meaningful and comprehensive approach support us in being acknowledged as making a leadership contribution in this field and assessing the impact we strive for.

Appendix 3

Mayor's Commission on African and Asian Heritage **Diversifying Audiences sub-Committee**

Draft summary of progress as at 21 April 2009

Pre-amble

- From February 2009 to date, PD & HW have made contact with representatives of several London-based national, regional and regional H organisations, interviewing the majority of them in person about their work in Diversifying Audiences.
- All have been invited to become members of the sub-Com and all have agreed to help frame a set of recommendations for the sub-Com to put to the Heritage Diversity Task Force (HDTF) on 11 June 2009.
- Many were able to attend the 1st of 2 sub-Com meetings on 21 March 2009; most of them, plus those who were unavailable on that date, intend to attend the 2nd sub-Com meeting, on 22 April 2009.
- 14 organisations in all are now represented on the sub-Com (see below), while a 15th, HLF, wishes to meet with PD and HW prior to the presentation of recommendations to HDTF, to add its own voice to this process.

- | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | English Heritage |
| 2 | Hackney Museum |
| 3 | Imperial War Museum |
| 4 | London Metropolitan Archives |
| 5 | London Transport Museum |
| 6 | London Hub |
| 7 | Museum of London/Museum in Docklands |
| 8 | National History Museum |
| 9 | National Portrait Gallery |
| 10 | National Trust |
| 11 | Royal Academy |
| 12 | Tate Modern |
| 13 | The National Archive |
| 14 | Victoria and Albert Museum |

Summary of points raised and draft areas of recommendation

Listed below are 3 broad areas under which are grouped some of the key points that have emerged during discussions to date, both during the individual, 1-1 interviews conducted to date and at the 1st sub-Com meet in March 2009.

This very brief summary aims to highlight the sub-Com's "direction of travel" to date, rather than represent any firm conclusions it has reached as yet. The summary aims, nonetheless, to help focus the discussion at the 2nd sub-Com meeting on starting to frame these conclusions.

The 3 broad areas are

1 Identify, encourage, and aim progressively to institutionalise good practice across the sector

- a) Regular action learning sets between fellow professionals at key levels in different H orgs (eg build on and expand existing ones, such as the one that unites: EH/V&A/NT/NHM/ Women's Library)
- b) More intra (cross-departmental) and inter-organisational dialogue

- c) Increase visitor voices, co-curating (eg 2007 Sacred Quran project in west midlands)
- d) More power sharing, seeing it as a legitimate and complementary way of working, not as a threat
- e) More than representation, participation too
- f) Protect the primacy of the public space
- g) Accept that galleries not for “communities”, but for all
- h) Increase a “closeness to org” and its mission/cause to emphasise a sense of belonging and ownership
- i) Top-down support for change agents within org to validate and embed diversity throughout org
- j) Seek to saturate diversity ethos across the organisation
- k) More “reflective diversity” from governance and workforce to incorporating diverse narratives as part of the orgs main H narratives
- l) Mainstream diversity but ensure it doesn’t thereby disappear – look to make it a contractual obligation of all staff, in all of their jd’s, and included as part of their regular appraisals
- m) Closer monitoring by funders – DCMS, HLF etc - to ensure greater compliance to agreed standards and targets contained within PSA and funded projects
- n) More benchmarking: funders to ask “*where are you with diversity?*” and “*what can you realistically achieve*” plus regular monitoring, including random spot checks and mystery shopping; be prepared to withhold funding if non-compliance
- o) Establish longitudinal, year-round evaluation
- p) Carry forward learning from one project to another
- q) Build relations based on trust and long-term investments - not just a marketplace that one is trying to expand so as to sell it things
- r) Finding the right project partners is key
- s) Market exhibitions/heritage offer by targeting segmented audiences
- t) Recognise the importance of push and pull factors - ripple and echo - interactive dynamic becomes multi-way; change occurs gradually
- u) London-based national orgs’ work out of London should be about learning not just touring, seen as a brokering role that also brings a national consciousness to org’s way of working
- v) HLF could provide training for Boards in an org-wide consultation

2 Identify, discourage and aim progressively to eliminate poor practice across the sector

- a) Lack of accountability
- b) Poor internal communication and weak recognition of importance of diversity beyond political correctness;
- c) Reduce silo mentality: internal silo approach often reflects itself onto org’s external view of audiences/communities
- d) Avoid treating diversity as an add-on rather than as needing to be embedded in the organisation’s DNA
- e) Reduce incidence of anomalous marriages of “diversity” with other unrelated departments eg “outreach” lumped together with profit driven enterprises
- f) Don’t ghettoize funded placements
- g) Avoid mechanistic target-setting; this can result in a crude form of social engineering
- h) Desk bound nature of work can make diversity officers into the organisation’s “dustbins” for diversity issues
- i) Need to question “voice of authority” stop expressing, start listening
- j) Become more aware of short-term nature of funding diversity and work more strategically with its rhythms to build “serial continuity” and, in the long run, sustainability
- k) Avoid category confusions that can skew new policy initiatives eg National versus London figures, need to be aware of which is which when using data to validate existing practices and new initiatives

- l) Recognise that “heritage”, “Englishness” and aspects of the built heritage can be imposing, intimidating and thus exclusionary
- m) “*Our passion can be a barrier*” - need to be more still and calm and adopt more rounded approach, stop rushing around
- n) 1st time visitors not tracked
- o) Be aware that practice is specific; issues of ownership and sensitivity are quite different for visual arts than other art forms/heritage elements: a painting does not of itself bring in audiences or encourage learning

3 Try something new from time to time/think laterally

- a) “Enter by the side door”: challenge imposing face of the exterior. Deny it its power to dominate/subjugate
- b) Cutting edge tends to come from community margins not from national core
- c) Become a listening organisation that is receptive to and encourages new initiatives and fresh perspectives from all levels of the workforce, not simply senior management
- d) Search for, experiment with imaginative ways to involve young people in archives
- e) *Inviting the unpredictable goes to heart of what museums are for*
- f) *Being surrounded by old things reactivates memory in old people*
- g) *Target not initially for great usage visitorship to a static and precious resource but finding ways to make community feel sufficiently confident to propose partnerships of mutual interest*
- h) broaden cultural understanding of collections: key priorities include: how to tell a world story. How to interpret a property/heritage object or element better
- i) become more attuned to complexity of intergenerational: ask potential new users “what would you and what would you and your children want to pass on?”
- j) Change people’s perceptions thru life transforming experiences active participation key
- k) Unconventional interventions break stereotypes show approachability and can bring unanticipated social benefits e.g young offenders participating allowed back into school
- l) Perception of heritage as elitist, so aim to take “badge” to places it rarely goes

Appendix 4

Notes from the Museum of London Community Engagement event 13 November 2008

'A radical challenge to museum curating in the 21st century'

'Sensitive in the process, radical in the obliteration'

'Don't be surprised if you have surprises'

19 January 2009

A. What people said about their experience of community engagement

A1. People from community groups said:

When you have worked with museums, what has been good about it?

- Where a museum shows a willingness to engage.
- Enthusiasm of individual staff members
- Ability to embed the relationship into the museums long term practice.
- Relevance of the collection to peoples' lives.
- Necessary contribution/allocation of the time and resources.
- Accessibility and comfort – opening hours, easy parking & physical access.
- Real involvement; e.g. community providing equipment for event, writing text or finding objects on an archaeological dig.
- Great atmosphere – everyone wanted to be there.
- Positive approach from staff – helpful, open.
- Get 'behind the scenes' of the museum, get to know how it ticks.
- Undertake something challenging, ambitious – this is good providing it's achievable.

When you have worked with museums, what has not worked?

- Unsatisfactory process, too rushed. Need more time, feel pressured.
- Well intentioned but on the whole under-resourced.
- Parking not easily available.
- Communication with community - from museum to community. Lack of advertising – community unaware of posters in the area.
- Not enough interaction between community and museum team.
- When you embrace an invitation and then get rejected.
- When you have less committed participants.
- Improve Openness – sense of shared heritage.
- Need for commitment and continuity.
- Insincerity - Tokenism (perceived or real).
- Invited too late into planning stage of projects.
- Lack of information about what to expect.
- Limited collections or non-relevant collections.

Your critical factors to successful community engagement?

- Early and full involvement/ engagement.
- Properly resourced – effective, appropriate and considered (time, money, personnel).
- Giving the community the sense of real ownership and responsibility; sharing power and learning
- Themes and issues vs. groups and collections.
- Getting communities mixing with each other.

A2. People from the museum sector said:

When you have worked with communities, what has been good about it?

- doing something, instead of nothing
- sharing knowledge & experiences with the custodians (experts & specialists)
- mutuality: two way process – benefits museum and expands audience; a two way process – learning from committees too – involving museum staff from all depts
- re-interpreting existing collections through the community sharing its culture & giving space for different, multiple perspectives & hearing real experiences; reflection of somebody's past; meaningful; such as childhood memories; this work feeds into interpretative framework of museum = voice seen
- structures for discussion, negotiation & shared decision-making, such as having a constant focus group
- well-resourced volunteer programmes
- listen to the plurality of voices not always trying to reach consensus
- long-term, sustained, positive high impact on audience (a focus on outcomes/ impact, not activity) with successful outcomes for all engaged
- risk-taking, ambitious, willingness to try new things
- sustained partnerships, relationships built on trust & long-term relationships should be allowed to evolve
- personal fulfilment for participants
- recognition of the importance/ value of this work by Board/ Senior Staff
- shared ownership - working 'with' not 'for' – communities need a sense of ownership, to feel represented and resonance 'That's me'
- shared vision - having clear direction with planned objectives, & sufficient planning & evaluation time
- sufficient resources + professional approach
- the museum learns
- right set of partners for the project & need to have appropriate approaches to different communities
- skills building & diversifying the workforce; it's monocultural at present
- good end project with high visibility
- moving beyond the museum's walls
- community engagement embedded in organisation's values
- contemporary issues led, not funding or collections led
- getting people working in museums who are not 'museum' people
- clarifying who we mean by communities
- shifting...question...power structures
- creating change and influencing the culture of the organisation
- introducing new audiences
- need to be aware of differences/ tensions within 'defined' communities
- avoid only talking to the 'self elected leaders' of communities
- value – listen – learn - act
- smartens up not dumbs down

When you have worked with communities, what has not worked?

- doing 'to' communities not 'with'
- 'corruption' – a pastiche of real work
- when museum engage with communities they do not like/ cannot cope with/ cannot respond to what communities tell them
- relationships are between individuals so problem when individual leaves
- explores inadequacies of 'the system' - particularly problem of silos
- lack of resources; sustainability & legacy issues & unrealistic time frames

- lack of support; not being seen as a crucial part of the whole museum make up. Senior managers not engaged on deeper level, not understanding & therefore not 'in tune' & able to support fully
- lack of internal communications – sharing knowledge and celebrating work
- maintaining high staff morale when work is not recognised
- funding applications, forms, meetings = time consuming
- too much focus on delivery = less time for reflection & thinking
- tick box approach or end product dominates (undervalues process)
- outcomes from work need equal status to other museum work
- museum's community work not co-ordinated across the institution - community engagement work can be seen as in opposition to the collections management process
- museums are still generally object-orientated in terms of broad structures and end systems - Are we hamstrung by systems?
- lack of appropriate spaces within museum for meetings, creative work, etc
- drives some staff members deeper into a racist state of mind
- lack of understanding of community
- target led
- short-term funding (has weaknesses and strengths)
- expectations that the museum would deliver more than it could
- expectations that the community would deliver more than it could
- co-production can lead to misunderstandings
- museums don't want to give up their power in certain areas when working with community groups
- political agenda of the local authority can add to confusions or create problems
- lack of workforce development and training
- trying to balance the demands
- assumptions made in both directions
- short-termism (deadlines to produce)
- consultation = vacillation
- not listening

A3. People from museums & the community groups said:

What would make it better?

- senior staff understand time frame it takes to do quality community engagement – time needed to understand & learn how best to work with communities
- value of continuing relationships & sustaining resources (equal to internal value/ collections)
- better internal advocacy, publicity & communications
- more co-ordination across museum; being a planned part of all museum work from strategy, policy, exhibitions, web, etc – not an add on
- properly resourced
- clear, supportive leadership
- museum staff are able and supported in challenging assumptions
- more time
- routes of communication to enable senior management to engage directly with groups & others
- more space and more flexible use of space
- more use of web
- need to change organisational ethos
- museums should spring out of community
- interdisciplinary working
- inject new blood
- more diverse representation
- focus on outcomes & impact; remember ultimate goal as important as process
- embedding community development training into workforce development

- making the work more visible
- sharing with all staff
- building in sustainability from the start
- Community is where community happens. Sharing. Not just geographical. It's where people meet and overlap. Should *not* see people as being representations of specific groups.
- Community means 'shared burden' linguistically: Museum learning, good structures to share. Skills building within project. Multiple angles and perspectives. Space for all.

Your critical factors to successful community engagement?

- trust
- resources
- communication
- training
- diversifying the institution
- sustainability

B. Core Values

The participants agreed that the core values underpinning community engagement are:

- Trust
- Well-resourced
- Building capacity (Museum & communities)
- Good communication
- On-going skills development
- Sustainability & long-term commitment
- Organisational ethos & values
- Diversifying the institution
- Genuine power-sharing
- Learning & reflection
- Bringing people & collections together
- Communities meeting communities
- 'True representation'
- Mutually beneficial relationships
- Risk-taking & acceptance of past mistakes

C. Strategic Issues

1. Senior management & strategic leadership

- Is there genuine management buy in?
- Need a clear direction (Leadership) which demonstrates a clear understanding, support, commitment & interest in CE
- is it a paper exercise or 'flavour of the decade?' - Is this 'tick box' or 'policy statement or 'major change'?
- Need a sophisticated strategy - linked to Renaissance & key funders/ partners
- MoL ought to lead by example
- need for CE to influence decisions at all levels, in all departments "CE should be a golden thread reflected in all the museum's structures & processes"

2. Structures & systems

- constraints that the system sets
- lack of awareness of CE across organisation
- the lack of good internal communication channels reflects the museum's relationship with the outside world
- Not knowing – How do community know what's available and how they can be involved?
- need for shift/balance between collecting & using

- Can't know when a collection is being collected what its future use and relevance may be. Lack of strategic view re collections, what should we preserve/collect? (Staff who came in to do this struggle with outward looking focus).

3. Training & CPD

- needs for significant uplift across staff of CE issues & good practice
- need to invest time & resources in appropriate CPD
- need to share learning about CE within MoL better
- Recruitment – diversification at all levels
- CE demands the reconstruction of the profession – are we ready?

4. Power Sharing & partnerships

- some museum staff need to 'let go' and allow other voices to influence activities and policies
- Need to redefine 'knowledge' and look at power balance re "whose history" – what and how it's displayed?
- 'Issues led' approach is needed, not collections led. Collections are only a starting point (or should be!). [Collections tend to reflect issues from past approaches to collecting]. Need multi-disciplinary displays, based on issues. Think about displays/working/collection reasons in the light of today's (social) issues and values.
- need to share ownership of the common heritage with others on equal terms
- need community voices on the board & across staff, as well as in galleries
- Subjects of exhibitions should reflect community
- Collections need to respond to community needs
- More of everything local (collections, activities, displays, support) - sense of connection to immediate locality.
- More volunteers (& more diverse)
- Empowering volunteers as community advocates
- More dialogue/ forums with communities
- Community involved as team members – content, editing, design – smartens up the organisation
- Need to be open/have predisposition to involve/discuss/remove boundaries
- Democratisation. Everyone loves things. Explore world by looking and feeling 'things'. It's a human way to learn. Putting objects in cases goes against this. Need to shift power, encourage more people to really engage. Need right partners, to use their expertise.

5. Plurality & Diversity

- need to reflect multiple identities in *staff* as well as exhibitions – people from community groups becoming museum staff.
- need to diversify range of people museum is working with
- need to recognise tensions within and between communities
- need to offer a venue where communities meet communities
- Identity is much wider than ethnicity
- Multiple interpretation: both sides of a story – e.g. slavery stories
- Multiple voices: Let the story be told/heard.
- Through shared authorship & consultation you 'smarten up'
- should be open to wider range of ideas/identities – Museum as a *facilitator* - Sharing knowledge/responses to material
- Equitable partnership (paper by June Barn (?) Hutchison).

6. Value systems & ethos

- CE should be 'the golden thread' through all aspects of the museum's work – the MoL's mission: need to embed CE in the ethos of the MoL; need staff commitments '*It's in our DNA*'
- enthusiasm of staff is critical

- Dynamics within museum's own community (staff) v. important. Crucial. It models what happens without
- Need 'Signs' from museum about its openness. How is this and willingness communicated within & outside the museum?
- Value system of museum v. important. About museum changing and evolving as a result. Whole museum/org must buy in.
- Objects v people debate; collecting v using - curators v community / visitors debate. New approaches needed to deal with these tensions
- need to create a sense of mutual responsibility and value: reciprocity
- Training in community involvement
- Inclusivity from the outset
- Culture of outreach spread through staff.
- All staff responsibility for community engagement - Get rid of 'community spaces' in museum. 'Community exhibitions' should not be sidelined but should be in main museum – the whole museum should be a community space.

7. Flexibility

- In planning with communities
- Need systems that do not sideline communities but are built on mutual learning & respect
- In partnership development
- respecting both professional skills and community knowledge
- Museums need to be open to being engaged. (e.g. homelessness exhibition with homelessness project who made the approach).

8. Resourcing & timeframe

- CE & cultivating relationships over long periods is a slow process; development takes time; need time to build trust (although too much forward planning works against flexibility - need to keep open to opportunities (e.g. The Refugee Exhibition).
- core funding is essential to ensure sustainability – need to re-distribute where necessary. Prioritise resources for CE within the museum planning process.
- communities should be involved at earliest stages of resources distribution
- need joined up thinking with resourcing
- Don't leave it to the 'outreach' team not a 'bolt on'

9. Outcomes & benefits

- outcomes & benefits need to be for all, and agreed by all
- goals – who is setting them? & why?
- who is measuring & how?
- process is part of the product
- people bring new skills & learning
- do not get hooked on outputs

10. Managing expectations

- between communities & museum (& vice versa)
- be realistic
- need to be open to a dynamic, fluid and flexible process
- it needs to be OK to take risks and not be penalised
- need to build confidence to tackle difficult things (e.g. BUF/BNP) and to be reassured that it's OK to fail
- need to develop as a learning organisation. Respectful but challenging authorship.
- Challenge is mutual (both museum and community benefit)

11. Hidden feelings (often go unheard)

- hidden & uncomfortable feelings
- hidden & uncomfortable issues

- hidden prejudices
- hidden challenges
- sensitivities
- can staff speak freely? in confidence? without censorship? without reproof?

12. Communication

- If we can't communicate internally how do they expect us to communicate well with the outside world? Internal networking is an issue
- Need informed meetings as well as random conversations
- Museum bosses need to open up discourse amongst staff and stakeholders about how to deliver the CE mission

D. Further questions asked on the day:

- Role models – could these encourage community member to e.g. become curators?
- Multi-sense approach needed – can engage as no other can (from childhood onwards). Some museum collections are too protective, prevents full appreciation. How do we change this attitude?
- What's acceptable in the work place? How do we bring in long-standing museum staff who don't relate, don't see benefits of community engagement?
- Need political leverage; do senior people understand the process? Who owns the process?
- How should staff invest in community engagement to benefit the organisation? How does each individual member of staff engage with the mission?
- What are people's skills? How do we make best use of these?
- Why don't we invite staff & FoH to private views?
- Can staff give their views with out cause for concern/ sanctions?
- How do we resolve expectations on each side?
- Ask community 'what is your expectation of the MoL?'
- What makes us passionate? What interests people? When curators show inspiration the users see it – they can inspire passion in others
- Need a series of mini-events to experiment/ pilot ideas – little things that build up relationships
- start small – other things emerge - need to kick the ball onto the pitch – get started – iterative process – museum needs to suggest ideas & seek feedback
- Uncomfortable issues? How does the organisation deal with these?
- consultation essential
- how do we deal with sensitive issues? Do we know what questions to ask?
- Who is being exposed to the community?
- A whole organisation/ holistic approach – 'golden thread of DNA'
- CE can mean using unofficial means, can be anti-bureaucratic, even subversive – are we ready for this?
- Ground-work - who forges this?
- What are the practicalities and politics of collecting?
- Do museums have (or should they develop) a CE core offer? Perhaps with other museums?
- What's in the collections? How do communities know?
- What does the MoL think it wants in terms of CE? Sensitive but radical?
- What are key success factors – how do we measure these?
- Need to acknowledge professional skills & knowledge and not demoralise or undermine profession but question it