

## UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

### MUSEUMS STRATEGIC PLAN 2013-18

The University of Aberdeen's museum collections are among the oldest, largest and most significant in the country, having the status of a Recognised Collection of National Significance. In support of the high levels aims identified in the University's Strategic Plan 2011-2015 and the National Strategy for Scotland's Museums and Galleries, we have identified six strategic themes for the Museums Strategy 2013 to 2018.

#### **Aim 1 The University will aim for the highest standards possible and will be known for having a leading museum service.**

- a) The University's museums will play a prominent part in the life of the university, with high quality displays and activities attracting members of the university community and visitors, contributing to the ambitions of a world-leading university.
- b) The museums will have well designed and flexible public spaces, with a wide range of visitor facilities enabling creative public engagement.
- c) Collections stores will be designed to be accessible for researchers and other visitors, incorporating study and conservation facilities to enable improved use of the collections.
- d) The museums will play a leading role in the national and international museum and related sectors, participating in collaborative projects and being well-regarded for research and innovative interpretation, consistent with their status as Recognised Collection of National Significance.

#### **Aim 2 The University will have well-curated collections**

- a) The collections will be well curated with appropriately designed accessible storage facilities enabling environmental monitoring, house-keeping and care of collections. The reserve collection store will draw together most of the university's museum collections onto a single location on campus to enable their access for research, teaching and public engagement.
- b) The conservation of the collections will be professionally managed, with a conservation policy and programme to ensure the sustainability of the collection.
- c) Collections-based research will be fostered, contributing to the documentation of the collection. Electronic records will be available online for all items in the collection, with increasing numbers of associated digital images and with records of the current location of all items available for museum staff.
- d) The collections will be developed to reflect the university's research aims, with targeted active collecting and consideration of disposals when appropriate.

#### **Aim 3 There will be close engagement between the University's museums and academia**

- a) The museum will be an important aspect of the University's research profile, reflecting major research themes as well as the strengths of the collection. High-quality research on the museum's collections, and activities using the collections, will be undertaken by academic researchers, museum staff, students and others, with results contributing to the understanding and documentation of the collections as well as disciplinary research.
- b) Museum Studies will lie at the heart of the museums' contribution to a range of degree programmes, offering learning opportunities and contributing to the University's teaching profile. A strong network of honorary and joint appointments will ensure that museum and academic staff collaborate in teaching.
- c) Alongside formal learning opportunities, students will be able to participate in the work of the museum through its events and exhibitions, but also through a systematic volunteering programme, opportunities for internships and close liaison with the Students' Association.
- d) The museum will be part of a cultural hub for the university, contributing to its social and intellectual life through events, recruitment, public engagement and being an inspiring and welcoming part of campus.

**Aim 4 The University's museums will participate in high quality and accessible public engagement**

- a) The museum collections and academic research will lie at the heart of the public engagement programme, contributing to public lectures, schools programme, exhibitions and other events, and ensuring a wide disciplinary spread of activities.
- b) There will be a strong online presence for the university's museums, bringing together information about the collections, exhibitions and events, online resources and academic opportunities and increasing awareness of the international significance of the collections.
- c) The service for schools will have distinct programmes for different stages, including an outreach service built around the Cabinet of Curiosities as well as collections-based activities in the museum.
- d) An effective communications and marketing strategy will ensure high visibility, maximise the number of people participating, and foster integration within the University's public engagement programming.
- e) Services will be designed to be suitable for people of all ages and abilities, with a strong focus on activities for young adults to reflect the museums' place in the university.
- f) Exhibitions will focus on displaying the collection in accessible yet challenging ways, making strong links between academic research, the collections and the public.

**Aim 5 There will be appropriate staffing and resources for the University's museums to achieve the strategic aims**

- a) There will be a core staff able to enable the full range of the museum's activities to be delivered sustainably, with additional fixed term posts for specific projects. Additional areas for development will be considered, such as a curator for the biological sciences collections and a volunteer manager, while enhancing the administrative and technical support will also be considered.
- b) The museum team will have clearly defined roles, but will also be able to provide support outwith their immediate area of responsibility. Training and staff development will ensure that staff are operating at the leading edge of professional practice, supported by documented policies and procedures.
- c) There will be an increasing focus on external funding and philanthropy to support museum activities and developments, notably the development of new museum storage and public engagement facilities, as well as projects that enhance the documentation, care, understanding, use and marketing of the collections.
- d) Museum staff will embrace the aim of continuous improvement, ensuring increasing efficiency and the use of technological solutions to enhance services.

**Aim 6 In order to achieve the other aims, the University's museums will develop close collaboration with appropriate institutions**

- a) The museum will lie at the heart of a network of partnerships, with a particular focus on the work of the Special Collections Centre and other sections of the university involved with collections and public engagement, as well as those responsible for research and teaching.
- b) A priority will be given to close working with museums in North-East Scotland, particularly those of Aberdeen City Council, and collaboration with other university museums. The museum and its staff will also play an active role in developing partnerships with other museums in Scotland and beyond, aiming to provide leadership for the museum sector.
- c) Close partnerships will also include those that widen collaboration beyond the museum sector, particularly focusing on work with the local community, commercial organisations and charities that have related aims.