

# North West Federation of Museums and Art Galleries Professional Development Grant Final Report

## Background

Over the past few years Whitworth staff have tended towards introspection. This is perhaps due a 'heads down' and 'getting on with it' approach brought on by heavy workloads, pressures on travel budgets or perhaps just habit.

With the introduction of a programme of workforce development and cross-organisational learning regionally through the Hub, however, staff are beginning to recognise the benefits of "getting out more", learning from colleagues in other museums and galleries and sharing good practise.

With the re-opening of Kelvingrove in Glasgow and the related sector interest, it was identified that it would be useful for three members the public programmes team (Head of Learning and Interpretation, Marketing Officer and Head of Development) to make a trip to Glasgow to see new their new developments and meet with relevant colleagues. While there we also planned to visit other relevant arts organisations.

Applications were made by two staff (myself and Esme Ward) to the North West Federation for Museums and Galleries professional development grant scheme to cover the costs of this trip. It was agreed that only one member of staff would be funded and I was offered a grant of £230.

## The Visit

The programme team made the trip to Glasgow between Monday 21 August and Wednesday 23 August 2006. It was felt that Kelvingrove would have been open for long enough by this date to get a good overview of any changes in audience numbers, profiles etc.

We travelled to Glasgow on the morning of Monday 21 August, arriving around lunchtime. Monday afternoon was spent at **Glasgow Museums Resource Centre**. The Centre is a purpose built storage facility in a suburb of the city which has limited opening to the public. The facility is the result of the Kelvingrove refurbishment, used to house the collections and staff during renovations and beyond.

Glasgow Museums promote the Centre as "*the first publicly accessible store for the city's museum service*" although drop in access is only available on a daily tour, which we took with a member of the education team (and were the only visitors that day).

The Whitworth Art Gallery, which currently opens all its stored collections for public viewing on an appointment basis, has long term plans to open its own stored collection for drop-in public access. We have, over the past couple of years seen a number of open access stores but found nothing which matches our own aspiration. We hoped that Glasgow Museums would be providing a service which would act as a benchmark for these developments but despite being an excellent object storage facility we felt that the Centre had a number of drawbacks including its location outside the city centre on a rather bleak industrial estate (the result of ERDF funding) and a lack of appropriate public welcome.

The Resource Centre is also home to **The Open Museum** which is advertised by Glasgow Museums as: *“taking Glasgow Museums' collections beyond the museum walls and out into the community”* with the provision of reminiscence kits, object handling kits and exhibitions available for loan. *“A free service allows Glasgow's citizens to borrow museum objects and create their own displays”*.

To hear more about this programme we met with Elaine Addington, Open Museum Coordinator, who also gave us more information on how the Centre operates and on the development of Kelvingrove.

Tuesday was spent at **Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery**. I spent the morning with Alan Horn, Development Director for Glasgow Museums. Alan and his small team of three led the capital campaign for Kelvingrove and are about to embark on a similar campaign for the **Museum of Transport**. Alan was appointed at the start of the campaign to provide an overview of fundraising and other income generation (shops, catering concession, banqueting, intellectual assets, image reproduction) for the refurbishment and beyond. There was previously no development team and no external funding had been raised for Kelvingrove in the past so an effective overall strategy was able to be implemented with no inherited history.

The capital campaign for Kelvingrove is a huge success story. 13 years of planning (from original plans to builders on site) meant that the process and was well thought out and met the needs of all concerned. In 1996 an application to NHMF for £5m was considered as not being ambitious enough. A second £25m bid was considered too ambitious and in 2001 their third bid (for £12.7m) was agreed. At the time it was the highest award NHMF had given in Scotland, although they have recently given £17.5m for the Transport Museum, just across the road from Kelvingrove.

The Development team set a further £5m target to match the NHMF grant. Priority additions were available to funders and individuals who chose not to support the main campaign. The most successful of these additions is the previously unplanned £5m Campbell Hunter Education Wing, paid for by Tom Hunter (retail entrepreneur and Scotland's richest man) who had previously expressed no interest in museums but proved to have an interest in young

people and education.

Alan suggests that he ran a “*straightforward fundraising campaign*” and that they were “*rigorously honest*” with trusts, corporate sponsors and individual donors. This seems to have worked, resulting in a final bottom line budget of £36m.

The development has transformed the building for visitors and staff alike and has managed to meet the almost impossible request from the public to “*make it better but don't change anything because we love it as it is!*”. As the most consistently visited museum and art gallery outside London (1m visitors annually) and an audience who genuinely believe that Kelvingrove ‘belongs to them’, there was much at stake. With this outpouring of interest, individual giving was an obvious method of raising funds for the work. When the campaign finally closed (after being extended due to public demand) 5000 people had given 9000 donations – a huge success but one which proved difficult to manage given such a small development team.

In the first instance the development was about an essential structural overhaul. With 100 year old wiring and collapsed roofs there was much to be done to create a safe space for collections and staff. It was recognized that these structural changes could free up a significant amount of new public space and much of the basement and office space was converted into gallery space. Prior to the refurbishment 120 staff worked on site. Now only a handful of ‘behind the scenes’ staff are on site (including 4 curatorial hot desks) and the rest are based at The Resource Centre.

Alan was about to leave Glasgow Museums to take up a new job in university development and alumni fundraising and we agreed that it would be useful to stay in touch.

The afternoon was spent at Kelvingrove looking at new displays, the Resource Centre, the Campbell Hunter Education Wing, the catering and retail outlets, the museum’s relationship to the park and external promotion and marketing.

On Wednesday morning I visited **Tramway** where I was particularly interested in their development of **The Hidden Garden** as an extension to their gallery spaces. The Whitworth is situated in a park and we are in the process of working with Manchester City Council to develop this green space to include artist design solutions, sculpture etc. A number of useful ideas arose from this visit.

In the afternoon I visited **The Burrell Collection**. The Burrell is also set in parkland (Pollock Country Park) and I was interested to look at the relationship of the gallery to the green space. In addition it was useful to see the building in the light of potential development at the Whitworth, a play area close to the gallery, the catering and shop operations, the informal education offer. I also took a

public tour with one of their volunteer guides and was able to hear from the guide and some of the local people on the tour their thoughts on the development of Kelvingrove.

The trip was a very useful opportunity to see a new development and hear about the successes and problems involved. It also gave me the opportunity to visit other useful benchmark organisations. The findings from the trip are still to be reported to the programme team meeting (December) but have already informed a number of processes and projects at the Whitworth. In addition my own role at the Gallery has recently changed to include management of the income generation team so the conversation I had with Alan Horn at Kelvingrove become even more pertinent, as I recognise shared issues and opportunities.

We have also just begun a process of benchmarking at the Whitworth and this has also been informed in a number of ways by the visit.

I would like to thank the NW Fed for making this trip possible.

## Expenditure Budget

The £230 grant was spent as follows:

Train journeys	Manchester-Glasgow Return	£ 63.00
	Nitshill (Resource Centre) to Glasgow City Centre	£ 2.20
Bus journeys	Glasgow city centre to Tramway	£ 2.45
	Hotel to Kelvingrove	£ 1.50
	Kelvingrove to hotel	£ 1.50
Taxi Journey	Glasgow City Centre to Nitshill (Resource Centre)	£ 12.00
Hotel	2 Nights at Glasgow City Centre Travelodge	£110.00
Meals	Breakfast x 2 at hotel	£ 10.00
	Lunch at Kelvingrove café	£ 5.50
	Dinner (Monday)	£ 10.00
	Lunch at Tramway	£ 3.50
	Dinner (Tuesday)	£ 14.00
<b>Total:</b>		<b>£235.65</b>