

# *Common Cause*

## **North and Mid Wales Museum Partnerships Study**

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## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

***“Museum to museum” dialogues are not good. It would be of benefit to meet others. (Ivor Murrant, Llanrwst Almshouses)***

***Where we are in North Wales cuts you off. There is a divide between North and South Wales, but to an extent we make it that way. It depends a lot upon the characters. You have to give the time to know what’s going on (Pat West, Ynys Mon)***

The study was initiated by a Steering Committee comprised of professional museums officers in North and Mid Wales and was funded by CyMAL. It covers the areas north of an oblique line between Aberystwyth and Montgomery. The nature of the museum provision is that services are small and relatively geographically isolated. As a result, museum-to-museum business activity is limited, as are opportunities for sharing experience and knowledge.

### **Conclusions**

In the areas of formal learning and storage, local authority museums in the study area exceed the Wales national average in the level of their provision. They also exceed the Wales average in provision of suitable buildings. This is remarkable because it is clear from analysis of financial data from Spotlight Wales that non-nationally-managed museum budgets in North & Mid Wales are 30% below the national average.

Whether run by local authorities, trusts or universities, most museums in the study area are achieving minor miracles on a shoestring. However, Spotlight Wales demonstrates that these museums are often unable to achieve the same levels of service as the Wales average.

If the museums in the study area are to improve and achieve the same levels of service delivery as the Wales average, they may need to be identified as a special case and given dedicated support.

Although individually their work is often good, curatorial confidence is low and will need to be raised if improvements are to be made. The areas which would most immediately benefit from partnership working include:

- o *Community engagement, market research; web-based services; collections assessment and knowledge about collections; mainstreaming Welsh language; temporary exhibitions; engagement with cultural, heritage and tourism strategies; career progression.*

A stronger voice for the needs and contributions of all museums in the study area is necessary if it is not to feel ignored nationally. This should also include trustees, elected members and chief officers.

There is a strong spirit of enthusiasm for collaborative working in museums on the ground and from senior local and national figures. Given the low staff numbers which characterise museums in the study area there is little surplus capacity to invest in setting up and maintaining partnerships, however beneficial they may be long term. It should not be assumed that effective raising of standards overall can happen without additional targeted support.

Support for future museum improvement in the study area will depend upon a combination of national structures, local investment and effective mutual support. This would require the active engagement of

- A North and Mid Wales group with a voice
- Local Authorities
- Amgueddfa Cymru
- CyMAL
- The Federation of Museums and Galleries in Wales

The North and Mid Wales Curator's group should be re-formed as an inclusive and proactive group which works federally with both smaller clusters locally and large organisations nationally, responding to consultations and representing the interests of museums in the study area.

A Partnerships Officer should be appointed on a two year contract to assist in the initiation and co-ordination of new relationships and to give practical assistance to them.

At a national level the Federation of Museums and Galleries in Wales is the most appropriate organisation to ensure that museums in North and Mid Wales are fully recognised and included in the Wales-wide family. However, it would have to change its working practices if this were to work satisfactorily.

### **Recommendations**

- There are 16 recommendations for the North and Mid Wales museums' community to invest time and energy in museum-to-museum networking, representation and influence, and sharing experience.
- There are 7 recommendations for working with CyMAL
- 7 recommendations are made for working with Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales.
- 4 recommendations are made for working with the Federation of Museums and Galleries in Wales.
- 1 recommendation is made for local authorities

## **2 BACKGROUND AND BRIEF**

**2.1** There has been a feeling for some time within the museum community in North Wales that local museums could and should work more closely together for the common benefit. Acting as lead body, Wrexham County Borough Council made a successful grant application to CyMAL for a North and Mid Wales Museum Partnerships Study.

**2.2** Brief  
“The Mid Wales Museum Partnerships Study will examine how museums (and museum services) can work more closely together, to develop effective synergies and improve their offer to customers. The study will cover all aspects of museum work and will consider the potential for joint working arrangements on both a formal and informal basis”.

## **3 PROCESS**

**3.1** The consultants were appointed following open advertisement. They worked under the guidance of a Steering Committee comprising:

- o Steve Greuter, Wrexham (joint lead)
- o Ann Lloyd Williams, Conwy (joint lead)
- o Eva Bredsdorff, Powys
- o Susan Dalloe, Denbighshire
- o Morigan Ellis, Bodolwyddan
- o Michael Freeman, Ceredigion
- o Angela Gaffney, Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales
- o Carol Whittaker, CyMAL

**3.2** The Study had four consultation stages which were entirely for Accredited or Registered museums:

1. Two focus groups, attended by a total of 12 people, held at Welshpool and Bangor
2. Brief email questionnaire to both the curators being interviewed at (3) and those who attended the focus groups.
3. Telephone interviews and conversations (c 40 minutes) with
  - 11 people representing a cross section of the museum community
  - 2 senior local authority Chief Officers
  - 3 from Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales
  - 2 from CyMAL
  - 2 from GEM
  - 1 from MA / Federation
4. Plenary session for everyone – Colwyn Bay 19 Feb 2008

**3.3** The evidence upon which this report is based is:

- a) Consultation with 30 individuals who included a sample group of 24 people working directly in museums. Between them they

represent 33 of the 40 Accredited, Registered or provisionally Registered museums in the study area.

- b) Analysis of Spotlight data for the full total of 50 museums (ie including private or non-accredited museums) in the study area.

## **4 UNDERSTANDING THE STUDY**

- 4.1** We have used the term “study area” to describe the area of North and Mid Wales covered by the study – which is north of an oblique line from Aberystwyth up to Montgomery. Only Accredited or Registered museums were included in the consultation stages, but all museums are listed at Appendix 5.

It is important to note that this study only considers how partnerships and collaborations could improve museum and gallery service delivery in the designated study area. There are, of course, many other issues which museums need to address. The sample of people consulted for this study all recognised the distinction between what they need overall (which is being addressed by CyMAL’s emerging work around a national museums strategy for Wales, and concurrent consultation through the Federation of Museums and Galleries in Wales) and which of those issues can be specifically addressed by partnerships within the study area.

Although data has been provided, this is not primarily a statistical report. The consultation was planned to produce qualitative, evidenced views which were then informed by the experience of the consultants in producing the recommendations. *Inspiring Learning For All’s* headings of people, places, policies and partnerships were used at the research and evidence gathering stages of the study.

The issues highlighted at (5) are not listed in order of priority. Different elements of the museum community will wish to engage more actively with different sections.

### **4.2 Sbotolau ar Amgueddfeydd /Spotlight (CyMAL 2007)**

CyMAL has published Spotlight in December 2007 using data collected in 2006. Extracts from its findings for the study area are to be found at Appendix 5. Spotlight uses a proven model to provide valuable comparative data to give a far greater depth of understanding of the museums community in Wales than was previously possible.

#### **Range Statements**

In this study we have used those Spotlight range statements which refer to issues raised in consultation. Range statements describe levels of attainment against defined museum standards. The

maximum level is 6, and 3 is generally accepted as Accreditation standard. It must be emphasised that the range statements are NOT scores. For example, a small independent museum would not be expected to employ a full-time education specialist and is therefore unlikely to reach level 5 or 6 on formal learning. We have compared the figures for the study area with those across the whole of Wales.

### Funding

Centrally funded and managed organisations like the National Trust for Wales and Amgueddfa Cymru could distort local statistics. In preparing the average levels which head each part of section (5), to get a sense of what locally managed museums and galleries are achieving, we excluded “nationally managed” sites run by the National Trust and Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales. However, they were included in the consultation and where explicitly referenced in the text.

In 2005/6 the average budget for all the museums in the study area was 45% lower than that for all of Wales. When the “nationally managed” museums are removed from the figures, the North and Mid Wales average budget was still 20% lower than the equivalent figure across Wales. In case this was an exceptional year, we looked at three years’ figures and the same pattern emerged. Without “nationally managed” museums, the study area had budgets 30% lower than the average across Wales.

#### Spotlight 2007

<b>Average Budgets</b>	All Wales 105 sites	<b>All Wales without NT and AC-NMW</b> 93 sites	All museums in N & Mid Wales 50 sites	<b>N&amp;M Wales without NT and AC-NMW</b> 43 sites
2005/6	£159,039	<b>£99,265</b>	£88,113	<b>£79,236</b>
Three year average	£133,696	<b>£91,257</b>	£79,704	<b>£63,204</b>

### 4.3 Snapshot

Spotlight lists **all** museums, including unaccredited venues. According to Spotlight, in the study area

- Out of 50 museums, 36 are fully accredited or registered museum facilities, 4 independents are provisionally registered and 10 (3 LA and 7 independent) are not accredited.
- The 50 museums are run by 32 different museum bodies. Of these 50, 20 are run by 7 local authorities.
- Local authority visitor numbers range from 100 to 57,000 per year, while independent museums range from 580 to 36,000.
- None of the museums are really large in UK terms. In 2006 the two largest local authority museum service budgets, aggregated across their sites, were £668K and £492K. These single tier, unitary authority museum services are financially more comparable to second tier, District, museums in England.

There are three large independent museums (over £150K pa) and many very small ones.

- Of the 123 paid staff, 50% are in local authority museums & 34% in the National Slate Museum at Llanberis or the National Trust.
- Overall, there are a total of 1,184 people working for all museums in the study area, of which 68% are volunteers, 5% are professional volunteers and 10% paid professionals.
- 275,000 approx items are held in museum collections in North and Mid Wales' museums. The largest by number are photography, archaeology and archives (these always come top by the nature of the artefacts); costume and textiles, decorative and applied art, fine art, science and industry.
- 34% of the museums in the study area say that their stores are already full, 22% will be full in 5 years and 26% between 5 and 10 years.

## 5 ISSUES FOR MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES IN NORTH AND MID WALES

### 5.1 The public interface

#### 5.1.1 Community engagement

<p><b>Spotlight (Wales national figures in brackets)</b> <b>F9 – Audience development and marketing</b> Local Authority – 2.85 (3.25) Independent – 2.69 (2.66)</p>
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The focus groups claimed a high level of support for their museums from their local communities. Local authority museums estimate that between 50% and 65% of their visits are from local communities, with different sites attracting very different audiences. Sometimes they also fulfil a different role - that of "social spaces", where locals can drop in for ten minutes as well as visit formally when exhibitions change.

This is not the same as audience development (engaging new users from hard to reach groups). Some museum services are experienced in community engagement and these local experiences should certainly be shared through seminars and the Federation, but, overall, it seems that audience development is not being prioritised in the way that might be expected to achieve local government corporate agendas. The reason is not likely to be that museum staff lack the willingness to engage and undertake work with and/or in the community, but a lack of capacity when most museum teams are very small and have to concentrate on day-to-day operational matters. Encouraging community engagement takes time and human resources on an ongoing- basis.

Never the less, cultural diversity is still not seen as a major issue by those we consulted, even though there were mentions of communities of Polish migrant workers, travellers and, in some areas “it is Welsh speakers and the rest”.

*✍ My assessment is that there is considerable latent support in the community. They believe heritage is important and that we are doing a good job. We need to go out into the community to translate that into active real support. (Alan Watkin, Chief Leisure, Libraries And Culture Officer, Wrexham)*

*✍ The community responds well to what we do but we are not really challenged. (Pat West, Ynys Mon)*

While Spotlight indicates that Independent Museums were doing better than the all-Wales comparative figure, the interviews revealed a slightly less comforting picture of community support for the smaller independents which tend to have a core loyal following with tourists boosting their numbers. Only those with regular events really attract repeat local visits and this is restricted by volunteer numbers.

*✍ We do get strong local support but only after the threat of pulling it down due to lack of interest! There was uproar. (Janet Griffith, Barmouth Sailor's Institute)*

*✍ We get support from the schools, Community First, the local council, AM and MP. But local people don't come as often as we would like although we do change our exhibits every year. (John Cave, Holyhead Maritime Museum)*

Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales has recently appointed a Public Consultation Co-ordinator and it would be very useful if their experience could be shared with the study area, possibly as guidance notes or through training.

### **5.1.2 Users / non users / marketing**

*✍ We don't know enough about non-users in the community so we don't target our audiences. But then, once you target, you have to deliver. Sharing good practice would be useful. (Pat West, Ynys Mon)*

*✍ I have contributed to CyMAL events on our work with community engagement and I would be happy to share that. (Morrigan Ellis, Bodelwyddan)*

To persuade people to really believe that museums are valuable to them, we need to know who does *not* use them and why. While 15 out of 19 museums claimed they were confident that they knew who their users were, some gave substantial caveats and three were only analysing visitor's books. Although the larger museums with professional staff are doing market research, it is largely focussed on current users, and at least 3 local authorities only carried out visitor surveys spasmodically or when resources were available. The smaller independents were more interested in promotion – adverts, editorial and leaflets – although this was limited by cost.

*✍ It would be interesting to compare our market research but every site is different and I don't know if our results would be useful. (Morrigan Ellis, Bodelwyddan)*

*✍ We do no active marketing at all. We rely on CADW and the NT. (Independent)*

In our sample, only 7 museums had anyone on the team with any marketing responsibility and only 2 have regular access to professional help. The low level of marketing expertise probably means that even where surveys are carried out, they have little impact upon changing museum policy or financial planning. It is unlikely that rapid changes to the product are made as a result.

*☞ We can measure our community involvement. We have a season pass, £25 per family and these have gone from 123 in 2004 to 500. We send an annual questionnaire to pass holders and get c 40% back. How did we do it? We found out what they wanted, listened to them. (Chris Wright, Greenfield Valley Trust)*

*☞ We had an ILFA grant 3 years ago for non user research but the contractors didn't know enough about our local demographic so the results were not very useful. I would really like to see something else, but I don't see how we could afford it now. (Susan Dalloe, Denbighshire Heritage Services)*

For political, social, financial and planning reasons, museums need to understand non-usage and the potential visitor / user pool before spending scarce resources on promotion.

Non-user research would be more effective if done collaboratively. Interestingly, Wrexham Library service is leading on non-user research for public libraries across Wales, so there is a precedent. For museums, this is a matter of interest to both CyMAL and Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales. The latter commissioned Leicester University to conduct a non-visitor study about five years ago which produced much that was not time specific and information that would be of interest to a wider range of organisations (see Appendix 4). It would be interesting to repeat the exercise.

### 5.1.3 Education and learning

**Spotlight (Wales figures in brackets)**

**F11 – Access – informal learning**

Local Authority – 3.75 (3.7)

Independent – 2.6 (2.68)

**F12 – Access – formal learning**

Local Authority – 4.15 (3.89)

Independent – 2.52 (2.71)

Spotlight shows that in the areas of education and learning (particularly formal learning) North and Mid Wales' local authority museums are reaching high standards, exceeding the Wales average. This may in part be due to the HLF funded JAMES project, although this only benefited 6 local authority and 5 independent museums in Denbighshire, Flintshire and Conwy. Whatever the reason, this is could put them in a powerful position when we see that the Assembly Government describes learning for life with the words "to have a better understanding of our world, of looking to the past in order to deliver a better future for the people of Wales" (*One Wales – A Progressive Agenda for the Government of Wales, 2006*

## Capacity

Spotlight lists 13 paid professional staff in the study area whose primary role is education and our sample showed that almost three quarters of those museums now have a dedicated education presence, whether paid staff, volunteers with relevant experience or access to other museum education services. Only 2 local authorities and 4 smaller independents in our sample do not now have contacts with schools that might use their museums although these are often in formative stages.

*☞ Our schools in Anglesey pay into the service but if a school doesn't buy in, they have to pay for services direct. We do taught visits and activities and handling boxes for non Anglesey schools. We have put prehistory stuff on the National Grid for Learning and we have expertise in interactive whiteboards (Pat West, Ynys Mon)*

*☞ An ex headmaster organises it for us. He has been round all the schools on Holy Island, Anglesey. Each school pays a fee and gets two trips to the museum and a free bus provided by Stena. We also have schools from Anglesey, Conwy, Crewe, France and Ireland. We show them the history of the port of Holyhead by taking them to the country park to see the quarry, then to the museum, then to the port where they see the old docks and go onto the big ship and meet the captain. (John Cave, Holyhead Maritime Museum)*

*☞ We are limited by our lack of staff and old teacher's packs. We circulated local schools to ask what they wanted but only two came back. (Brian Owen, Royal Welch Fusiliers)*

The interviews also demonstrated an enormously wide range of provision and experience with flashes of inspired provision. Although further developments could be hampered by partial dependence upon grant aid, there now does seem to be a solid foundation of expertise in the larger museums and Amgueddfa Cymru which could provide the basis of partnership working. Education staff do seem to feel isolated, especially post-JAMES, and it is to be hoped that the current GEM/CyMAL initiative will provide a networking platform for the future. (See GEM case study - Appendix 4)

*☞ An excellent volunteer does our schools loans boxes but we don't get many school groups coming, they have been stable at about 1,500 for years. We put loads of stuff online which teachers could use, but we don't think that teachers use it. They just want us to give a brief talk on a topic so they can tick a box. An education post would be a priority for us. (Michael Freeman, Ceredigion Museum)*

In theory there would appear to be opportunities for shared core packages of teaching resources which could be adapted for local use. In practice, as one museum said "We have very good materials, I am not sure what benefit we would get from sharing them". Does this material reach the attention of the right people? Perhaps an easily identifiable web-based education presence through, for example, the National Grid for Learning (NGfL - Cymru), could reach more teachers than any leaflet (see Appendix 4). However, there is always a danger that e-learning resources are driven by the supply side (museums think they have a good package) rather than a

thorough understanding of need. Research papers have highlighted the need for someone to look at the demand side, to co-ordinate resources and identify gaps.

*✎ "The work that I do to support museums outside Amgueddfa Cymru I do through GEM (The Group for Education in Museums.) Other learning staff support local museums in different ways, including through the partnership programme. There is no performance indicator for this type of work but we help wherever we can. (Ceri Black, Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales)*

*✎ Our museum education work is excellent. Of course, every elected member is on a school governing body, which could be useful. (Alan Watkin, Chief Leisure, Libraries And Culture Officer, Wrexham)*

*✎ What would be ideal for us would be a post for museums, libraries and archives in Denbighshire. (Susan Dalloe, Denbighshire Heritage Services)*

#### National support

Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales has set out its vision for the next ten years under the strap line “a world class museum of learning”. While most of this relates to activities within its own museums, they are also already engaged with education officers in partnership schemes across Wales. Their education officers do help other non-national museums, if they are asked.

The Group for Education in Museums (GEM) has a Wales convenor in Amgueddfa Cymru but there is no Wales committee. The organisation's membership is stronger in South Wales, but following the recent CyMAL-funded Building a Learning Legacy initiative, which has aimed to strengthen activity in North Wales, the convenor would like to increase presence of the organisation in the study area, adding twice yearly networking meetings to the GEM's training programme. If local museums were willing to offer free accommodation and/or organise lunch, the events could be supplied by GEM Wales in more locally accessible venues. A directory of names, snapshots and contact details of those primarily engaged in museum education would go a long way towards reducing isolation. (See GEM case study - Appendix 4)

#### 5.1.4 Online presence and websites

Out of 19 responding, 17 museums have a website. These range from very large sites with over 1,500 pages giving access to searchable object catalogues, to single page marketing. Almost all respondents wanted to improve their sites while noting limitations around conforming to a local authority template and/or finding funding.

*✎ We would like to be able to use online collections for education and a Wales wide resource would be really valuable. As with all these things it would need to be carefully monitored though. (Morrigan Ellis, Bodelwyddan)*

*✎ Shared education resources would be good. A person to put stuff on National Grid for Learning Cymru. (Brian Owen, Royal Welch Fusiliers)*

It does seem that most museums now have access to the web and

at least some people with the skills to use it. This is significant when it comes to delivery of support to museums in the study area. Where museums are small and staff cannot leave the building or cannot afford to travel and can feel isolated, electronic solutions must be part of the mix. This could assist with

- Education resources
- Marketing
- An intranet source of expertise about collections
- Access to a Skills Bank

*✍ I think museums are a bit behind because both libraries and archives have an enormous amount on line and we can look less modern or informed. There are moves by the Federation, National Museum and Royal Commission to get every archaeological find in museums in Wales on line, but it is taking far too long to sort out the technology and organisation. (Michael Freeman, Ceredigion Museum)*

*One Wales –A Progressive Agenda for the Government of Wales (June 2007)* refers to establishing “an all Wales Collection of People’s History backed by permanent staff with responsibility for the promotion and development of the collection”. It is likely that this too would include a virtual museum element.

CyMAL’s national Museum Strategy for Wales is in development and consultation has taken place. The People’s Collection will be a crucial component of the strategy, because it is a *One Wales* commitment, and CyMAL is committed to working in partnership to deliver it by co-ordinating with and taking note of other initiatives. There is evidence that many museums in North and Mid Wales would like to be engaged in these discussions from the start.

Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales, has stated that “it will be our objective to facilitate access to the collections to every part of Wales through our partnership programmes with local museums and galleries, and by the creation of a ‘virtual museum’ accessible through the internet” (*Development Plan 2006-16*).

The relative isolation of museums and galleries in the study area makes digital access to services of particular interest. However, there is no co-ordinated approach to any of these initiatives at present and any proposal would have to take into account competition for visitors between the charging and non charging venues. A collaborative response to digital initiatives would ensure that museums in North and Mid Wales are integrated into any proposals.

## **5.2 Collections and assets**

### **5.2.1** Focus groups said that these were high priorities:

- Sharing collections expertise, including research and publication, specialist knowledge and links to national knowledge and database.

Slightly lower was:

- Conservation advice – an officer available to everyone in the region.

## 5.2.2 Collections – content

A summary of CyMAL's Spotlight assessment of the collections and numeric data on the content in all North and Mid Wales museums is attached at Appendix 5.

- Agriculture – Ceredigion holds 58% of total collections in Accredited museums in the study area
- Archaeology – Powysland and Llandudno Museums hold 52% of total collections
- Archives – the largest collections are at Royal Welch Fusiliers, Ceredigion and Rhyl Library & Museum which between them hold approximately 69% of total collections
- Costume & Textiles – Wrexham and Ceredigion between them hold 66% of total collections
- Decorative & Applied Art – Wrexham has the largest holding with 32% of the total, 11% of the total are of international significance
- Fine Art – the largest holding is at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth with 58% of total collections, 28% of the total are of international significance,
- Maritime – the largest holding is at Holyhead Maritime Museum, being 38% of the total
- Medicine – Wrexham holds 61% of total collections
- Music – the smallest collection numerically, Llandudno holds 57% of the total collections
- Photographs – the largest collection numerically, Royal Welch Fusiliers holds 67% of total collections
- Science & Industry – the National Slate Museum holds 50% of the total collections
- Social History – the next largest after photographs. The two largest collections are at Ceredigion and Wrexham which between them hold 57% of the total

The majority of the collection information covered in Spotlight shows overwhelmingly local relevance. Where significance in an international, UK or Wales context is indicated this often relates to the same group of objects.

Within subject areas there is potential for links to be made to collections within the study area, indeed one can even begin to identify lead institutions. This could be tackled on a thematic basis or by providing generic information to support understanding e.g. geology or biology collections. With active leadership support, museums with specialist staff could be provided with opportunities to give assistance and share expertise and knowledge with relevant

colleagues in the study area.

Spotlight has identified 261 collections in the study area which have been deemed to be of international/Wales/UK significance. The potential for defining and recognising “dispersed national collections” is also being actively discussed. A talk by Richard Bevins, Amgueddfa Cymru, to a cross domain audience at the 2007 CILIP CYMRU conference: Building for the Future, was titled “A Museums strategy – where next?” and ended by suggesting what the strategy should consider covering:

- *Undertake a systematic assessment of what collections are held and where, and ascertain their significance i.e. define the asset*
- *Build on the recent developments*
  - *Partnerships Programmes e.g. with Swansea City Council for the National Waterfront Museum.*
  - *Sharing Treasures*
- *Develop a strategy for rolling out in a more formal way the 'local' relationships*
- *Maximise initiatives for Wales such as the MA 'Effective Collections' programme*
- *Work strategically at integrating acquisition policies and strategies*
- *Engage in serious dialogue in relation to the potential for long term loans and transfers across Wales*

## **5.2.2 Knowledge of collections**

Knowledge about collections is fundamental to their use in service delivery. Society expects museums to provide reliable knowledge and people trust their accuracy and impartiality. Only two thirds of questionnaire respondents said that their volunteers/staff had “enough knowledge about their collections to do their job well” or that they had staff or volunteers with specialist knowledge about the collections or a relevant research subject. 4 local authorities said that they do not have adequate knowledge about the collections they hold for society. Spotlight lists paid professional staff with a primary role in curatorial work – in the whole study area it lists 9 in local authorities, 3 in independent museums and 2 in nationally managed museums (NT and the national museums).

☞ The days are gone when we had the luxury of a specialist. We would go to the National Museum, though we do have a lot of expertise here. (Pat West, Ynys Mon)

☞ I would tend to go to the National Army Museum or the Imperial War Museum; there are contacts I have made over the years. (Brian Owen, Royal Welch Fusiliers)

☞ I have always made scholarship a priority. The council know we have a good reputation, and I am very hot on responding to enquiries, so our satisfaction rate is high, so they are happy. However, that we do have five staff and one attendant. (Michael Freeman, Ceredigion Museum)

Knowledge about collections was traditionally held in the curator's head, with only limited entries going into catalogues and even now, knowledge transfer processes are rare. Professional curators of

specialist collections, or those individuals (paid or Trustee) who have been in post for a long time, are generally satisfied with the levels of collections knowledge in their institution and have a good range of contacts where they can gather more. Those independents with historic links to CADW, the National Trust or Amgueddfa Cymru are very fortunate in this regard.

*➤ We would ask for help from the Amgueddfa Cymru, National Library or Powys archives. (Dr Ann Welton, Montgomery Civic Society, the Old Bell Museum)*

However, more recent or more junior appointments have less confidence in their knowledge. For them, opportunities to extend their knowledge, to keep up to date with recent research and to meet colleagues who can be useful to them, are very important. Two thirds of our sample knew that someone in their museum participated in a museum network of some kind, although 2 of the 8 local authorities said that these were limited and some of the small independents included their curatorial adviser.

This is not unique to the study area – the Museums Association have raised it as an issue nationally – but it is a particular issue for people, paid or unpaid, who work in such small institutions that it is a) difficult for them to get out and b) almost impossible for them to give time to research in any form.

*➤ Networks are definitely important for me personally because of my lack of curatorial expertise. I need confidence in curatorial matters. (Independent)*

*➤ At times for assistance we look west (Ireland). We are also fortunate to have Pat West. (John Cave, Holyhead Maritime Museum)*

*➤ I think we should have a party now and then. But I know it is difficult to pull people together. (Ivor Murrant, Llanrwst Almshouses)*

In theory there is sufficient knowledge about the study area's collections, but it is in isolated pockets and staff find it is difficult to dedicate the time and travel funds to sharing it between venues. The lack of curatorial confidence in this area could be improved by closer “museum to museum” relationships, and mechanisms to give museums access to their neighbour’s knowledge should be explored.

### 5.2.3 Collection management

**Spotlight (Wales figures in brackets)**

**F4 – Collection care – storage and housekeeping**

Local Authority – 3.45 (3.2)

Independent – 2.69 (2.88)

**F6 – Collection care – documentation**

Local Authority – 3.6 (3.75)

Independent – 3.34 (3.46)

Spotlight shows that local authority museums in the study area are reaching good standards in the areas of storage and documentation. Although the independents are not doing equally well, this may be because those figures also include un-accredited

museums. The focus groups (all accredited museums) said that the following were actually of low importance when considering future partnerships :

- Rationalising collections – already being considered
- Shared storage – not likely to be acceptable politically
- Sharing conservation services – i.e. lab work. Nothing to share in study area museums. Available commercially.

Of 18 questionnaire responses, 16 believed that their collections are “adequately cared for and safe” although some “only just”. Of 20 responses, 13 have someone who deals with documentation – although 4 of those who don’t are local authorities.

*✍ We could easily offer training in mounting and archival work. (University)*

## 5.2.4 Conservation and collection care

### **Spotlight (Wales figures in brackets)**

#### **F1 – Provision of suitable buildings**

Local Authority – 3.9 (3.5)

Independent – 2.9 (2.95)

#### **F2 – Collection care – environmental monitoring**

Local Authority – 3.85 (4)

Independent – 3.04 (3.24)

#### **F3 – Collection care – environmental control**

Local Authority – 3.65 (3.56)

Independent – 3 (3.26)

If museums do not look after their “stuff” neither they nor their users can do anything with it, and neither will future generations. Avoiding damage through preventive conservation and then putting it right on the conservator’s bench are core elements of public service.

In our sample, just less than half had anyone who had a conservation remit and only the National Slate Museum at Llanberis and the National Trust has regular access to a professional conservator. Spotlight also lists paid professionals whose primary role is in conservation – in the study area it lists 2 in local authorities, 1 in an independent museum and 2 in nationally managed museums (ie NT and the national museum). While this is of concern, the collections are so diverse that we are not convinced that one peripatetic conservator would be sufficient to cover all the requirements. There is a private sector supply and grant aid is available through CyMAL.

### **Collection Environment**

The correlation between provision of a suitable building and standards achieved for collection care is one that can be easily overlooked. Local authority museums exceed the Wales average in provision of suitable buildings. The majority of museums are housed in 2 or 2\* listed buildings with all the difficulties that this can entail in terms of ensuring an adequate environment for historic collections. Advice on preventive conservation must include consideration of the

building envelope to ensure that any investment and improvement in environment is sustained in the long term.

### **Preventive assessment**

According to Spotlight, local authorities are handling their museum environment well, but the same is not true for the smaller independents.

Where museums have been partners with Amgueddfa Cymru in “Cyfoeth Cymru Gyfan - Sharing Treasures” or “Celf Cymru Gyfan - ArtShare Wales”, the national museum has on occasions assessed the condition of local collections as part of the partnership. Several museums have historic but informal links with Amgueddfa Cymru for conservation advice. Other museums regret the passing of face to face advice from the experts at Council for Museums Wales (CMW). They understand and accept the different role of CyMAL, and praise the telephone advice available from officers there, but they still wish that they saw more experts on the ground.

When curators completed self assessment for Spotlight, or the questionnaires for this study, they seem to have been fairly confident about the state of their collections. However, when we interviewed them in depth they said that there is a need for peripatetic collections assessment service. This apparent contradiction may be professional altruism from curators to volunteers, but needs further exploration. We are not convinced that a single peripatetic collections post is the answer because it would have to cover so many specialist subjects. In addition, now that Spotlight has highlighted where collections are held, it will be possible to bid to existing CyMAL grant schemes for fixed term, high level expertise.

Training on object assessment and condition reporting is also offered by the Museums Association. Training one member of staff to train other institutions might be a viable way forward.

### **Bench conservation**

Nobody thought that a partnership approach to conservation delivery would be productive. A case study on finding commercial conservators is at Appendix 4.

*↳ CyMAL has Liz Bowerman who does archives too; she is good for distance advice. Would a two year preventive conservation post be useful? There would have to be enough partners to make it worthwhile. (John Marjoram, MA/Fed).*

*↳ We buy conservation for archives from Caernarfon; we miss the hands on conservation officer at CMW. (Pat West, Ynys Mon)*

### **Disaster response**

One focus group wanted shared emergency response equipment, expertise and training, perhaps with the National Trust. The interviews showed no great demand for this but some responses demonstrated

that the upcoming review of their procedures for Accreditation is certainly timely. The geography of North Wales has an impact upon travel time and reduces the viability of a central resource. Local partnerships already exist (for example between the museum and archives on Anglesey and those in Gwynedd) and further locally driven partnerships should be encouraged.

### 5.2.5 Redisplay of permanent exhibitions

**Spotlight (Wales figures in brackets)**

**F10 – Access – display**

Local Authority – 3.65 (3.5)

Independent – 2.6 (2.66)

The focus groups did not see the improvement of permanent displays as a priority for partnership working, although sharing display solutions and good practice would be useful.

Of the 15 questionnaire responses, 12 museums had plans to upgrade their permanent displays with the majority of these dependent upon grants or fund raising. Only half of local authorities have staff who specialise in display and exhibition preparation and they are already overstretched - “our technicians are overworked and money would be of no advantage to us because it would cost more in money and management to backfill when they are away.”

*↳ We have to meet very high standards to meet Government Indemnity. We could give advice on environmental control, pest monitoring, security etc. And we have to do it on a shoestring. (Morrigan Ellis, Bodelwyddan)*

*↳ We would love to borrow material but sometimes it is difficult for a small museum with no money and small premises. Perhaps small items of low value ought not to need such high standards as real treasures – it can exclude us from even simple loans. (Independent))*

### 5.2.6 Temporary or touring exhibitions

One of the primary stimuli for this study was the partnership potential in touring exhibitions, particularly loans, specialist knowledge and skills. The focus groups agreed, strongly urging the potential for linkages with Amgueddfa Cymru.

Somewhat to our surprise, out of 16 questionnaire responses from our sample, 12 museums have somewhere to display temporary exhibitions and more are planned. Unfortunately only 8 have an exhibitions programme with a budget and many of the spaces are small (see Appendix 4).

Larger, charging museums are generally not interested in sharing exhibitions locally because they need to retain their individuality “It needs to be different and not available in two months time in Bangor as well” although “if it was small and aimed at schools it would be

good". Sharing Treasures has been a catalyst for high quality exhibitions for these larger venues. While it was initially designed to assist with outward loans from Amgueddfa Cymru, its wider impact has been substantial. We have already noted its scope for assessing the condition of collections and it has, crucially, opened the door for those partners to build relationships with other UK national museums. It has naturally focussed initially on major services which can reach high levels of security and environmental control.

However, this study shows that a wider cohort of smaller museums now wishes to engage in shared temporary exhibitions. This theoretical desire should be weighed against their ability to pay a realistic fee, even if charged at cost.

*↳ We want new or changing temporary exhibitions as a peg to bring in new and return visitors. (Independent)*

*↳ We would be particularly interested in clock making, harp making or print making - all local industries. (Ivor Murrant, Llanrwst Almshouses)*

Suppliers of lower value exhibitions should also be explored. Ceredigion is already well known for its supply of temporary exhibitions, but there are some other unexpected providers:-

*↳ When we think about an exhibition we always think about a travelling version. 5 are available at present. They cost about £400 per month to hire plus travel costs. We don't hire in any here; it's cheaper to do it ourselves. (Michael Freeman, Ceredigion Museum)*

*↳ We tour exhibitions in England. They are not of particularly high value; we could extend them to other museums. (University.)*

*↳ We produce temporary exhibitions which could go to other museums, the photo panels are all boxed for storage. We send them to Ireland. Next year (2008) it will be about the local football team "Harbourmen" -, many seamen played in it. (John Cave, Holyhead Maritime Museum)*

### 5.3 Policy, business & governance

"Together, the twin strands of strategic working and funding pressures represent a real challenge for museums in general, and independent museums in particular. While the larger local authority-supported museums have both the capacity and political connections to deal with such issues, small museums often find themselves at the margins of the council's structures and business. ... Museum development officers - where they exist - have neither the status nor the responsibility that would enable them to be effective advocates for these museums."

*Adrian Babbidge, Local Authorities and Independent Museums, AIM, August 2007*

#### 5.3.1 Cultural policy

*↳ The Welsh Assembly told local authorities to have Cultural Strategies some time ago. What happened to them? Lots of our curators don't engage at that higher level. (John Marjoram, MA/Fed)*

Only half of our questionnaire respondents ticked an unequivocal "yes" to the question "does your local authority have a heritage or cultural strategy?" and 4 local authority respondents said "no". Even where they existed, only 10 out of 20 respondents said that their museum featured in it. Local authorities may believe that they have

a strategic statement about their priorities in cultural heritage, but at delivery level this is not seen to be making much difference. Perhaps this is not surprising given the size and low profile of some museum services, but if Beecham (see 5.3.5) is an indication of the future, then powerful strategies would be a useful negotiating tool.

"We will place a statutory obligation on local authorities to promote culture and encourage partnerships to deliver high quality cultural experiences for their communities."

*One Wales, June 2007*

If local authority cultural strategies were already a powerful planning tool across the study area, then a strategic approach to influencing joint working across neighbouring authorities would have been one of our recommendations. In view of the One Wales statement above, we believe that a voice for the sector in the study area will be vital in the future.

*➤ After the publication of One Wales, I expect cultural entitlement to be an issue in the future and it might replace Cultural Strategies. We will all have to engage with community planning. (Local Authority)*

### **5.3.2 Museum policy at a national level**

"Independent museums .... will never have the scale to justify their own seat at the tables where decisions are made. Only by working with other bodies with a common interest, whether in the cultural or voluntary and community sectors, are they likely to have any influence. In some independent museums, where the focus has been inwards, this represents not just a different way of working, but a different way of thinking."

*Adrian Babbidge, Local Authorities and Independent Museums, AIM, August 2007*

There is widespread approval of CyMAL's roles in grant and advice giving but there is also an understanding of their inability, as a government department, to lobby on behalf of museums or represent their interests. There will always be questions about where the line is drawn between CyMAL drawing the sector's attention to a potentially important issue and being seen to have an opinion on it. Some professionally staffed museums make great efforts to be actively engaged in museum policy development, and those independents who have been in the sector long enough to build up personal relationships feel they know where to go to get information.

*➤ Internally we do make quite an effort to be aware of national issue and whilst we get sent email bulletins from CyMAL it's not the same as giving your views and being consulted directly. Consultation often happens in massed events where the same outspoken people do all the talking, influencing issues that affect everyone. (Morrigan Ellis, Bodelwyddan)*

*➤ I never have time to think about feeling isolated. I know other museums are there. (Brian Owen, Royal Welch Fusiliers)*

*➤ I feel we are isolated; we are outside the real family. With all due respect to Ann and CyMAL "museum to museum" dialogues are not good. It would be of benefit to meet others. (Ivor Murrant, Llanrwst Almshouses)*

However, there is a danger that the voice of museums at this higher level is not heard or taken into account by either local government

or the Welsh Assembly Government because there is no effective forum in North or Mid Wales where that voice could be created. (See also 5.5.4 for the Federation)

*➤ The situation at the moment is a bit hit and miss. I would like to know that opinions are flowing back and forth. I would feel more secure if I knew decisions were made on the back of evidence. Having our voices heard is essential. (Independent)*

### **5.3.3 Tourism**

Only a third of the people who answered our questionnaires felt their museum was engaged with any tourism strategy, although local commercial tourism partnerships such as the Llanberis Partnership and Attractions of Snowdonia were seen as successful. A new brochure and website for "Giants of North Wales", which includes many of the museums in the study area, is an indicator that cultural tourism is strengthening through the Tourism Partnership North Wales. Where cultural tourism is increasingly seen as valuable, the museums community must have a strong enough voice to be heard in these emerging debates.

Access to research and analysis on tourist visits to Wales can be found online at [www.new-wales.gov.uk/topics/tourism/research1/regional-profiles](http://www.new-wales.gov.uk/topics/tourism/research1/regional-profiles). For example in 2005 (latest data available) 50% of visitors to North Wales came from Merseyside and the North West and there were 235k overseas visitors and 3.5m UK visitors. In mid Wales 32% of all UK visitors were from the West Midlands and there were 96k overseas visitors and 1.9m UK visitors. (See Appendix 4 / 1.2)

*➤ We have half a page in the unitary development plan. I do a lot of badgering but our departmental boss is incredibly supportive. (Chris Wright, Greenfield Valley Trust)*

### **5.3.4 Governance**

While concentrating upon museum facilities and services it is important to remember the people who, in the end, carry the can - the Elected Members or Trustees. Museums are run by local authorities and a wide variety of different types of Trusts or educational charities. Organisational status can change over time.

*➤ We are undergoing a review at present and training for trustees is bound to come out of it. One model could be that pass holders become members of the Trust and vote for a steward's council which would protect and promote the spirit of the site. They in turn could vote for a small executive council. Wildlife Trusts are a useful model. (Chris Wright, Greenfield Valley Trust)*

Questionnaire respondents were asked whether they expected changes in their governance arrangements within the next five years. Out of 17 respondents, 7 expected changes, including 3 local

authority museums which referred to departmental restructuring. The transfer of local authority museums to trust status was only referred to once and then to say that the idea seemed to be on the back burner at present.

Independent museums either have extremely involved and supportive trustees, or the interviewee is working virtually alone. Succession planning was raised regularly and many were taking active steps to extend their talent pool. On balance, local authorities were seen by both LA and independent respondents as supportive of museums within the limitations of their budgets and their non-statutory status.

*↳ The level of support we are given by our local authority relates directly to the direction the political wind is blowing at the time. (Morrigan Ellis, Bodelwyddan)*

*↳ We don't get any money from the county but the Town Council gives us a donation each year. And Nest Thomas from Gwynedd is our curatorial adviser and they have a very good archivist. (Janet Griffith, Barmouth Sailors' Institute)*

*↳ We are pretty well off compared to others. You always have to fight. It's not easy. (Pat West, Ynys Mon)*

Members of governing bodies do need opportunities to meet and exchange ideas with museum experts and other people in the same position. The change to cabinet structures in local authorities has significantly changed the relationship between curator and councillor in some authorities, but not all. Under CMW there were opportunities for Elected Members with an interest in museums to meet regularly at the AGM and Council meetings. Both councillors and trustees saw this as a valuable and enjoyable way of learning about the sector. There now appears to be no such forum and we recommend that the Federation of Museums and Galleries in Wales consider the creation of a sub group for trustees and elected members.

*↳ Our two cabinet members promote the county and they will fly the flag for heritage services. I have a much closer relationship here with the councillors than in other jobs. It's a small county so you do bump into them on lots of committees. (Susan Dalloe, Denbighshire Heritage Services)*

*↳ I never come into contact with councillors any more. I used to report personally every 6 weeks but since the cabinet was formed, I have only been invited once. The structure is only interested in decisions, not really reports or deeper understanding. (Michael Freeman, Ceredigion Museum)*

In terms of future partnership working, most interviewees were interested in training for trustees, but this tended to be in terms of basic museum skills rather than the ethics of governance. Museum training for elected members was not seen as a priority although twice yearly meetings for them to meet their counterparts in neighbouring authorities were suggested.

### **5.3.5 The Beecham Report Beyond Boundaries: Citizen-centred local services for Wales**

*There will inevitably be a move towards joined up working of some sort. Because museums are a low priority for local authorities, they could be seen as a low risk area to test collaboration. And it would look good. (Alan Watkin, Chief Leisure, Libraries And Culture Officer, Wrexham)*

Compared to other parts of the UK, Wales has a large number (22) of all-purpose, unitary authorities with a fairly low population base and this is considered by some to be potentially inefficient. The *Beecham Review of Local Service Delivery* was followed in 2007 by *A Shared Responsibility* which asked for:

“Collaboration across boundaries to improve local authority services, and changes to local scrutiny and regulatory arrangements ... including citizen satisfaction and local authority performance”. (Adrian Babbidge, Local Authorities and Independent Museums, AIM, August 2007).

The report is targeted at high spending major departments. The North Wales Partnership Board (Leaders and CEOs of the six counties) are looking for medium term benefits from economies of scale in big corporate functions. Beneath them the chief officers of the six authorities have initiated discussions about museums, libraries and archives under the banner “Making Connections”. Talks about the most effective models for delivering archive services are also underway.

Given this background, it is disturbing that at curatorial level the Beecham Report was not seen to have implications for this sector. We do not believe that this indicates anything other than the low place in local authority hierarchies that museums often hold. Curators may not yet be in the loop, and there are differences of opinion as to whose fault this is. It does seem, however, that high level options could be being discussed in the absence of any museum voice.

*Some curators still think “it doesn't affect us”. But some unitaries are very small. At the low level that museums usually operate, without a formal partnership they are individually easy pickings because they are non statutory. (John Marjoram, MA/Fed).*

*The pooling of services would be better than merging management structures because the economies of scale would be hard to find where they are already so small. (Local authority)*

Taking a longer view, it is unlikely that Beecham will be the last time this happens. Museums in North and Mid Wales must be better prepared to recognise issues and respond to them at an early stage.

### **5.3.6 Business – income generation**

Museums are notoriously run on short shoestrings. It is worth repeating that according to Spotlight, in 2005/6 the average budget for a “non-nationally managed” museum in North and Mid Wales was £79K.

One local authority branch museum reputedly has a disposable budget of just £400 and in every case discretionary expenditure is a very low percentage of the total. Local authority budget cuts to museums are cumulatively severe and they now cut back into the bone. Although museums are rarely being treated worse than other parts of the local authority, it is already "difficult to see how they could cost any less!" As a result, a recent examination of Wales-wide recruitment advertisements showed a rapid falling off of staff appointments between 2002 and 2007 with most being at or below entry level salaries and very few at senior level (*John Marjoram, May 2007*).

The ever-increasing priority and drive to meet quantitative targets and performance measures can mean that the qualitative work – which is the added value that museums bring to support the wider national agenda - becomes marginalised. However, while staff and budget cuts are a serious matter of concern, they are probably not issues that can be addressed by partnership working, although the arguments must be made during consultations for the CyMAL national museums strategy.

On a positive note, there are many examples of imaginative income generation through corporate hire, weddings, the sale of images and even ghost nights. There are many areas where museums feel that they have skills to share and they are very willing to share them:-

*☞ We have people experienced in dressing displays and retailing. We could help private museums like we ours, it would be nice for them to talk to other museums and help them (John Cave, Holyhead Maritime Museum)*

*☞ In volunteer management and restoring agricultural machinery we have practical on the ground experience, not just WCVA theory.(Chris Wright)*

*☞ We have expertise in fine and ceramic art we could share, also print making and Art in Wales. We already offer a part time PhD in the workplace – degrees by distance learning to museum people. We need to make it wider known. (University)*

*☞ We have a wide range of expertise e.g. marketing, business development and catering which we are willing to share. The AiB Skills Bank seems to work well and North & Mid Wales would be a good starting place to start talking about ways to help each other.( Morigan Ellis, Bodelwyddan)*

### **5.3.7 Welsh language**

"The Welsh language belongs to everyone in Wales as part of our common national heritage, identity and public good."

*(One Wales, June 2007)*

Across the whole of Wales:

- Employees working in archives were more likely to be bilingual (Welsh and English) (36%) than museums (20%) and libraries (19%).
- Volunteers working in museums were seven times more likely to be bilingual (20%) than volunteers working in archives (3%). No volunteer working in a library service was reported as being bilingual (0%).
- The entire workforce of two museums, one archive and two library services were bilingual reflecting the nature of their immediate communities which had high Welsh speaking populations.

*Quantifying Diversity: Mesur Amrywiaeth, CyMAL, 2006*

During consultation, Welsh language interpretation was offered to both focus groups and taken up by those attending in Bangor. Significantly, while the Welshpool group felt that Welsh identity was “being covered by the National Library and National Museum - it is very political and funding is available”, the Bangor group integrated Welsh identity with raising the profile of museums within Local Authorities and the Welsh Assembly, joint heritage and cultural strategies, and improved national and regional museum relationships.

While most museums acknowledge a Welsh language policy, at least in labelling, fewer of them can conduct their business through the medium of Welsh. Even in local authorities where translation services are available, it is said that working in two languages is more than twice as time consuming and requires excellent planning and time management skills. Even for those independent museums with first language, Welsh-speaking trustees, they are not always confident enough to translate into formal written Welsh.

Service delivery through the medium of Welsh is part of the work that museums do to support local and individual identity but in the context of this study, it applies not only to the communities they serve, but also to the curators who serve them. There is a growing generation of local curators whose first language is Welsh, who think and work in Welsh, and for whom communication in English is less comfortable. Qualified curators will inevitably have been trained in English and, anecdotally, few of the Welsh speaking students who train in Museum Studies in England return to posts in Wales. But there is now a technical vocabulary in Welsh, there are classes and many curators do attend them.

We wonder whether it is the curators in the north and west (who are most likely to have Welsh as their first language) who are the most likely to feel disengaged from museum policy development nationally. If this is true, it must be addressed.

*↻ The University has a very strong bi-lingual policy; their reports always refer to the work the galleries do. They run courses on art in Wales and have a very strong tradition of Welsh culture*

*↻ We are committed to the Welsh Language policy. We want all our posters letters etc to be in Welsh but our Welsh speakers are not confident enough to translate. We put it out to contractors and it costs us a lot. Practical solutions would be helpful. (Ivor Murrant, Llanrwst Almshouses)*

## 5.4 Staffing

**Spotlight (Wales figures in brackets)**  
**F8 – Staff and volunteer development**  
 Local Authority – 3.5 (3.62)  
 Independent – 2.04 (2.13)

### 5.4.1 Staff capacity

Out of 21 questionnaire responses, 5 reported increases in their staff or volunteer numbers over the past five years but only one of these was a local authority. Where rises were reported, they were **all** either volunteers (sometimes paralleled by a drop in paid staff) or grant aided posts. 5 museums reported drops in numbers.

In small museums with few staff or volunteers, everyone has to be able do everything. As businesses become more complex and subject to greater scrutiny and monitoring, tensions do arise. The focus groups (chiefly those from local authorities) said that staff numbers are now insufficient to do the increased jobs expected of them, although Spotlight shows that this is not markedly worse than the Wales wide figure. CyMAL grants are available and applications for shared posts in partnership would be eligible.

Although it is commonplace in this sector, we were struck by the number of times that people were working beyond their own boundaries. This informal mutual support is wonderful, and is the back bone of networking, but it is partially dependent upon personal giving of both time and money. Taking on expanded roles without sufficient training could dilute quality and, if a post is re-advertised on the existing job description, some past activities may be lost. If the recommendations of this study are to be addressed, it would be necessary to invest serious time in the process of setting up new partnerships and collaborations.

- o *I am curatorial adviser to two museums. It's not in my job description but it is expected.*
- o *I do a lot of it in my own time. But the issue is cost, our budget cuts mean that we cannot afford to travel. I pay it myself sometimes.*
- o *I do loads of training courses for little museums on conservation basics for the English Hubs. It's mostly in my own time though.*

### 5.4.2 Recruitment

The focus groups considered workforce diversity was "not an issue". Given CyMAL's publication, *Quantifying Diversity: Mesur Amrywiaeth*, we were surprised by this.

Career progression was seen to be a national issue. Certainly people do tend to stay in post once they have discovered the joys of the North and Mid Wales lifestyle, so turn over may be low. During interviews, however, we heard of difficulties in recruitment, usually ascribed to isolation and poor career prospects in small organisations, although recruitment of Welsh speakers was also quoted. Between 2002 and 2007 very few senior posts were advertised for Wales, causing the researcher to question whether it was necessary for good people to leave Wales to further their career.

*There is a case for an easy win – perhaps sharing specialist posts where we do not need them full time individually? (Alan Watkin, Chief Leisure, Libraries And Culture Officer, Wrexham)*

### 5.4.3 Training.

Training courses are provided by CyMAL and the Federation and are considered good though with some room for development. It is apparent from interviews that some paid curators and most volunteers are still not confident in the areas of preventive conservation, learning provision and specialist collections knowledge. Any new partnership should feed identified regional needs into the existing programmes and give priority to local delivery, accepting that attendance numbers will inevitably be small.

Each institution will have only occasional need for specialist skills and the poor networking in the region means that a lot of “reinventing the wheel” is happening. Many of the area’s museums are entirely voluntary or with very low staff numbers. Opportunities for on the job learning by exposure to good practice by colleagues are therefore few. Similarly, opportunities to leave the building for training courses are limited by problems of backfilling. There is a significant reluctance to travel far for training, particularly among volunteers who not only have to pay their own expenses but are adding many hours to their voluntary contribution.

*➤ Sharing skills was thought very important by the Federation meetings, but anything to do with meetings and events is tricky. You can really only get people together locally. Could there be clusters for CPD? In the one curator museum it might help them. (John Marjoram, MA/Fed).*

*➤ I am a great believer in mentoring and shadowing with visits to other people’s museums, rather than training. We could help there. (Pat West, Ynys Mon)*

[www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk](http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk) provides a way of thinking about learning in a holistic way across an entire organisation. Inspiring Learning for All can be used to support skills development by focusing on the elements that support learning organisations – using the checklists for partnerships for example – and using this to identify areas where joint support can be built between organisations.

## 5.5 Support and collaboration

*➤ Ann Williams is a great support for us. She works tirelessly. (Ivor Murrant, Llanrwst Almshouses)*

**5.5.1** If support for professional and organisational development is not available within the museum service, then it must be found elsewhere. Substantial support already comes from the national bodies, described below, but where practical help or discussion is needed to grow people’s confidence, this will have to be supplied locally, either in the form of networks or electronically.

There are differences in personal experience of the national bodies. While one focus group was positive about both CyMAL (particularly its grants) and the Federation; the other expressed frustration about

what they saw as poor communication and non-inclusiveness, while strongly making it clear that individual officers are excellent. They were, however, united in the opportunities that they saw for further working with Amgueddfa Cymru.

Later, each interviewee was asked to list “the three most rewarding collaborations that your museum already has”. 5 listed Amgueddfa Cymru (with 2 naming specific officers), 2 CyMAL, 4 community organisations, 6 other museums, 2 commercial, 3 specialist networks (including 2 diversity groups), 3 local authorities, 1 CyNNAL, 1 HE sector, 2 CADW. There was a tendency not to see other local museums as partners although the shared archaeologist between Wrexham, Denbighshire and Flintshire is very encouraging.

*☞ I don't have much contact with other museums. Sometimes I feel as if I am causing them trouble because they are so busy; there are so many things I would like to talk to them about. But it is to do with time. What do you do if emails don't get read, or responded to, and there is no other form of communication? (Local Authority)*

*☞ We have just started meetings of the six Heads of Service; we met at the end of November and identified four areas to explore further – volunteering, marketing, archives services and alternative methods of funding. (Alan Watkin, Chief Leisure, Libraries And Culture Officer, Wrexham)*

They were also asked what kind of support they would most like from any future collaborative working. The most frequent responses were:

- More technical support.
- Improving museum to museum relationships
- Professional support for education and conservation
- Touring exhibitions
- Basics courses, “not too deep and delivered locally”

People saw these as either being enabled through the Amgueddfa Cymru; through a shared post in North and Mid Wales; or by strengthening pastoral care provision from local authorities. In reality, no one solution will fit all the issues raised in this study. A complex matrix of support will be needed and the most important shared element would be co-ordination.

### **5.5.2 Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales (Amgueddfa Cymru)**

*In the past they were very paternalistic and did a massive amount for local museums but now they have performance indicators to meet they cannot just drop everything and come and help us. (Michael Freeman, Ceredigion Museum)*

Amgueddfa Cymru has 619 staff – about 56% of staff employed in museums in Wales. While their current Remit Letter (under which Amgueddfa Cymru receives funding from the Welsh Assembly Government) does not specifically mention offering support to the country's other museums, they do so by the sharing of collections through loans and exhibitions and, informally through a host of informal contacts. It is clear that the familial relationship that some museums in Wales feel they have with the national museum is rather

different from those experienced in England.

A review of Amgueddfa Cymru's partnerships was conducted in August 2002 which recognised the "enormous diversity" of their partnerships. At that point, these included research, curatorial and educational advice within Wales, project development and working with other UK national institutions. However, the role of "central provider of museum management to small scale communities" was then one which "requires clarification and economic review". The preference in 2002 was for the more efficient model of a small number of pilot partnerships with a labelled identity. This has indeed been the rationale for recent work through the two Partnership programmes, which were designed to manage expectation and deliver quality results. A lot has changed since 2002 and the document is to be reviewed.

**Cyfoeth Cymru Gyfan -Sharing Treasures**

Launched in 2001 the scheme is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government and administered by CyMAL. Environmental and security standards are improved so that the partner can display objects from the national collections.

**Celf Cymru Gyfan - ArtShare Wales**

Launched in December 2004 and funded by the Esmé Fairbairn Foundation this visual arts partnership scheme runs in parallel with Sharing Treasures.

We have found that Amgueddfa Cymru still has a far broader reach than its two formal programmes. Out of 16 questionnaire responses, 14 museums said that they worked with Amgueddfa Cymru, including all local authorities and all but 2 of the independents. The relationships ranged from informal advice with conservation or occasional loans, to formal partnerships through Art Share Wales and Sharing Treasures

Many interviewees were impressed with existing work and saw massive opportunities for wider engagement. It is clear that Amgueddfa Cymru is involved in many different levels of partnership working apart from the two programmes. Their Outreach Collection reached 137,500 people in Wales in 2005/6 and their loans programme included over 3,500 objects loaned to more than one hundred venues in Wales in 2006/7. Lots of other informal and personal relationships also exist although unrecorded and unsung.

Amgueddfa Cymru is a repository of the kind of knowledge and skills which museums in the study are keen to access. The partners in Sharing Treasures and ArtShare Wales obviously find it easiest to access Amgueddfa Cymru expertise and that doors are opened for them beyond the basic core of the two schemes.

*Anglesey was one of the first services to join Sharing Treasures which is great although there is still a cost to receiving. We talk with archaeology, arts, and education for their collections expertise and identification. Once you have made*

*the connection you are fine. (Pat West, Ynys Mon)*

*➤ We use Amgueddfa Cymru for conservation using grant aid and we have occasionally had their conservators out to look at our collections. They are also willing to give advice over the phone. Recently we have had help from the University of Wales archaeology department as well. (Dr Ann Welton, Montgomery Civic Society, the Old Bell Museum)*

*➤ The problem is the size of our service. We only borrow individual items but there don't seem to be other ways in. (Susan Dalloe, Denbighshire Heritage Services)*

However, for those outside the formal programmes there is an uneasy perception that relationships are “personality driven”, distant and occasionally more academic than operational. Some departments are seen as easier to talk to than others, and there is a feeling that quick wins with opportunities for flag flying may be at the expense of embedding more lasting mutual relationships.

Reliance upon personal contact is potentially a significant issue in North and Mid Wales where museum staff turnover is low. If a long serving curator or trustee was to leave, on either side, the informal collaborations between the local museum and Amgueddfa Cymru could collapse. Informal dependency upon professional friendships is time limited and does not give credit to Amgueddfa Cymru for what it does already. In future, as the number of new Sharing Treasures partners increases, engaging with the smaller accredited services may need a different approach.

*➤ The National Museum should formalise its relationships so that it is not just down to personalities. The people who have good relationships have been around a long time. (John Marjoram, MA/Fed).*

*➤ I would like them to have an outreach person to promote museums throughout Wales. A liaison officer, somebody senior to go out into the real world and talk to unsubsidised museums. (Chris Wright, Greenfield Valley Trust)*

The conservation section of Amgueddfa Cymru has historically done as much work with non national museums on an ad hoc, informal basis as it does through formal relationships. They contribute to CyMAL's newsletter and run two conferences a year for non national staff with an interest in museums, but as these are run at Amgueddfa Cymru sites, they are usually in the south. Although recording the ad hoc work would give Amgueddfa Cymru credit where it is due, one must be cautious about exposing them to the risk of being given income generation targets.

*➤ The general outreach service is not part of the business plan but it is understood to be part of our education vision and remit. (Robert Child, Amgueddfa Cymru)*

A separate issue which was raised several times is the virtual absence of Amgueddfa Cymru sites in the study area. With the exception of the National Slate Museum at Llanberis, the population do not benefit from the free access to national facilities enabled by the Welsh Assembly Government. In this context it is interesting that One Wales wishes to “explore the creation of a National Gallery for

Wales".

*✍ We have Llanberis which is part of Amgueddfa Cymru up here. Does it see itself as being in the vanguard of supporting all museums across the piece? (Alan Watkin, Chief Leisure, Libraries And Culture Officer, Wrexham)*

*✍ We do feel disadvantaged with no free national museums in the north east of Wales. The people in Wrexham and Flintshire know the national museums on Merseyside better than those in Cardiff. The reach of the national museum doesn't get to us here. (Anon)*

### **5.5.3 CyMAL**

Of 18 questionnaire responses, only 1 independent museum said that they did not "get useful support from CyMAL". The praise was strongly focussed around grants, training courses and advice from named officers.

The interviews completely reinforced these positive views, but, inevitably, focussed additionally upon what more they would like. The strongest theme to emerge was the desire for face to face contact with professional advisers. If this is not now the role of CyMAL, then there is a gap to be filled, possibly by a North and Mid Wales partnership.

*✍ The CyMAL grants are extremely helpful and they will provide good advice if you ask. They could be more committed to going out to museums and talking to people at the coal face. Meeting them on site would help museums to feel more in the loop. (Morrigan Ellis, Bodelwyddan)*

*✍ They don't get out and about as much as they used to do. But then we were very spoiled with CMW. It's the nature of the beast isn't it? (Pat West, Ynys Mon)*

*✍ We get on very well in terms of funding advice and guidance. I realise they straddle between operational and strategic. (Chris Wright, Greenfield Valley Trust)*

Many of the issues raised during this study are eligible for CyMAL grants and partnership applications are welcomed.

### **5.5.4 Federation of Museums and Galleries in Wales**

Throughout the study there were very divergent views of the Federation, ranging from "very cliquey" and not inclusive, through "it has changed now but not everybody realises", to "very good support, especially from the development officer". It is important to acknowledge that all Federation committee members are volunteers with full time jobs or consultancies and they must respond to the wishes of their subscribing members. However, while respecting the work they already do, in terms of this study, there are four main issues with regard to museums in North and Mid Wales.

#### **Communication**

Museums are not always aware of what the Federation does, either because the Federation's communications are not reaching them or because museums don't proactively check its website. The Federation has an unrestricted website, a magazine and a discussion

list available for its members. However, these are obviously not currently meeting the needs of museums in North and Mid Wales (and maybe not elsewhere). Perhaps an 'included / affiliated' North and Mid Wales grouping could contribute to these to make them more effective both for members across Wales and for the committee.

### **Representation**

It is believed in the study area that when CyMAL seeks the sector's opinions about museum initiatives, it goes to the Federation Committee. Committee members and their museums (currently, coincidentally, mainly from the south) therefore feel well informed. Federation members who can attend events and meetings held in the south are more likely to hear about initiatives, and have an opportunity to discuss their implications, than those in the study area.

While museum people in North and Mid Wales do genuinely feel that their voice is not being heard in national debates, it may not be necessary to create a new body to do this. CyMAL cannot undertake lobbying on behalf of the sector due to its position within the Welsh Assembly Government. But if the Federation is to genuinely fulfil on the advocacy role, it will need help to keep local museums involved and to get information back to the committee.

The re-forming of the North and Mid Wales Curator's Group (NMWCG) or a new more focussed version of it (see 5.5.5) could provide an opportunity for genuinely federal working across Wales with the new grouping forming a branch of the Federation, with or without a similar structure in the south. Arrangements could even be put in place for appointing officers, including the Chair, alternately from the north and south. The desire of museums in the study area to discuss local business within easy travelling distance is very real and should be respected.

### **Training**

With CyMAL, the Federation training programme is an important contributor to improving standards although there are perceived to have been less events in the study area than there were previously. The training programme is well regarded but there are opportunities for more locally delivered, small scale events, perhaps using local providers under "train the trainer" initiatives. It is important that the real needs of the museums in the study areas are incorporated into training planning. These include both technical museum basics and more fluid networking opportunities with facilitated exploration of strategic and political issues.

### **Advice and support**

Unusually, the Federation has both ring-fenced funds and a short term, grant aided post and is willing to give assistance to its

members. It was suggested that the Federation web site could have a NMWCG section with lists of resources including Welsh speakers.

### **5.5.5 Successor body to the North and Mid Wales Curator's Group**

There used to be a well loved North & Mid Wales Curators Group which was open for everyone, free of charge. This was originally run by CMW but when that support ended it gradually succumbed to time pressures on those volunteers who picked up the co-ordination. A similar grouping should now be reinstated but with an altered and more powerful remit. Never the less, care must be taken to ensure that is really inclusive and empowers individuals.

The new grouping for the study area should:

- Be open to every museum in the study area regardless of governance arrangements
- Hold meetings quarterly in different museums
- Have a constitution which permits it to:
  - Work in association with the Federation nationally, providing a channel for consultation and representation
  - Speak on behalf of its members
  - Hold budgets and enter into agreements
  - Manage staff
- Encourage local museum groupings
- Gain agreement to a plan of activities which are:
  - Practical – e.g. small scale initiatives to help smaller, usually voluntary museums and/or initiatives to assist service delivery by local authorities by sharing experience and initiatives
  - Strategic – e.g. negotiating packages of support from mda, GEM and CyMAL, co-ordinating online resources
  - Representational – e.g. initiating debate and responding to consultations, influencing training provision
- Enable participation through the medium of Welsh.

To kick start the new relationships investment in staff capacity will be needed. As already noted, this is not freely available in existing structures. A dynamic strategic individual could make a massive difference with a clear remit, active local engagement and national support which opens communications channels for the study area. It is important that this post is not just seen as supporting any successor body to the North and Mid Wales Curator's Group. It must be:

- At a senior enough level to gather and understand local views and needs and build confidence and capacity for the group to express these nationally and regionally with credibility.
- Should work peripatetically and attend meetings around the study area and at national level.
- Gather data, information and case studies to provide evidence for advocacy and fundraising.
- Be able to adapt models of support and engagement to suit both volunteers, paid professionals and governing bodies.
- Be proactive in creating opportunities, both large and small, for

museums to work together.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

### **6.1 Most museums in the study area are small but ambitious. However, because they are often operating at a lower level than the Wales average, they will need extra help to reach common standards.**

In the areas of formal learning and storage, local authority museums in the study area exceed the Wales national average in the level of their provision. They also exceed the Wales average in provision of suitable buildings. This is remarkable because it is clear from analysis of financial data from Spotlight Wales that non-nationally-managed museum budgets in North & Mid Wales are 30% below the national average. Only three museums in the study area would be considered large by UK standards.

Whether run by local authorities, trusts or universities, most museums in the study area are achieving minor miracles on a shoestring. However, statistics in Spotlight Wales demonstrate that they are often unable to achieve the same levels of service as the Wales average. Local authority museums in the study area are not well funded and, as shown in section 5, some find it hard to reach the standards of delivery of similar museums across Wales. Small independent museums are slightly below the Wales average in almost all areas.

If the museums in the study area are to achieve the same levels of service delivery as the Wales average, they may need to be identified as a special case and given dedicated support.

### **6.2 Although individually their work is often good, curatorial confidence is low and will need to be raised if improvements are to be made.**

The areas which would most immediately benefit from partnership working include:

- o *Community engagement, market research; web-based services; collections assessment and knowledge about collections; mainstreaming Welsh language; temporary exhibitions; engagement with cultural, heritage and tourism strategies; career progression, networking through the medium of Welsh.*

### **6.3 A stronger voice for the needs and contributions of all museums in the study area is necessary if they are not to feel ignored nationally.**

Not all museums feel that their interests are expressed or understood. They risk marginalisation in future changes to local government because their contributions are not recognised. Beecham is just one example of this.

A forum where people who work in museums, whether they are paid or unpaid, can exchange experiences, learn from each other and discuss approaches to national and local policy development is needed.

A forum where trustees, elected members and chief officers can discuss and learn about the sector is also needed.

Stronger representational links are needed if the Federation is to continue to be the primary consultative body for museums in North and Mid Wales.

#### **6.4 There is a strong spirit of enthusiasm for collaborative working in museums on the ground and from senior local and national figures.**

The desire on the part of museum professionals to help each other and their voluntary and independent colleagues is tempered by a genuine lack of capacity. Given the low staff numbers which characterise museums in the study area there is little surplus capacity to invest in setting up and maintaining partnerships, however beneficial they may be long term.

It should not be assumed that effective raising of standards overall can happen without additional targeted support. Museums are very willing to share expertise but need a mechanism to help them to do this easily and habitually.

Touring or temporary exhibitions could be shared across the region if museums are involved in planning at conceptual stage. Similarly, specialist expertise for specific collection types could be bought in on a joint basis.

#### **6.5 Support for future museum improvement in the study area will depend upon a combination of national structures, local investment and effective mutual support.**

This would require the active engagement of

- A North and Mid Wales museums group
- Local Authorities
- Amgueddfa Cymru
- CyMAL
- The Federation of Museums and Galleries in Wales

Amgueddfa Cymru already has an important but often unrecognised role in local museum delivery which could give considerable additional strength to the wider museum community. CyMAL is well respected but would need extra capacity to provide the face to face support that museums at this stage of development still need.

Both of the above are interested in online resources and Virtual Museums. To be genuinely inclusive, they should make special efforts to work with museums in North and Mid Wales.

At a national level the Federation of Museums and Galleries in Wales is the most appropriate organisation to ensure that museums in North and Mid Wales are fully recognised and included in the Wales-wide family. However, this would mean a change to its working structures.

A successor to the North and Mid Wales Curator's group should be set up as an inclusive and proactive group which works federally with both small clusters locally and large organisations nationally, responding to consultations and representing the interests of museums in the study area.

A Partnerships Officer should be appointed on a two year contract to assist in the initiation and co-ordination of new relationships and to give practical assistance to them.

## 7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NORTH AND MID WALES MUSEUMS COMMUNITY

Museum services in the study area are generally fairly young and not well established. In terms of standards, they do have further to travel than others in Wales, but there it would be dangerous to accept the lower status quo as inevitable. These recommendations are for everyone with an interest in these museums, whether strategic or practical. The challenge is for everyone to work differently to a shared vision of a better future.

### “Museum to museum” networking

1. Call a meeting of the North and Mid Wales Curator's Group to discuss a new structure and purpose and open a dialogue with the Federation of Museums and Galleries in Wales.
2. Appoint a Museums Partnership Officer to co-ordinate the work of the group, represent its interests and initiate joint projects.
3. North and Mid Wales Curators Group (N&MWCG) should enable participation through the medium of Welsh and have a budget for Welsh translation.
4. Investigate and share museum documentation processes which have been produced in Welsh.
5. Where museums are small, staff cannot leave the building or cannot afford to travel, and feel isolated, electronic solutions must be accepted.

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### Representation and influence

6. Represent the museums community in discussions around Cultural Tourism.
7. Engage with initiatives designed to define, integrate and rationalise museum collections ensuring that all voices are represented.
8. Following the publication of Spotlight, investigate the pattern of need for collections assessment and the need for a peripatetic advice service.
9. Through discussion and consultation in the study area, identify training needs.
10. Identify joint marketing needs including non-user research

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and enter into partnership with appropriate Wales-wide organisations.



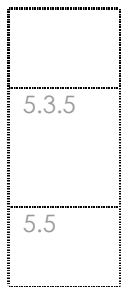
**Sharing Practical Experience and Planning Activities**

- 11. Now that Spotlight has highlighted where collections are held, collaboratively bid to CyMAL grant schemes. 5.2.4
- 12. Explore creation of a North and Mid Wales skills bank, managed and marketed in and for the study area. 5.3.6
  - Create and share lists of where museums feel that they had skills to share and are willing to share them. This should include commercial and professional areas.
  - Create a directory of education contacts in museums in the study area. 5.1.3
- 13. Bring together venues which could share temporary exhibition planning 5.2.6
  - Share exhibition topics in advance to enable local curators to engage at an early stage and planners to design smaller parallel exhibitions for different venues.
  - Suppliers of lower value exhibitions should also be explored
- 14. Discuss training needs annually and represent those needs to CyMAL and the Federation. 5.4.3
  - Give priority to local delivery, accepting that attendance numbers will inevitably be small. 5.1.1
  - With CyMAL, the Federation and University of Wales at Aberystwyth, include Governor training, distance learning and local delivery of museum basics for volunteers. 5.4
  - Provide opportunities for sharing experience in community engagement within the study area.
  - Agree a formal programme of mentoring and shadowing within the study area, to be supported by employers and validated by the MA CPD programme
- 15. Disaster response partnerships should be created locally taking the geography of North Wales into account 5.2.4
- 16. Research the need for preventive conservation collections assessments. 5.2.4
  - This should precede any decisions about peripatetic posts or a “train the trainer” relationship with Amgueddfa Cymru. 5.2.5

**Recommendations for work with CyMAL**

**Strategic**

- 17. CyMAL to open doors to dialogue with Welsh Assembly Government departments. 5.3.5
- 18. Ensure that all curators are aware of the implications of the Beecham Report and are enabled to feed their evidence into consultations. 5.5
- 19. CyMAL should review its consultation processes and include any new N&M Wales grouping. 5.5



20. CyMAL should intercede with National Grid for Learning Cymru on behalf of museums in the study area

6.5

**Practical**

21. Following the publication of Spotlight Wales, CyMAL should hold local workshops to assist in sharing knowledge of collections.
22. CyMAL should pay particular attention to museums in North and Mid Wales when developing the People's Collection.
23. CyMAL should give leadership in defining access standards in the sector.
24. CyMAL should re-advertise that it can grant aid Welsh translation at project initiation stage.
25. CyMAL, with the Federation should investigate locally delivered training suitable for Trustees. This should be repeated to cover succession issues.

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**Recommendations for work with Amgueddfa Cymru**

**Strategic**

26. Museums and sponsoring bodies should work together to agree priorities and shared interests with Amgueddfa Cymru and other potential collaborators.
27. Amgueddfa Cymru should consider recording the full range of its support to non national museums in the study area.
28. Amgueddfa Cymru should actively seek to work alongside the new Partnership Officer for museums in North and Mid Wales.

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5.5

**Practical**

29. Seek access to Amgueddfa Cymru market research and access to their Public Consultation Co-ordinator.
30. Support networking opportunities for education staff through a variety of routes including GEM

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5.1.3

**Recommendations for work with the Federation of Museums and Galleries in Wales**

31. The Federation is the most appropriate organisation to ensure that museums in North and Mid Wales are fully recognised and included in the Wales-wide family. However, this would mean a change to its working structures.
32. Explore the benefits of adopting a federal model with a formal relationship with the NMWCG.
33. Seek better ways to represent the views of the wider museums sector when they are consulted by government.
34. Consider the creation of a sub group for trustees and elected members.

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5.3.4

**Recommendations for local authorities**

35. Permit and empower staff to invest serious time in the process

5.4.1

of setting up new partnerships and collaborations.



## **8 SUMMARY OF PLENARY SESSION TO DISCUSS THE REPORT**

- 8.1 27 people attended the Plenary Session at Colwyn Bay Library on 19 February 2008 to discuss the draft report and suggest amendments which have been included in this final version. The discussions across the day are summarised at Appendix 7.
- 8.2
- There was general agreement that the report accurately portrays the situation as experienced by people on the ground.
  - There was agreement that the current situation where the smaller museums in North Wales are unable to reach Wales-wide standards is unacceptable.
  - While there was strong support for partnership working, to kick start future improvements a strategic post was needed.
  - There was a desire to be engaged in the design, direction and monitoring of the post's work.
  - A post, if funded, was only one element of the recommendations and improved profile and representation of museums in the study area was equally important.
  - The Federation is the "best" existing organisation to improve this and they must be given the first opportunity to take this on.
  - Strong approval of a successor body to the North and Mid Wales Museums Group, but with a new and more radically engaged role.