AMGUEDDFA CYMRU - NATIONAL MUSEUM WALES

Learning and Access Policy and Strategy

Towards a World Class Museum of Learning

Inspiring people to make sense of the world through memory, reason and imagination

> The aim of this paper is
> to create an integrated, comprehensive and coherent learning strategy
> across all museums and curatorial disciplines of
> Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales.
>
> The end result will be to increase the public understanding,
> interpretation and enjoyment of the collections
> by ensuring excellence of access, provision and support
> through the collaboration of all who work at Amgueddfa Cymru.

October 2005

Updated 2011

Learning and Access Policy and Strategy
Executive Summary

The Aim:
The policy has been produced to clarify how the Learning Department can support the Museum in its aim to become a World Class Museum of Learning.

The document is intended to provide a developing framework for improving the Museum's work across the entire range of its activities and is for use by the whole of the organisation.

The policy has the following purposes:
• to stimulate ideas, clear thinking and good practice;
• to disseminate understanding of the Museum's learning and access agenda, internally and externally;
• to demonstrate how the Museum's work underpins its role as a learning organisation and supports our Vision for the future

In terms of policy goals, it seeks to provide a foundation for the organisation to:
• stimulate critical appraisal of learning and access initiatives;
• promote awareness of different learning styles, contexts and opportunities;
• provide a basis for developing concepts, approaches and projects that will contribute to the Museum's work;
• offer ways for individuals and groups to contribute according to their strengths and roles

The Process:
The Policy and Strategy was written following a number of internal staff workshops and seminars, in which issues and ideas were discussed alongside a range of external expert views. The plan was also informed, in part, by the 'Inspiring Learning for All' framework.

Key Principles:
The key principles of Amgueddfa Cymru's Learning and Access Policy require the organisation to:

1. Widen relationships with and sustain opportunities for diverse audiences.
2. Invest in learning settings and spaces.
3. Be experimental and improve the quality of learning experiences on offer.
4. Embed and celebrate learning throughout the organisation and beyond.
5. Strengthen our research capacity and outputs to increase impact.

Implementation:
The five key principles are high-level and long term. Some of the statements reflect the situation now; others are aspirational in that they represent a goal towards which we are working. They will be supplemented by performance indicators, measures and targets in the Museum's Operational and Corporate plans.

OVERVIEW LEARNING AND ACCESS POLICY AND STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION
> The Welsh Dimension
> The International Dimension

1. THE POLICY
> The Policy Making Process
> Creating a World Class Museum of Learning

2. THE STRATEGY

> **Widen relationships with and sustain opportunities for diverse audiences**
> > Styles of Learning
> > Different kinds of relationships
> > Networks and Partnerships
> > Collecting Policy
> > Programming
> > Dialogue
> > Staff Diversity

> **Invest in Learning settings and spaces**
> > Exploring space
> > Creating Learning Spaces
> > Animating space
> > Virtual learning space

> **Be Innovative and Improve the Quality of Learning on Offer**
> > Innovation
> > Visitor Studies research
> > Evaluation
> > Learning Outcomes

> **Embed and Celebrate Learning**
> > Putting Learning at the heart of what we do
> > Championing and celebrating the Museum as a centre for Learning
> > Developing our skills
> > Wider strategies for training and development
> > Learning related skills

> **Strengthening our research capacity and outputs to increase impact**
> > Wales and the world: the world class Museum of research
> > Strategic links
> > New research
> > Profile and dissemination
> > Linking research with our Learning programmes

APPENDICES

1. Definitions:
   Access
   Social Inclusion

2. The Learning Organisation

3. Types of Learning Activity offered by Amgueddfa Cymru:
   Formal Learning
   Lifelong Learning
   Audience Development
   Gallery Learning
   E-Learning
   Staff Development

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to set out the Museum's policy for Learning and Access. It builds on a long tradition of educational activity, which originates in the Museum's foundation responsibility for the education of the public. At the same time it sets out fresh thinking on education and learning within museums and galleries.

This paper encompasses the concept of access, which has risen to the top of the learning agenda and includes both physical and intellectual access. (See Appendix 1 for a fuller discussion). It considers learning approaches aimed at meeting the widest range of learning styles and the need to ensure relevance to those outside traditional visitor groups. It recognises that people learn in different ways, contexts and circumstances.

Museums, galleries and other learning organisations throughout the world are recognising the central importance of sound policies and strategies for learning. These reflect the cultural, educational and social policies of modern government and also address the diverse ways in which learning underpins relationships with their audiences.[1]

The strategic elements of this policy are set out in relation to the policy framework and are intended to address Amgueddfa Cymru as an organisation. The document does not describe every specific programme of activity. Instead it sets out principles and approaches that will be embraced to ensure that the policy is realised. It outlines five strategic policy themes which will need to be taken into account in our core operational documents, and which underpin the Museum's Vision (2004).

The Welsh Dimension

Amgueddfa Cymru operates in a different policy context from museums and galleries elsewhere in Britain. In the fields of education and lifelong learning, culture and language, social inclusion and e-learning the Museum responds to Welsh Government initiatives, rather than the DCMS and DfES. It delivers learning within a Welsh context, alongside or in partnership with other Wales-specific organisations and initiatives. All these present Amgueddfa Cymru with a different set of circumstances compared with equivalent organisations in the rest of the UK.

---

[1] The use of the term audiences was debated during policy development discussions, and was rejected by some as being too passive and failing to communicate the sense of active involvement to which we aspire. Consequently, where appropriate, other descriptors such as 'users', 'visitors' and 'participants are used. However, we also recognise that the term 'audience' is widely used by our peers and that 'audience development' usefully captures the idea of *potential* visitors with which we hope to engage.

Amgueddfa Cymru collaborates with CyMAL (Museums, Archives and Libraries Wales), which provides support to museums, archives and libraries in Wales. CyMAL operates on different, sometimes parallel, principles from the former Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), which provided cross-sectoral support in England. In particular, CyMAL and Amgueddfa Cymru together have evolved a Partnership and Audience Development Strategy which is distinct from the initiatives which supported the English regional hubs created by MLA's 'Renaissance in the Regions' programme.

Amgueddfa Cymru works bilingually in English and Welsh, drawing on the Welsh Government's initiatives on language, and informed by the Museum's own Welsh Language Mainstreaming Strategy and Welsh Language Scheme. In this context, as in others, it has recently looked to policy and strategy contexts outside the UK for examples of good practice and comparators.

These different and distinctive factors offer opportunities and challenges for the development of a lifelong learning programme for Amgueddfa Cymru.

The International Dimension

In addition Amgueddfa Cymru operates within a UK and a global context. We address worldwide issues, contribute to an international arena and engage in international collaborative projects, including scholarship and collections based research with international partners. We interact with an international audience at our sites and increasing via the internet.

This international reach and responsibility means that we also need to be conscious of wider trends and influences in museums, galleries and learning organisations around the world.

1. The Policy

This document sets out ways in which Amgueddfa Cymru will express its goals and activities as a learning organisation. It includes broad policy areas and a range of associated strategies by which policy may be implemented in practical ways. It is intended to provide a developing framework for improving the Museum's work across the entire range of its activities.

The policy has the following purposes:

- to stimulate ideas, clear thinking and good practice
- to disseminate understanding of the Museum's learning and access agenda, internally and externally
- to demonstrate how the Museum's work underpins its role as a learning organisation and supports our Vision for the future

In terms of policy goals, it seeks to provide a foundation for the organisation to:

1) Stimulate critical appraisal of learning and access initiatives
2) Promote awareness of different learning styles, contexts and opportunities
3) Provide a basis for developing concepts, approaches and projects that will contribute to the Museum's work
4) Offer ways for individuals and groups to contribute according to their strengths and roles

More generally, the Policy will assist in the making of strategic decisions about resources, and in future prioritising of projects and activities.

1.1 The Policy Making Process

Amgueddfa Cymru's Vision, when it began in 2004 described the organisation's purpose as:

> *Inspiring people to make sense of the world through memory, reason and imagination.*

In the summer of 2004, a small steering group of Council members[2] and staff met to consider how this role might be clarified and freshly expressed in a new Learning and Access policy. A programme of internal staff workshops and seminars played a role in articulating ideas and issues, while also bringing in external voices and views. Each curatorial department audited its learning provision while further discussions took place in site and functional groups.

---

[2] Now known as Trustees

The process was informed by – but not restricted to - the Museums, Archives and Libraries Council's (MLA) 'Inspiring Learning for All' framework, produced to help organisations understand their own learning work and to develop their policies, strategies and evaluation on the basis of this improved understanding.

The Vision seminars and workshops resulted in a critique of existing learning activities within Amgueddfa Cymru, including those which we do well and areas we regard as priorities for development. The sessions were followed up with three further workshops led by Vicky Woollard of City University in September 2005. These were attended by 'learning champions' representing a range of different departments and sites. The workshops revisited Amgueddfa Cymru's learning themes to reflect developments arising out of the Visioning process and to prioritise further in identifying broad operational areas of planning.

1.2   *Creating a World Class Museum of Learning*

The Vision process has demonstrated that the Museum is fundamentally a learning-oriented organisation, with the collections, expertise and facilities being cared for and deployed to this end.

The 'Inspiring Learning for All' framework endorses a definition of learning derived from the Campaign for Learning. It begins:

> *'Learning is a process of active engagement with experience. It is what people do when they want to make sense of the world.'*

And explains:

> *It may involve the development or deepening of skills, knowledge, understanding, awareness, values, ideas and feelings, or an increase in the capacity to reflect. Effective learning leads to change, development and the desire to learn more.'*

The Vision process has led the Museum to aspire to become a world class museum of learning. If this is to be achieved it is crucial that **all** departments, teams and individuals contribute to the learning task and that collections are deployed to this end. This Policy and Strategy is therefore intended as a document for the whole of the organisation, rather than being confined to the Learning Department.

The Museum has a well-established reputation for its commitment to education. We are known as an institution in and through which people learn. As a result of the Vision process we are now seeking to deliver excellence by becoming a Learning Organisation, that is to say an organisation committed to learning from a combination of its own experience and good practice elsewhere.

Learning Organisations:

- are adaptive to their external environment
- continually enhance their capability to change
- develop collective as well as individual learning
- use the results of learning to achieve better outcomes

The concept of the Learning Organisation is more fully explored in Appendix 2.

An underlying theme of the Learning and Access Policy discussions was the need for implementation to be based on a virtuous circle, in keeping with the idea of the Learning Organisation.

Consult
Research
Audit

Monitor
Evaluate
Improve

Collaborate
Create
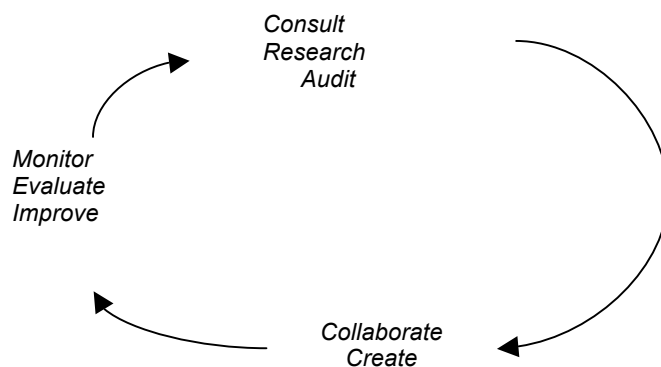
To become a world class museum of learning, we need to combine excellence in the delivery of learning with organisational learning at the highest level.

Amgueddfa Cymru could easily re-state its present policies, emphasising that all aspects of the organisation meet the collective goal of being a 'learning organisation'. However, as other museums recently involved in such a policy process have noted, learning is a catalyst for change. Embracing learning in a holistic fashion maintains and improves:

- an organisation's relevance and standards
- the quality and achievements of its staff
- the museum experience for visitors and users

Our Learning and Access Policy and Strategy must be capable of influencing corporate policy and planning, including the strategic objectives for the Museum as a whole. The policy will determine strategic decisions about resources and assist in prioritising projects and activities.

1.3   *Five Policy Themes*

The key principles of Amgueddfa Cymru's Learning and Access Policy will require the organisation to:

> 1. **Widen relationships with and sustain opportunities for diverse audiences**
> 2. **Invest in learning settings and spaces**
> 3. **Be experimental and improve the quality of learning experiences on offer**
> 4. **Embed and celebrate learning throughout the organisation and beyond**
> 5. **Strengthen our research capacity and outputs to increase impact**

1.3.1 Widen relationships with and sustain opportunities for diverse audiences

Amgueddfa Cymru will strive to attract a genuinely diverse range of users and reflect the variety and complexity of society in every aspect or our work - from collecting policies to displays and programming, and from staffing to marketing.

We will research potential new audiences, and devise ways to take on board new ideas and experiences in the creation and implementation of our museum programmes. We will engage with our visitors and users, and they with us, in diverse ways. The Museum is uniquely placed to provide differentiated learning experiences.

We will look for an appropriate balance between reaching out to new and more diverse audiences, with our desire to strengthen relations with our current and core audiences. The Museum will exploit its potential to provide different ways of learning for people who learn in different ways. In some cases we will seek breadth of learning opportunities, reaching the many; in others we will prioritise deep and on-going relationships with a smaller section of users.

The Audience Development Action Plans developed since October 2005 have informed this policy theme.

1.3.2   Invest in a variety of learning settings and spaces

The Museum will work to ensure learning settings and spaces are developed to a consistently high standard, whatever the context.

In museums and galleries learning occurs in many and varied settings and spaces. Our visitors learn in designated spaces – for example in dedicated teaching and study areas. They also learn through personal experience and reflection in exhibition galleries and external settings, as well as in busy

interaction within large groups. We will exploit the potential of all spaces available for the 'learning mission' in each of our museums.

Our understanding of the learning experience will inform how we plan and invest in our museums. Maintaining and improving our learning spaces will need to feature in future operational planning and capital investment.

We also consider the learning potential of settings beyond Amgueddfa Cymru's boundaries - with our partners and other organisations, at national events such as the Eisteddfodau, with schools and on the web.

1.3.3 Be innovative and improve the quality of learning experiences on offer.

The Museum will ensure that the learning opportunities it provides are of the highest quality.

As an organisation seeking to promote innovation, Amgueddfa Cymru will identify and celebrate best practice in all sectors in which we operate. Amgueddfa Cymru will be imaginative and brave enough to take risks, implementing new methods of delivery. We will experiment, using research and development processes as well as well-tested approaches.

In addition to developing expertise in collections and subject specialism, we will encourage expertise in communicating collections, and in particular in the way learning is experienced.

To ensure the highest quality, projects will be planned with learning outcomes in mind and will be evaluated for effectiveness on completion.

1.3.4 Embed and Celebrate Learning

The Museum will embed and celebrate the importance of learning throughout the organisation and beyond.

A world class museum of learning depends as much on the performance of all the people who work in it, as upon its collections. We will value the contributions that staff, volunteers and our partners make to learning. Expertise in learning will complement and be valued equally alongside collections expertise.

Our organisational culture will recognise that learning takes many forms. It includes embracing new and valuable *experiences*, such as project development processes, as well as new knowledge worth gathering and understanding. Internal communication and forums for discussion will be essential to achieve this.

1.3.5 Strengthen our research capacity and outputs to increase impact

The Museum will strengthen its research capacity and outputs to increase their impact, thereby increasing our profile as a centre for learning of international quality.

Research is a fundamental task enabling the collections to be understood.
We must find ways of making our research programmes, including research-based development *processes*, more visible to the visiting public as well as our academic peers. Revealing the depth of research that underpins the display of our collections will enhance the visitor experience and promote a fuller understanding of the role and work of Amgueddfa Cymru.

We must link our learning activities with our research programmes more effectively, to maximise the impact of both.

In making the most of our research programmes and outputs, we will need to use the most appropriate media for dissemination, including the web.

2.   The Strategy

This section sets out the strategy through which the policy will be implemented. It described five policy themes which will underpin core Museum operational documents, including:

- The Museum's corporate, operational, site and departmental plans.
- Programmes for different audiences and those who learn with Amgueddfa Cymru.
- Training and activities for Amgueddfa Cymru staff.
- Programmes and strategies for specific target groups

The process of identifying and prioritising the strategic objectives will inform the organisation's plans, including those specific items outlined in Section 3 of this document.

2.1   *Widen relationships with and sustain opportunities for diverse audiences*

Different people learn in different ways. From the perspective of our users, learning can enhance opportunity, build skills and experience, provide opportunities to gain qualifications and promote a richer understanding of the world around us. Our visitors and users reflect a variety of experiences, needs and wants. They include people looking for enjoyment and relaxation; school children and families; cultural tourists, students and scholars; first time visitors and regular users.

The task of the Museum is to spark an interest in learning which lasts throughout people's lives.

We will ensure that high quality learning opportunities are provided for the broadest possible audiences through:

- Exhibitions - including our collections and interactive exhibitions.
- Public programming – including guided tours, activity sessions and workshops, lectures, study days, concerts, and outreach initiatives.
- Live interpretation – workshops, object handling, and schools activities.
- Audio-visual resources, including audio guides, film, video, and hand-held devices.
- Publications and research.
- Web-based learning, including exhibits and resources.

2.1.1   Styles of Learning

Our visitors have different styles of learning and these preferences should inform the way in which we develop learning opportunities.

We should also be aware that individuals prefer to learn in a variety of different *contexts* (through discussion and debate; through handling objects or accessing

ICT; through contemplation and study; through acting out or creative acts) – and we need to cater for this variety.

Our users should be able to expect a choice of different *levels* of learning (differentiation), as well as opportunities to deepen their learning (progression).

We will audit our current practice, identifying barriers to learning and become more welcoming. The objective will be to change attitudes, remove insularity, develop a better understanding of our current users and non-users, and to encourage greater involvement.

2.1.2   Different Kinds of Relationships

We will build relationships which are 'narrow and deep' as well as 'broad and shallow', through, for example,

- Encouraging funders to sustain support for on-going projects to ensure a quality of experience.
- The use of virtual routes and trained explainers to provide creative solutions where there is pressure to manage or reach large numbers.

2.1.3   Networks and Partnerships

We will promote relations and partnerships with a wide range of organisations to build future collaborations. By being more innovative in finding learning partners (external and internal), and through activity accompanying partnership exhibitions, we will create new learning opportunities, improve learning, and maximise the reach of projects.

Working with excluded and vulnerable groups and communities, in particular, requires special skills. We recognise that best practice in addressing social inclusion and access lies in collaborating with other agencies, including voluntary organisations. Organisations which are already working with target groups or communities usually have a better understanding of their needs, as well as having skilled and experienced staff. Through partnerships and collaboration with existing external programmes we will achieve greater inclusiveness.

We will develop more diverse ways of providing personal interaction in our museums through:

- Inspiring 'users' to be 'learners' and 'communicators', for example young guides in new exhibitions.
- Developing volunteers as facilitators of activities.
- Creating opportunities for visitors to interpret our collections.
- Co-ordinating and evaluating student and work experience placements, to ensure that their learning informs ours.
- Developing a pool of trained specialist explainers and interpreters.

2.1.4 Collecting Policy

The needs and interests of our audiences, partnerships and research will inform our collecting. We will address both current and future needs and interests.

At some times, Amgueddfa Cymru collects for reference and documentation; at others, for display and illustration of themes. We will identify current collection strengths and develop a sustained and appropriate policy which reflects the diversity of users' interests.

Collecting will reflect new intellectual directions proposed by the Vision, such as for example, contemporary history and the representation of different identities. The Vision themes will provide a framework for this activity and the way in which we represent 'the peoples of Wales' is an immediate priority.

2.1.5 Programming

We will create programme and interpretation themes which are simple, consistent and clear. For example, sustainability of natural resources in the contemporary landscape and economy should be a thread at all our museums, not just amongst our Natural History collections. Equally, creativity can be represented in many areas, including the understanding history and science through creative endeavour.

2.1.6 Dialogue

We will listen to and engage in dialogue with existing and potential audiences. We need to learn more about their needs and interests, preferred learning styles, the extent and depth of information they require, and their preferred means of communication. In order to support this area of activity, structures or mechanisms for dialogue will be required, such as user/community panels.

2.1.7 Staff Diversity

To deliver relevant and diverse programmes to diverse audiences, it is vital that we maintain and expand a diverse workforce. We will ensure there is a sustained strategy for appointments, which will sustain a diverse staff with diverse skills. We will also aim for diversity amongst our volunteers and partners.

2.2   *Invest in Learning Settings and Spaces*

2.2.1 Exploring Space: Evaluating and Monitoring the Use and the Potential of Spaces for Learning

Our museums offer a rich resource for learning. In the past we tended to focus on our galleries and 'education rooms' and have perhaps failed to appreciate the variety of ways in which our visitors learn and of the importance of taking a more holistic view of our museums and collections. The Learning and Access policy discussions have highlighted the need to explore and debate the learning potential of museums in a more sophisticated way, across a wider range of spaces and settings.

Alongside creating dedicated educational spaces, such as the Clore Discovery Centre at National Museum Cardiff, and the Search Engine area at The National Wool Museum, we have increasingly begun to experiment with the creation of learning zones *within* exhibitions, and grounds. These areas, and other resources such as art carts, handling trolleys and activity stations which encourage and enable visitors to engage with our collections more actively, have been warmly welcomed by visitors. We have drawn upon and developed this practice in gallery developments at National Museum Cardiff, St Fagans: National History Museum, and The National Roman Legion Museum.

We are already working to increase opportunities for learning, through developments designed to increase physical access to our collections. We should do more to create facilities for private study and research for our users, and also to promote these facilities where they already exist.

The landscapes surrounding our sites, particularly at The National Wool Museum, St Fagans: National History Museum and The National Slate Museum offer the potential to expand learning opportunities, for example in relation to biodiversity, while external play areas for children, developed with learning in mind are also rich in educational value. Our shops, restaurants and 'sandwich rooms' could be used to promote sustainability, while corridors and informal exhibition areas provide the opportunity to display the creative work and responses of our visitors, together with the work of other artists.

2.2.2   Creating Learning Spaces

We will invest in the resources, planning and establishment of well serviced learning settings and spaces with learners' interests in mind.

We are developing ideas for new learning spaces with user groups. Through consultation with visitors and potential users, we will ensure that the interests and needs of learners inform the style, provision and delivery of learning settings and spaces. Such interests and needs may range from providing or improving networked and local ICT-based resources in public spaces, to investing in furniture for 'comfort' in galleries and external spaces.

Our priority will be to develop learning settings which enable greater physical, intellectual and sensory access to our collections - settings which offer our

visitors deeper and richer learning experiences. Our aim is to create different types of learning environments for different learners, as well as multi-purpose spaces and settings that cater for a variety of learning styles, interests and levels. For example, these will include dedicated research and study spaces on the one hand, and flexible programming spaces on the other. Some of our spaces will introduce ideas and connections, while others should offer opportunities for deeper levels of learning.

We are extending our interest in exploiting the learning potential of a variety of spaces, into settings beyond museum boundaries. In our work with partners and other organisations, at national events such as the Eisteddfodau, in our activities with schools, and through our presence on the web, we will endeavour to create excellent learning zones.

2.2.3   Animating Space

Space alone is not enough. We also recognise the importance of animating learning spaces to establish dialogue and create opportunities to question and challenge. Although initiatives such as Art Carts, New Media interactives and installations offer opportunities for learning and engagement, the Vision consultation has underlined the importance of personal interaction for our users.

Our commitment to improve learning spaces must also include a commitment to develop the way in which we engage with visitors face-to-face. For example:

- The 'staffing' of learning spaces.
- Provision of training and support to people who work with visitors to enable them to provide the highest quality of service;
- Development of a greater role for our Museum Assistants as facilitators and explainers.
- Exploring opportunities to increase the use of 'live interpretation' at our museums
- Recognising the different levels of interpretation needed in different contexts
- Finding ways of balancing the demand for access and the duty of 'care'.

2.2.4   Virtual Learning Space

The web and other forms of electronic communication offer rich opportunities for widening access and enhancing learning. Projects such as SCAN (Education for Sustainable Development, which is largely delivered through the web) have demonstrated the potential for creating new forms of engagement and interaction with users. Other web-based learning resources have successfully delivered new and different forms of interpretation.

Within galleries, web / ICT-based resources such as those at The National Waterfront Museum, enable the layering of information to meet the needs of diverse users, and encourage interactivity.

As a publishing medium, the web can make information about our collections, research and learning materials, more cheaply and widely available. Our collections databases, in particular, have the potential to be more extensively used throughout Wales and the wider world, however, data would first need to be 'restyled', for it to be used as a learning resource.

At present, expertise and knowledge in e-learning and in the web generally is spread across Amgueddfa Cymru. The development of the Rhagor website has required us to establish a more central role for the web in the way that we work. Its use should be embedded more strongly in our research work, gallery and exhibition development, learning activities and programming.

If it is to flourish as a high quality learning space, the Museum's web presence will need to combine its publishing function with initiatives that actively support learning, engage with the needs and interests of our *users*, and offer opportunities to access and participate in a wide range of Museum activities. To achieve this, we would need to support staff in developing skills in creating content and making it easily accessible, as well as a commitment to planning and financing this development.

Whilst the internet is a powerful tool for communicating with people outside the organisation, our *intranet* offers a rich learning space for our staff. We will create a learning zone on our intranet where evaluation or learning-related study and research carried out within the Museum, can be shared across the organisation.

We will use this not only to describe successful innovations, but also for honest appraisal of projects which have been deemed less successful. In this way, we will support the creation of a learning community *within* Amgueddfa Cymru and generate a shared understanding of good practice.

2.3 Be Innovative and Improve the Quality of Learning on Offer

2.3.1 Innovation

We will set out to be experimental; through a process of research and development we will encourage the development of high quality learning opportunities for our visitors and users. Innovation may involve small changes to existing ways of doing things, or new ways of doing new things. Both have a value.

People learn best when they feel encouraged and supported in their learning. This applies as much to those who work in museums as to our users. We need to provide a supporting and trusting environment for museum staff, volunteers and other partners, so that they will have the confidence to try new approaches and learn from them.

Whilst we learn from our successes, we learn as much from those things that do not go so well. By encouraging *individuals* to reflect on their own experience, we encourage them to become better practitioners. By encouraging people to share their experience and learning with *others*, acknowledging those things that worked well and those things that might be improved, we create valuable learning opportunities for the organisation as a whole.

As an institution aspiring to becoming a learning organisation, it is vital that we develop new ways of developing collective learning, alongside individual learning. This should involve a commitment to learning within project teams, as well as establishing mechanisms for sharing learning and good practice across our museums.

To develop high quality learning experiences, we must ensure we are aware of the work of colleagues in other organisations as well as our own, and how we compare. Visits to other museums, opportunities for networking with colleagues outside Amgueddfa Cymru, knowledge of research and case studies undertaken by other organisations all offer valuable ways of benchmarking good practice and of encouraging innovation and experimentation.

We should also explore opportunities of working in collaboration with leading practitioners as means of developing innovation and delivering quality.

2.3.2 Visitor Studies Research

There is a growing body of knowledge about visitors and how they learn. We will both draw upon and contribute to this. Our learning activities will be research and evidence-based. Only by understanding how people learn in different environments and settings, and understanding the effects of barriers to learning, can we hope to achieve our objectives.

We will conduct visitor research before, during and after development of galleries, exhibitions, programmes and activities to ensure that the learning experiences we provide are appealing, relevant, accessible and appropriate.

We will draw on research into different learning styles and the influence of different learning settings to inform programme and project planning processes. Through staff workshops and training, we will aim to increase awareness and understanding of this form of activity as a process for raising standards. This research, with its emphasis on the quality of learning experience, will supplement and complement more marketing-focused forms of evaluation.

2.3.3 Evaluation

A greater investment in evaluation is essential if we are to achieve better results. Evaluation can be carried out in a number of ways, including:

- Use of focus groups to assess future plans, (including focus groups of staff where appropriate)
- Qualitative evaluation by internal staff of projects in which they have not been involved.
- Internal and external evaluation of the visitor experience by users, partners, staff and volunteers.
- Formal evaluation of the effectiveness of museum exhibits in communicating information and connecting with visitors.

Our evaluation will address the variety of ways in which users experience the museum. We will use both our Visitor Studies research and evaluation, to enable our staff, volunteers and partners to adopt a visitor perspective. Our aim is to be a user-centred museum.

2.3.4 Learning Outcomes

We will plan our work according to learning outcomes. We will encourage quality by establishing and using mechanisms for setting standards and recognising excellence. Frameworks such as 'Investors in People' and 'Inspiring Learning for All' will be used for planning and measuring the impact of learning and access activities.

2.4 *Embed and Celebrate Learning*

2.4.1 Putting learning at the heart of what we do

We will put learning at the heart of our activity and aim to maximise the opportunities for learning in all that we do. Project teams will be explicit about their educational objectives and target audiences, while project planning will take into account the interests and needs, access requirements and learning styles of our target audiences. In this way we will deliver schemes which promote access and learning as core functions of the museum.

We will emphasise the potential learning roles of all staff and will support staff in developing skills in delivering the learning agenda. Activities carried out across the organisation should be identified in terms of learning opportunities for people working in our museums.

2.4.2 Championing and Celebrating the Museum as a Centre for Learning

We will work to increase awareness of the way in which our museums contribute to learning and to social well-being at an individual and community level, and will demonstrate the positive impact that we have on people's lives. For our visitors and users, we will promote our role in providing informal, formal and lifelong learning. In relation to the Welsh Government and local authorities, we will highlight our museums as centres for learning and will explore the potential for partnership and collaboration. We will endeavour to influence and respond to national and local plans in areas such as education and cultural tourism. As a first step towards a stronger emphasis on advocacy, we will produce a publication championing our contribution to learning.

Through our work with Careers Wales / the Education Business Partnership and others we are already involved in training and information initiatives which enable the people we work with to better exploit the learning potential of our museums. We will continue and strengthen this activity so that our users have richer learning experiences. We will also learn from them about making our museums more relevant and accessible.

2.4.3 Developing Our Skills

We will improve the provision of continuous learning and development for everyone, emphasising the importance of continuing professional development.[3] This will require:

- Personal and vocational development of staff and others involved with Amgueddfa Cymru.

---

[3] Continuing professional development (CPD) is used here to describe activities which contribute to the development of staff, volunteers and partners. The use of 'professional' is not intended to exclude volunteers, but rather to capture an aspiration towards the highest standards.

- Recognising and using the expertise already in house and ensuring this level is enhanced.
- Performance and Development Review (PDR) objectives to include time and resources for skill and creative development.
- Supporting staff in their individual learning.
- Advanced planning and prioritising, to create time and to secure resources for high quality learning.
- Increased involvement of graduate and postgraduate students through work study placements.

This approach has implications for the Training Strategy within the organisation, as well as for the role of Managers.

2.4.4 Wider Strategies for Training and Development

We need to create more opportunities for sharing skills and dedicate more time and energy to learning from one another within the organisation. This could be achieved by:

- Peer-to-peer training.
- Mentoring and coaching.
- Encouraging job shadowing.
- Use of secondment, with exposure to different environments.
- Visits and project work.
- Encouraging team work, including cross-functional work teams and quality improvement groups.
- Using a variety of techniques such as structured on the job training, learning facilitators, job rotation and professional networks.
- Feeding back on what we have learned.
- Offering training to others as a means of developing our own skills.

Many of these approaches could also usefully be applied in conjunction with peers in the museum sector and other organisations.

2.4.5 Learning-related Skills

We need to promote the development of learning-related skills: that is, skills in communicating with our audiences, amongst a broad range of staff, including curators, interpreters and front of house staff. Examples include:

- Improving written communication skills to create more accessible text and signage across the museums
- Meeting and greeting – personal interaction with visitors
- Evaluation, including exhibition evaluation
- Visitors Studies research
- Skills in public engagement (running focus groups / audience panels).
- Addressing visitor groups
- Engaging with academic peer groups
- Writing for the web
- Interpretation skills, particularly live interpretation
- Creating exhibition labels
- Engaging with visitors with disabilities

The process of developing the Vision and the Learning and Access Policy has already been highly productive in terms of generating debate around learning. We should aim to continue to build on this work, moving from our current 'occasional' approach to a structured and continuing programme of dialogue and discussion, particularly amongst the 'learning champions' in the Museum.

2.5 *Strengthening our Research Capacity and Outputs to Increase Impact*

Research is the most fundamental form of learning undertaken by museums and is the basis of all subsequent activity. The objective of research is to increase our understanding of our collections, thereby improving our ability to interpret their meaning to our audience. Without this understanding, there can be no recognition of the meaning and relative importance of our collections. Our research underpins access to our collections in a very profound way.

2.5.1 Wales and the World: the World Class Museum of Research

We have traditionally concentrated on collections-centred research.

Our informal mission statement has been 'telling Wales about the world and the world about Wales'. This task has been interpreted differently by each curatorial department, given the differing nature of the collections. Archaeology, Industry and Social and Cultural History have taken Wales as their research focus, while the Art department addresses both Wales and the wider world. The Geology department has concentrated on Wales in an international context, while the Biodiversity and Systemic Biology (BioSyB) department sets out to contribute to a global agenda.

In some cases, our collections and expertise are already recognised as being of world class status. The challenge we face us is to maintain these areas while also aspiring to extend our world class reputation into other fields.

2.5.2 Strategic Links

The Museum's research programme complements Higher Education research work undertaken in Wales and further afield. Curatorial staff work in partnership and collaboration with their university peers where appropriate. Traditionally our research has often been strongest in areas where university research in Wales is less well developed. Moreover, the fact that museum research has maintained its focus on objects, artefacts and specimens, while universities have generally moved towards an increasingly theoretical focus, has enabled the Museum to provide a distinctive and complementary research contribution.

To strengthen our research capacity, we will audit and identify gaps in our research capacity and seek to address them by establishing strategic and focused partnerships with key external bodies. These will include universities and other leading agencies, such as the Countryside Council for Wales. Our emphasis will be on a small number of high quality partnerships.

2.5.3 New Research

Whilst we are best known for our collections-based study, we are also engaged in research in the fields of conservation and museology, offering advice to various academic bodies in Wales. We will aim to become stronger in these areas and celebrate the fact that we are providers of expertise as a result of our research record.

Increasingly, we are broadening our research profile, seeing the benefits of cross-departmental initiatives which benefit from the wide range of disciplines represented within Amgueddfa Cymru. We are also moving into new areas and becoming involved in more applied research.

Through a wider research profile, across a wider range of departments we will raise our profile as a World Class Museum of Learning.

2.5.4 Profile and Dissemination

To increase our influence, credibility and relevance, we will consider the requirements of our users and the wider community, as well as our own collection needs in drawing up a balanced research programme.

We should increase the impact of our research, by ensuring its dissemination through the most appropriate medium, including the web. We could more actively use facilities such as the Clore Discovery Centre and the Insight Gallery at National Museum Cardiff to disseminate information about our research activity.

2.5.5 Linking Research with Our Learning Programmes

In order that we maximise the learning potential of research, we must ensure that our activities build upon two strands: firstly, the role of collections and secondly, but of equal importance, our relationships with visitors.

The role and impact of our collections research is not always visible to our users and visitors. We should be more explicit about its use in our exhibitions, events, publications, in our museums and on the web.

We will draw on our own research and that of other institutions in the fields of museology, museum pedagogy and visitor studies, to ensure that our learning activity and programming is founded on sound principles.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: DEFINITIONS

1.1 ACCESS

We will aim to make our collections, expertise, programmes and activities more accessible to our visitors, taking into account the factors that might influence an individual's needs and interests - such as age, physical and intellectual ability, level of education, ethnicity, religion, social / economic status and gender. We will also bear in mind potential users who are unable or unwilling to come physically to museums, and aim to reach more people through our publishing programme and outreach activities, as well as through virtual access, through our website and Rhagor.

Amgueddfa Cymru focuses particularly on removing barriers in relation to the following three forms of Access:

1.1.1 Physical Access
We tackle physical and sensory barriers to make our buildings and displays more accessible. We want our visitors to be able to see exhibits and objects at the right height and to find labels and text in the best position and size. We want them to be able to find their way around our museums and grounds easily, to experience them as comfortable and welcoming places, and to have easy access to toilets and refreshments, as well as to places to rest and reflect.

1.1.2 Intellectual access
We seek to address intellectual barriers, in order to engage all our visitors, providing experiences which are challenging and understandable. We take into account different educational experiences, learning styles and ways of understanding of users of all ages.

1.1.3 Cultural access

Amgueddfa Cymru is committed to equality and diversity and these principles underpin our organisational values and the Museum's Vision. We recognise that those who use our services are from differing cultural, ethnic, racial and gender backgrounds and have different religions or beliefs, nationalities, sexual orientations, gender identities, ages, physical and mental abilities. By recognising and celebrating those differences, the Museum can ensure that it is accessible, relevant and representative of all the people of Wales.

The Museum implements its Equality and Diversity Policy in accordance with the Equality Act and other legislation which establishes the principles of equal treatment in employment and in the provision of services to the public.

As a public sector organisation, the Museum is committed to positively contributing to a fairer society through advancing equality and good relations in our day-to-day activities. Through our internal policies and procedures and our services to the public we are committed to:

- eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act;

- advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; and

- fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Museum's Diversity Group support the Museum's Diversity Officer in mainstreaming equality. Membership of the group includes representatives from across the organisation. The remit of the Diversity Group is to:

- review relevant current and pending legislation to ensure that the museum complies with its legal obligations

- review any aspect of the museum's activity to ensure that it does not discriminate in its employment practices or in its delivery of services to the public

- develop a relevant strategy supported by policies and procedures for consideration by the Board of Directors

- plan and effect communication of the group's existence and purpose so as to encourage help with its activities

- seek external support where appropriate in order to ensure that the museum has access to the most appropriate advice in relation to Diversity issues.

We are currently producing Equality Objectives and a Strategic Equality Plan in accordance with the legislative requirements, which will be available on our website by 2 April 2012.

1.2   SOCIAL INCLUSION

Social Exclusion is a 'short hand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environment, bad health, poverty and family breakdown (Government definition)

Amgueddfa Cymru received public funds on the basis that it is everyone's right to have the opportunity to explore, be inspired by, enjoy and learn from our collections. Since the establishment of the Welsh Government in 2000, social inclusion has been one of its firm priorities and the focus of cross-departmental development work. In particular, Welsh Government policy reflects a concern that museums develop more effective ways of fulfilling their responsibilities to people who are socially and culturally excluded, as part of their core activity.

In 2001-2, Amgueddfa Cymru commissioned research into Non-Visitors, from the Research Centre for Museums & Galleries (RCMG) at Leicester. This highlighted the needs of families; young people, older people; ethnic minorities; Welsh speakers / learners, and C2DE communities.

Whilst social inclusion, access and diversity are a shared responsibility for staff across the Museum, they have particular implications for Learning, Visitor Services, Marketing and Human Resources (HR) departments. Following the Non-Visitor research, Amgueddfa Cymru reviewed and strengthened its policies and strategies in relation to Learning, Marketing, Visitor Services and Events. The Museum has also designated a member of its HR department as having a particular responsibility for Access and Diversity.

We aim to support educational initiatives for people who are socially excluded, including Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) populations; people living with disabilities (including learning disabilities); those on low incomes and living in the poorest communities in Wales; people with health problems, with limited basic skills or who are disadvantaged in other ways. We endeavour to increase confidence, motivation and ability of people to participate as a means of encouraging social inclusion and social justice.

APPENDIX 2:   THE LEARNING ORGANISATION

2.1   Characteristics of the Learning Organisation

- Learning and reflection are built in to routines and culture. Learning is integral to activities, rather than optional extra.
- Learning takes place across the whole organisation.
- The organisation uses the results of learning to achieve better results.
- There is an emphasis on the social context in which learning takes place (in addition to the individual) and the organisation starts to develop ways in which it can learn lessons collectively.
- The organisation is adaptive to the external environment.

2.2   What do Learning Organisations do and how do they do it?

- Create opportunities to learn from experience.
- Create new knowledge and understanding.
- Embrace change, continually enhancing their capability to adapt.
- Encourage and support risk-taking and experimentation
- Develop systems for sharing knowledge and learning - and make use of these systems.
- Are 'user' (visitor / learner) - driven
- Strive for continuous improvement
- Encourage high quality team work, including cross-functional work teams and quality improvement groups
- Use a variety of 'techniques' including structured on the job training, mentoring, coaching, learning facilitators, job rotation, visits, work-shadowing, project work and professional networks.

2.3 Key Question for Learning Organisations

How can we go about developing and building learning activities into the every day fabric of what we do?

APPENDIX 3: TYPES OF LEARNING ACTIVITY OFFERED BY AMGUEDDFA CYMRU

3.1 Formal Learning

The Museum offers a large and diverse formal education programme which attracts over 200,000 visits from schools and colleges each year – about one seventh of Amgueddfa Cymru's visitor total. This figure compares very favourably with other bodies in Wales (e.g. Cadw and the National Trust). It also compares well with National Museums elsewhere in the UK. The schools programme is tailored around the particular requirements of the National Curriculum in Wales and is valued for its contribution to the Curriculum Cymreig.

In Higher Education, our curatorial staff teach on a variety of undergraduate and post-graduate courses and are involved in supervising Masters and Doctorate students. Curatorial staff, particularly in the field of Natural Sciences, are involved in capacity-building and training initiatives overseas, in conjunction with universities, other national museums and NGOs. Each year, our staff are involved with more than a hundred Museum research projects.

Traditionally, the Museum's contribution to schools and to Higher Education were regarded as separate and distinct areas of activity, but in fact they represent a continuum, offering opportunities for progression of skills, understanding and knowledge.

3.2 Lifelong Learning

The Museum provides a wide range of lifelong learning opportunities, encompassing programmes for pre-school children, programmes specifically targeted at older people and a wide range of learning initiatives for all ages in between. Activities include lectures, guided tours, events, workshops, concerts, performances and film screenings.

In recent years the Museum has focussed on developing opportunities for families who account for more than half of our visitors. Family learning actives offer opportunities for adults to support, or learn alongside, their children. It is delivered through Art Carts, handling trolleys, activity trails and other learning resources for use in galleries.

For our Adult audience, we provide courses, study days, seminars and learning materials, such as the *Llwybrau Llafar* and *Camau Cymraeg* web-published language learning resources.

Live interpretation is offered by a diverse range of staff (interpreters at St Fagans: National History Museum and The National Roman Legion Museum; craft workers at The National Wool Museum and St Fagans; underground guides at Big Pit: National Coal Museum, and former slate quarry workers at The National Slate Museum). This activity has proved highly popular with visitors of all ages. Programmes originally created for schools are being developed and adapted for different audiences, enabling a wider range of visitors to learn through discussion and dialogue. The Vision process has established very clearly that there is strong public support for developing staff to offer greater access, engagement and interaction with museum collections. This will require a commitment to training.

3.3   Audience Development

Audience Development initiatives, at the time of the original publication of Learning and Access Strategy and Policy, were largely instigated and developed by the Learning Department, in collaboration with colleagues in Marketing and Events. Activity at this time was focused on the groups addressed by research into non-visitors, conducted on behalf of the Museum by Leicester University Research Centre for Museums and Galleries. The On Common Ground initiative which targeted 14-24 year olds in disadvantaged circumstances, combined an activity-based approach, with an investigation into attitudes and methods of engaging with young people generally and provided a model for future audience development work.

Subsequent Audience Development strategies have been led by Marketing and outlined the steps which Museum proposes to take as part of a sustained programme to maximize the numbers and diversity of visitors and engage new audiences in our museums, including through our learning-related activities. The strategies work across our sites, using a more co-ordinated approach in order to broaden our visitor base and to address the high profile political area of child poverty. The emphasis is on reaching new visitors to affect changes in attitudes and behaviour and through involving users in developing services, facilities and programmes.

3.4   Gallery Learning

All project teams for exhibition and new gallery developments include members of the Learning department, who advise on learning potential of exhibitions and display. Programmes for schools are developed around temporary and permanent exhibitions and are often supplemented by learning programmes and resource materials for teachers and students.

The Clore Discovery Centre at National Museum Cardiff, which was established as a dedicated learning space for all ages, offers opportunities for 'hands on' learning in the traditional sense. It has demonstrated the importance and the popularity of this form of learning, and influenced the development of handling opportunities elsewhere. Whilst it has proved very popular with children and young families, there is a perception that this activity has taken place at the expense of other forms of research and study. This has highlighted the need for a range of different learning spaces and activities, meeting different user need.

Increasingly staff at National Museum Cardiff and at our other museums are exploring new ways of introducing learning spaces and resources within our galleries and grounds, so that learning is experienced in a more holistic and integrated way.

3.5 E-learning

The Museum offers a range of e-learning opportunities to schools through the web and for adults and their tutors, using the museum collections to develop the knowledge of culture, history and Welsh language.

3.6 Staff Development

The Museum has a well established policy and procedure underpinning its staff development and training activity. The cornerstones are the Performance and Development Review (PDR) process and the Corporate, Divisional and Departmental planning activity.

In recent years, the take-up of development opportunities by individuals and groups of staff has grown considerably. Activity has increased particularly in the areas of further education, professional development, management and customer care. The museum meets identified training needs from a variety of external and internal provision, and has a long-term commitment to introducing the Investors in People scheme at all museum sites.