

SUSTAINING THE FUNDING FOR MUSEUMS IN THE COMMUNITY

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1: OBJECTIVE

To provide some food for thought

2: BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

- a) All of us are here Friends, volunteers, societies, staff to support museums, but there are many others who would wish to identify with them.
- b) A museum is an institution based on a collection whose component parts have been acquired on behalf of a community or communities and which forms the foundation of services provided to a community.
- c) It is highly unlikely that the community on behalf of whom the collection was acquired, the community served, let alone the community supporting a museum are one and the same.

To which community does a museum belong? Analogy with the individual who belongs to different communities. Though may once have belonged to a single community, doubtful whether many museums ever did. Identifying these communities is vital. For example:

Geographical Area

Strengths: readily identifiable but may be quite complex - local, county, national, international.

Weaknesses: primary funding body might not equate with this area.

Opportunities: realignment may open new sources of support.

Threats: public funding squeeze, local government review

Subject Based - Research

Strengths: collections.

Weaknesses: recognition.

Opportunities: funding e.g. when collections are worked on the resulting recognition might bring in extra funding.

Threats: general lack of recognition of the relevance of such collections in society as a key to good decision making for the future e.g. natural history collections can form the basis of decisions on the environment.

Service Based

Others institutionally based, organisations etc.

3: PURPOSE

To ensure better alignment between the aggregate of these communities, the museum audience and the museum market. Recognised by major independent museums that have found the market, as defined in a purely commercial sense as attractions, cannot be used to generate the funding required.

4: MECHANISMS

a) Identifying priorities and aligning with community of interest.

Strengths: better focus.

Weaknesses: may not equate with traditional funders.

Opportunities: more sustained resources.

Threats: transfer of care to other museum authorities - sustaining existing support groups.

b) Agglomeration, critical mass, partnership.

Strengths: long tradition in south west - AMC, SW Federation training - within museum community and with other organisations.

Weaknesses: narrowness of the base of each individual museum, especially lacking resources to put into cultivation - European twinning.

Opportunities: more effective use of existing resources, substantial new funding.

Threats: necessity to safeguard identities.

Aware there is no absolutes in this approach. I will admit that my view may be coloured by a principle about which I personally feel passionately and I believe no one else has the right to deprive people of full access to the collections that 'belong' to them and indeed a duty to ensure that full access is developed as a priority.