



SCOTTISH  
MUSEUMS  
FEDERATION

# A LITTLE HELP FROM THE SECTOR

## SMF CONFERENCE 2024



0900 **Registration**

1000 **Welcome Address**

1010 **Session: Learning and Education**

### **Working with schools: Where do we go next?**

Since 2022, our focus at the National Trust for Scotland has been on understanding more about our schools audiences. We want to know who is engaging with us, the impact of our work, and what teachers want from us in this post-covid, climate-emergency era. We have properties and places throughout Scotland and have the capability to reach school pupils in every local authority area. Our current challenge is how we do this in a way that is sustainable, targeted and widens our reach in line with our 10-year corporate strategy, *Nature, Beauty and Heritage for Everyone*. We also want to ensure we're working in partnership with others to expand our collective work with schools. This session will highlight the results of this initial work, with a focus on those that may be useful to others in the sector. In sharing some of our key findings, we want others in the sector to be empowered to make decisions about their current and future work with schools. We'll also highlight areas we're looking to develop in the future and would love to work with others in taking them forward.

*Presented by Sarah Cowie, Senior Heritage Learning Advisor at National Trust for Scotland. Sarah has worked in the sector since 2004 in a range of institutions including charities, independent museums, local authorities, and national organisations. She has worked with a variety of audiences and currently leads learning at the National Trust for Scotland, with a particular focus on schools. Sarah is also a Trustee for the Group for Education in Museums and recently gained her AMA. Interests include making museums and heritage sites accessible, developing digital learning, evaluating impact, and bringing organisations together.*

## Workforce for the Future – Marseum

We're really excited that our Marseum learning resource has now launched, and we're sharing some information about how your museum can run your own out-of-this world project! We've developed this resource with Daydream Believers, as part of our Workforce for the Future programme. We will demonstrate how your museum can use the Marseum learning resource resource to run Education, Learning and Outreach activity with young people who might otherwise be excluded from participation in their local museum.

As part of our Workforce for the Future project, Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS) have collaborated with Daydream Believers to create the Marseum learning resource, with the aim of inspiring young people to grow their confidence, develop employability skills and learn more about museums and galleries.

In Workforce for the Future, MGS are working in partnership with Developing the Young Workforce to deliver youth employability projects in museums and schools in lower Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) areas. S1/S2 Pupils work to co-create a resource with their local museum, learning about the diversity of job roles in the sector and increasing their employability skills. The learning resource has been designed to support these projects, with our first four pilot Marseum projects lifting off imminently with partners in Oban, Fort William, Paisley and Fife!

*Presented by: Gabi Gillott, Workforce for the Future Project Officer / Museum Development Coordinator (Delivering Change) at Museums Galleries Scotland. Gabi works on two projects at Museums Galleries Scotland, Delivering Change and Workforce for the Future, both of which are focused on making a more diverse range of people welcome in Scotland's museums' workforce and audiences. In both roles, she draws on her experience as a creative facilitator, having worked across a variety of community, arts, and cultural organisations.*

*As Workforce for The Future Project Officer, Gabi supports the delivery of a national project involving Museums and Galleries working with S1 and S2 pupils in lower Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) areas to develop skills and learn more about heritage sector careers. She has also been working Daydream Believers to develop Marseum – a freely accessible learning resource to support more schools and museums to deliver similar projects.*

*As Museum Development Coordinator (Delivering Change), Gabi works closely with museum participants on the Delivering Change programme, supporting the development and delivery of the Museum Learning Programme and creating a network and cohort of museums to embed anti-oppression in their organisation. She also works alongside MGS's Museum Development Team members, supporting them in developing how they help museums engage with anti-oppression, inclusion and participation, aiming to embed this into MGS's core approach.*

1055 **Quick Comfort Break**

1100 **Second Session: Collections and Loans**

### **Historic Environment Scotland's Collections Inventory Project: Consistency and Collaboration**

Historic Environment Scotland (HES) cares for over 42,000 collection items across 148 Properties in Care. We identified a need to perform a detailed, Spectrum-compliant audit of all our collections, capturing updated, consistent and accurate information about these objects, including images. By the end of the project in 2025, the 5-member team will have visited all 148 properties to perform inventories, from Jarlshof in Shetland in the North of Scotland, down to Dundrennan Abbey in Dumfries and Galloway in the South.

This presentation will describe how the introduction of the Collections Inventory Project team to the Collections & Applied Conservation department has allowed a consistent method of inventory to be applied across the regions, and has fostered collaboration and support within the organisation.

*Presented by: Inga Edwardson is Collections Inventory Team Manager at Historic Environment Scotland (HES). She is responsible for managing the Collections Inventory Project team who are working to produce updated, accurate and consistent information about HES's collections across Scotland.*

*Kate Grimshaw is a Collections Inventory Assistant and is responsible for the implementation of the Collections Inventory Project. She travels between sites, inventorying and photographing objects, and prepares the data for addition to the CMS.*

### **The RSAs Bicentenary in 2026: Partners around Scotland**

In 2026 the Royal Scottish Academy will celebrate its bicentenary. As Scotland's oldest surviving artist-run institution, the RSA and its Academicians have played a significant role throughout the years in shaping the nation's art and its cultural landscape. The RSA is keen to celebrate this anniversary across Scotland, to properly reflect the national role of the RSA and its Academicians and their impact on the forming of a shared national collection.

We are warmly extending an invitation to cultural venues in Scotland to become involved in the bicentenary project and help develop it at a national level. RSA Academicians, both in the past and now, form part of every community in Scotland and their work features in public and private collections the length and breadth of the country. In honour of these connections, the project will align with institutions' individual display strategies and local priorities and hopefully not add to already stretched budgets and resources.

Involvement could range from updating labels with the RSA 2026 logo to a series of exhibitions across the year. The project is supported by Museums Galleries

Scotland and ArtUK. We hope that there will be wide sector engagement and that SMF members might take on a role of advocacy with us, spreading the word to other venues and encouraging more diverse involvement, within and outwith the museum and gallery sector.

*Presented by: Sandy Wood is Head of Collections at the Royal Scottish Academy of Art & Architecture. He is responsible for the management, care of, and access to the RSA's uniquely formed collection, Recognised as a collection of National Significance to Scotland. Sandy joined the RSA in 2003 after graduating in Fine Art from Gray's School of Art, Aberdeen, later completing a Masters in Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. Starting work at the RSA as a technician, he was appointed Assistant Curator in 2010 and Collections Curator in 2013. His areas of interest include the stories woven between historic and contemporary practice and practitioners, artistic lineage and legacy and the revealing of art through process and artistic voice.*

### **Accreditation Mentors: a CPD opportunity**

Museum Accreditation is a standard inclusive of the whole UK sector. It is available to and used by all types of museums, from the smallest volunteer-run museum through to national institutions. For those smaller organisations, without access to a museum professional, mentors are invaluable. They open up the scheme and the support from the wider sector allowing volunteers and their museums access to the benefits.

This introduction will cover an overview of the Accreditation Scheme and its benefits, the importance of the mentor role in the Scheme and why mentoring is a great development opportunity for individuals to take up.

*Presented by: Jenny Youngson (she/her) is a Museum Development Manager: Accreditation at Museums Galleries Scotland. She supports Scottish museums to achieve and maintain the UK Museum Accreditation Standard. She is responsible for ensuring the sector understand the Standard, how to articulate that they are meeting its requirements, and most importantly, how Accreditation can support the development of museums. She works with the UK Accreditation partners (Arts Council England, Welsh Government, and Northern Ireland Museums Council) to make sure that the Standard supports museums of all sizes and types across the whole of the UK. Jenny joined MGS in 2011, following roles in collections management and logistics with local authority museums. She continues to have a passion for museum stores and decants. Her role with Accreditation allows her to visit many museums and see behind the scenes, a privilege she is delighted to have.*

**1135 Break**

## 1150 Third Session: Intangible Heritage and Interpretation

### **Collaboration to tell the stories of Living Links**

Living Links is a long-standing research partnership between the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS) and the University of St Andrews, focusing on exploration of human cognition through behavioural and observational studies of brown capuchins and common squirrel monkeys living together in an exhibit of the same name at Edinburgh Zoo.

Fifteen years after opening the exhibit, we began a complete overhaul of the visitor experience, jointly funded and working in close collaboration with researchers from the University of St Andrews, and the interpretation, learning technology and keeper teams at Edinburgh Zoo.

We set out to tell the many varied stories of Living Links; including explaining how research works at the centre and some of the amazing discoveries made there over the years, as well as to inform people about our curious monkeys and some of the conservation challenges they face in the wild. We have created a unified look and feel for the area which blends innovative storytelling and physical interactives with on-site citizen science opportunities and a six-part online lesson programme for primary schools and families to continue their learning offsite and provide us with detailed learning analytic data.

We have conducted extensive evaluation in partnership with St Andrews looking at dwell times and engagement in the new versus old approaches, and the effectiveness of citizen science and our conservation messaging.

*Presented by: Lizzie Seymour, Learning Technology Officer and Royal Zoological Society of Scotland. Lizzie's background is in design and media, and she has more than 10 years' experience working in creative technologies across various industries from web development, graphic design and marketing to education. Since moving to Edinburgh in 2017 to become the first dedicated Learning Technologist established in a zoo environment, Lizzie has worked hard to demonstrate the benefits of embedding technology in conservation education. In 2019, Lizzie was named ALT Learning Technologist of the Year, an international award in recognition of her unique work using technology to build greater connections between zoo visitors and communities, with animals, conservation, and the environment.*

### **Heritage Reeks: Analysing the Malodour of the Dune Stinkhorn as a Case Study for Communicating Heritage Smells at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh**

The blooming of the corpse lily *Amorphophallus titanum* in summer 2019 recorded the highest ever audience figures to the Glasshouse at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh with visitors queuing up to sniff the stench of 'rotten meat', 'garbage', and 'sweaty socks'. Museum and gallery initiatives have tended to shy away from 'bad' odours, however, focusing instead on pleasant smells from the

past. The enormous public interest in the flowering of the corpse lily shows that there is value in olfactory objects—especially unpleasant ones—in cultural and heritage institutions that have up until now been underexplored.

It is in this context that this talk takes place, refocusing its attention from foul-smelling flowers to malodorous mushrooms: the dune stinkhorn *Phallus hadriani*, a phallic, smelly fungus that attracts flies and other insects to help disperse its spores. As part of a two-year project titled ‘Fragrance in the Fungarium’ hosted by the Botanic, Siôn Parkinson will examine the odour of this fascinating fungus to reveal aspects of how it appeared to artists and botanists since the sixteenth century and the challenges they continue to face in describing its foetid smell in both language and illustration.

Siôn will share how his experimental approach to working with heritage scientists, mycologists and fragrance designers aims to find new ways of capturing and communicating heritage smells of mushrooms to the wider public. The talk will conclude with a broader discussion about how Scottish museums and galleries can work collaboratively to highlight stories around intangible heritage relating to olfaction.

*Presented by: Dr Siôn Parkinson, AHRC Research Fellow at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Siôn Parkinson is an artist, musician and researcher on the cultural history of stinkhorn fungi. He is an AHRC Early Career Fellow at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh where he is investigating the smell of mushrooms as cultural heritage with a special focus on the malodour of the dune stinkhorn Phallus hadriani. Siôn's research combines odour analysis and creative interpretations of mushroom-related olfactory objects, such as old books, botanical artworks and fungus-rich environments across Scotland's four Royal Gardens. He has a PhD in sound studies from the University of Leeds where he was an Amanda Burton Scholar. Before that, he trained as a sculptor at Central Saint Martins and The Slade. His book Stinkhorn: How Nature's Most Foul Smelling Mushroom Can Change the Way We Listen will be published by Sternberg/MIT Press in 2024.*

## **Creating Family Friendly Museum**

This session will help attendees to learn more about the work of Kids in Museums and how our organisation can support museums to be more welcoming for children, young people and families. This virtual briefing and discussion session will enable attendees to think about low and no cost changes they could make to enhance their museum's family provision using the Kids in Museums Manifesto. Our Manifesto is a set of simple guidelines for museums, heritage sites and cultural organisations created with children, young people and families. It sets out what they feel makes a heritage site a great place to visit. We will also be talking about our free self-assessment tool, which is aimed at museums to enable them to do a light touch self-audit of how well they meet our Manifesto. The self-assessment tool is particularly aimed those with limited budgets.

*Presented by: Laura Bedford, Head of Programmes at Kids in Museums. Laura has worked in or with museums for over 20 years, with previous learning-based roles at the National Maritime Museum, Geffrye Museum (now the Museum of the Home), Te Papa and the Museum of Wellington City and Sea. Laura previously managed the National Alliance for Museums, Health and Wellbeing and was the director for GEM's health and wellbeing intermediate course. She is a steering group member for the Playful Places Network and a Trustee for Ware Museum. She has worked at Kids in Museums as the Head of Programmes since September 2018. Her role includes leading on the development and delivery of training and consultancy.*

## 1300 **Lunch**

### **Engagement Tables**

- Emerging Museum Professionals
- National & International Partnerships team at National Museums Scotland
- RSAs Bicentenary in 2026
- Museum Galleries Scotland

## 1400 **Social Activities**

- Linlithgow Canal Museum
- Linlithgow Museum

## 1530 **Breakouts**

### **Panel Discussion: Queering House Museums and Case Study**

How can house museums represent diverse stories? Where and how do we find queer narratives in historic sites, especially when they appear to be fixed in narrative and time. In 2023, Indigo and Robbie from the Georgian House, a National Trust for Scotland property in Edinburgh, ran a programme of events relating to LGBTQ history in the Georgian period.

This discussion panel is a case study for exploring how to engage visitors in “alternative” readings of heritage collections to capture intangible histories. By reinterpreting objects or considering them in a different context we can recreate queer narratives and establish income generating visitor experiences that reintroduce past lives to modern audiences.

*Presented by: Indigo has been working in the heritage sector for over seven years across Australia and Scotland. She recently completed an SVQ in Museums and Galleries Practice through Museums Galleries Scotland and Historic Environment Scotland. Indigo has worked in a diverse range of properties, from castles to convict barracks. She specialises in public programmes that make space for marginalised stories in traditional spaces. In her current role at the Georgian House, a National Trust for Scotland property in Edinburgh, she has been working hard alongside her colleague Robbie, on a*

*programme of events relating to LGBTQ history in the Georgian period. She is also the co-chair of the National Trust for Scotland's LGBTQ network.*

*Robbie has been working in Edinburgh's tourism industry for just under ten years. His successful TikTok page, which reaches over 100,000 followers, focuses on Edinburgh's History for an international audience. This unique perspective has led to a growing interest in Scotland's heritage practice and engagement with a visitor focused outlook. While Duty Manager at Mary King's Close, Robbie provided the research for the launch of their Pride Tours which focused on Scotland's LGBTQ past. This led to him being a finalist for the Thistle Awards in 2023. In his current role as the supervisor at the Georgian House, Robbie has developed a wide range of evening events, all based on his own research.*

### **Workshop: The Sensational Museum**

This will be a practical session in which we will ask participants to undertake 2-3 tasks, some on their own, others in groups, thinking about how the two strands of the project (Collections and Communication) raise challenges about multi-sensory experiences and how museum professionals might address these challenges.

*Presented by: Professor Hannah Thompson (Royal Holloway, University of London) is a partially blind academic and activist. Her research focuses on the intersections between Critical Disability Studies and French Studies and she has published 3 monographs and numerous papers on nineteenth-century French literature. Hannah is currently working on creative audio description in museums, art galleries and theatres and her notion of 'blindness gain'. She was Production Consultant for the Donmar Warehouse's installation BLINDNESS in 2020 and worked with a range of theatres and audio describers during her AHRC 2021-2 EDI Fellowship 'Inclusive Description for Equality and Access'. In April 2023 she became PI on a £1M AHRC-funded grant The Sensational Museum which aims to 'use what we know about disability to change how museums work for everyone.' Hannah writes about her place as a partially blind academic in a resolutely sighted world in her blog Blind Spot (<http://hannah-thompson.blogspot.com/>)*

1620 **Break**

1630 **AGM**

1700 **Conference Closes**

1715 **After Conference Social at Café Bar 1807**