



THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

The Mendoza Review: an independent review of museums in England Icon Statement

January 2018

The Institute of Conservation (Icon) welcomes the publication of the [Mendoza Review](#) by DCMS, which identified priorities for museums and outlined key recommendations for how government and its arms-length bodies can support the museums sector in England.

We are pleased to see recognition of the significant contribution museums and collections make to health, education, the economy and soft power. As museums are key employers of conservators, this is a welcome acknowledgement of the profession's contribution.

We support the review's recommendations, in particular those centred around the following priorities:

- **Dynamic collection management**

We welcome recommendations for National Lottery funders to fund "back of house" projects. The review identifies storage as a "low priority for funders," with underinvestment in storage projects placing collections at risk.

Storage is a key way museums fulfil their primary purpose of caring for collections and preserving them for future generations. Conservators play a crucial role in this as they maintain appropriate conditions for objects, mitigating risks caused by the environment, light, pests, air pollution and materials.

Icon facilitates learning and exchange of knowledge in this field, through support for our Care of Collections special interest group. The group promotes the diverse expertise and skills needed to address issues surrounding the care of collections. We hope the proposed funding will allow much of this expertise to be put to practice for the benefit of our cultural heritage.

- **Delivering cultural education**

The review's greater emphasis on support for the formal education work of museums with schools is important as exposure to art, craft, design and the work of museums is key to inspiring the next generation of museum professionals.

We recommend supported education work to also include experiences with conservation. Conservation is a multi-disciplinary profession that can facilitate the study of art, craft, social history, science and technology. Icon is working on extending opportunities for engagement with conservation at entry level and in schools. We welcome opportunities to collaborate with schools, government and sector partners to deliver the educational benefits of conservation.

While supporting the education work of museums will certainly contribute to securing the pipeline of talent in our sector, we remain concerned by the side-lining of creative disciplines in the national curriculum. The EBacc, which emphasizes a core set of academic subjects studied for GCSE, does not include creative disciplines. There has been a recent decline in the study of arts subjects, which can

only increase current skills gaps and shortages in the museum and heritage sector.¹ Icon urges the government to place creative subjects at the centre of education policy to ensure the sector can continue to make its substantial contribution to society and the economy.

- **Developing leaders with appropriate skills and diversifying the workforce**

We agree that entry routes into museum professions need to expand to offer greater opportunities to people from a wider range of backgrounds. We recognise that workforce diversity has been a long-standing concern for our sector and we are committed to continue tackling this issue. Icon is working with partners to develop standards for apprenticeships in conservation and we are considering how to further address recommendations made by the *Character Matters* report.

Icon shares the review's concern for skills gaps in the museum sector. Our *Conservation Labour Market Intelligence 2012-13* research identified gaps and shortages in the workforce, mirroring the results of workforce research across the heritage sector.² We expect the recent closure of conservation courses to have exacerbated the problem. Icon is working towards strengthening skills through our Internship Programme, our professional development opportunities and our advocacy work for conservation education.

We welcome the recommendations for Arts Council England to collect and disseminate key data on the workforce. This will be crucial to enhancing understanding of the issues facing our labour market and to track progress. Icon is committed to updating our research on the conservation workforce.

- **Working internationally**

It is encouraging to see the Culture White Paper's recognition of the contribution museums and collections make to the UK's soft power reconfirmed in the review. Collections promote UK culture, prosperity, trade and skill abroad, enhancing our global standing. Conservators play a central role in this. Through their expert care of collections, they increase the UK's reputation in conservation practice and ensure that our cultural exports can continue to tell the UK's story around the world.

Icon applauds the recommendations for DCMS, the British Council and Arts Council England to continue promoting international partnerships and to improve communications about opportunities. We are grateful for the support the British Council has already given us in establishing connections in China. We look forward to expanding our global work and contributing to the UK's soft power agenda.

We fully endorse proposals for DCMS to collect evidence on the impact of Brexit on the sector and to work across government to mitigate risks and maximise opportunities. We are concerned that Brexit will increase skills gaps and shortages and affect funding in the field. We are planning on carrying out research on the conservation workforce's EU nationals to better understand this potential change.

The review urges DCMS to produce an update in a year's time to demonstrate what progress has been made on the proposals. We look forward to contributing to this progress, particularly through the priorities listed above, and we hope that DCMS will have many successes to report in 2018.

Alison Richmond ACR FIIC, Chief Executive

¹ Joint Council for Qualifications, 2017. *Summer GCSE Results*; Ofqual, 2017. *Summer 2017 exam entries: GCSEs, level 1 / 2 certificates, AS and A levels in England*.

² Aitchison, K., 2013. *Conservation Labour Market Intelligence 2012-13*. London: Icon; Hook, B., 2014. *Historic Environment Intelligence Team Assessment Report 2014-2015: Digest of Labour Market Intelligence for the Historic Environment*. Historic England; TBR, 2014. *The Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage Skills Survey*. Creative & Cultural Skills and Historic England.

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