



National Programme 2024/2025

Introduction to Courierring workshop at the National Museum of Scotland



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Silver gelatin photograph by Douglas Mawson of the ascent of Mt Erebus, 10 March 1908, during the British Antarctic Expedition. © Dundee Heritage Trust

National Programme Across Scotland

Introduction

National Museums Scotland's partnership activity, supporting museums and heritage organisations across Scotland, is defined in our [National Strategy 2023–2027](#).

In the current challenging economic climate, museums are experiencing severe financial pressures with some under threat of closure. At the same time, the role of museums as inclusive spaces that promote wellbeing, where our communities can learn and thrive, has never been more important. Working collaboratively helps us all to do more and deliver more for our audiences by making effective use of our shared resources for the benefit of all.

The National Collection and the knowledge, skills, and expertise of our staff are shared through loans from the collection, the National Fund for Acquisitions, Maths Week Scotland, inclusive community engagement activities, our free National Training Programme, bespoke advice for staff and volunteers, and partnership projects that help to build capacity in the sector. This report shares details of our national partnership activity and impact during 2024–25.

We look forward to working with new and existing partners to develop and implement strategic and engaging programmes. Together we enhance the accessibility and reach of the National Collection, ensuring that its resources benefit individuals, enrich local environments, and strengthen communities across Scotland.

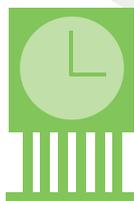
National Programme in Numbers

In **2024–25**, our **National Programme** activity reached all **32 local authority areas** in Scotland.



134 organisations across Scotland supported through **training, loans, acquisitions, Maths Week Scotland grants**, and **our national project *Reveal and Connect: African and Caribbean Collections in Scottish Museums***.

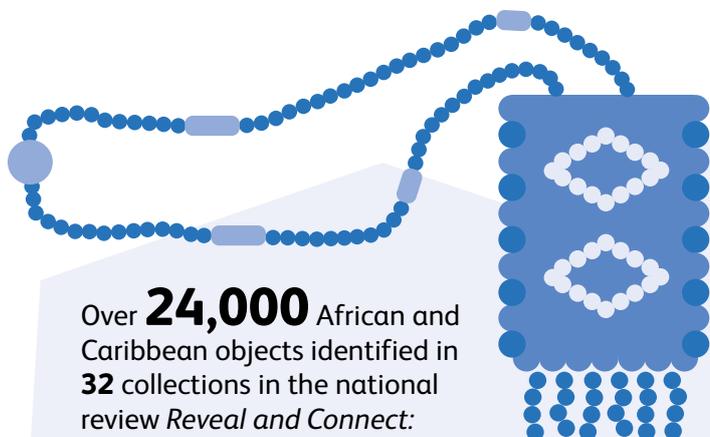
2,621 objects from the National Collection on loan to **58** museums in **25** local authorities across Scotland.



Sharing Scotland's Collection

Collections Development

58 grants worth **£187,702** from the National Fund for Acquisitions, supporting acquisitions worth **£451,700** and helping to develop and enhance **25** museum collections across Scotland.



Over **24,000** African and Caribbean objects identified in **32** collections in the national review *Reveal and Connect: African and Caribbean Collections in Scottish Museums*, the first stage in our shared endeavour to connect these collections with communities of interest.

Collaboration & Building Capacity

Over **17,000** visits to the Highlight Loan of the Mary Queen of Scots casket at Kirkcudbright Galleries, an increase of **20%** on visits to the Museum in the previous year.



Over **70** partners and **125** public events featured in **Maths Week Scotland 2024** with over **£45,000** in grants to support projects, events and resources across the country. The programme reached **106,378** pupils from 590 schools in every local authority in Scotland.

Engaging & Inspiring People



8,295 people engaged through our additional support and inclusive programmes, helping to broaden access to our collections and reach wider and more diverse audiences.



13,339 pupils from schools in every local authority in Scotland participating in our **Digital Schools Sessions**.



355 learning experiences delivered in **17** National Training Programme events to staff and volunteers from **92** museums in **29** local authority areas in Scotland.

Strengthening Skills & Expertise

29,895 views of our online training and guidance resources for museums.



**National
Museums
Scotland**



Curators and conservators installing a 4000-year-old Bronze Age necklace at The McManus: Dundee's Art Gallery and Museum.
© Alan Richardson

Sharing Scotland's Collections

Loans

Our loans programme brings objects to venues across Scotland where they can be experienced and enjoyed by local communities and visitors. Loans help to attract audiences and ensure the many stories the National Collection can tell are shared more widely. In 2024–25, 2,621 objects were on loan to 58 museums in 25 local authorities across the country. The following are some of the new loans made during the period of this report.

Whithorn Museum

The Whithorn crozier, dating from the late 12th century, was loaned for display at Whithorn Museum, close to where it was found at Whithorn Priory in the 1950s. The crozier was used by successive bishops and, with its delicate gilt bronze framework decorated with enamel inlay, demonstrates the power and wealth of the bishopric during the medieval period. The exhibition *Face to Face with Whithorn's Bishops*, 29 March–31 October 2024, included a new facial reconstruction of Bishop Henry, who died in 1293, based on a scan of his skull held in the National Collection. The Whithorn Trust's aDNA and facial reconstruction analysis, part of the Cold Case Whithorn research project, is bringing new context to this important object.



The Whithorn crozier was loaned for display at Whithorn Museum. © Duncan McGlynn

Stromness Museum

Mineralogical specimens were loaned to Stromness Museum, Orkney, for *Mineral Minds: Orkney's Geologists Under the Microscope*, 4 May–31 October 2024. The exhibition celebrated the work of eminent mineralogist Professor Matthew Forster Heddle, who was born on the Orkney Island of Hoy in 1828, and amateur geologist Ted Kellock, who lived in Orkney during the 1960s and whose collection of thin section microscope slides is looked after by the Museum. The loan, which was supported by The Royal Society, included a selection of Orkney minerals from the Heddle Collection.

Grantown Museum

Five archaeological objects were loaned to Grantown Museum for *First Peoples of the Spey – Hunter Gatherers to Christianity*, 15 June–31 October 2024. The exhibition explored the prehistoric sites of Strathspey with objects that belonged to the area’s earliest settlers 10,000 years ago through to the coming of Christianity. The loan included Neolithic axes from Dulnain Bridge, carved stone balls from Cromdale, and a Pictish symbol stone from Findlarig.

The McManus: Dundee’s Art Gallery and Museum

Jewellery worn during the Bronze Age, 4,000 years ago, was loaned for display at The McManus: Dundee’s Art Gallery and Museum from August 2024. It was discovered in 1870 at a burial site at Balgay Estate near Dundee. Research has shown that the 42 jet beads and nine jet plates were originally part of a matching necklace and bracelet. Signs of wear suggest that the jewellery was frequently worn. Following in-depth analysis, conservators at National Museums Scotland were able to recreate 66 missing beads and restring the jewellery in its original formation with the plates separating the barrel-shaped beads into multiple strands. The loan was made possible by the support of players of People’s Postcode Lottery. Christina Donald, Curator of Early History at Leisure and Culture Dundee, said:

“We highly value the partnership that has made this possible. Thanks to the expertise and generosity of National Museums Scotland, we can showcase the jewellery and reveal the results of in-depth scientific research to shed light on these important artefacts”.

Perth Museum

Objects were loaned to Perth Museum for *Waters Rising*, 8 November 2024–16 March 2025, exploring the effects of flooding in the Perth and Kinross area in the context of the global climate emergency. The loan included a placard created by an eight-year-old climate activist during the School Strike for Climate in 2019, on display for the first time. The loan was supported by players of People’s Postcode Lottery.



A knitted bonnet and other items loaned for the exhibition *Arnish Moor Man* at Kinloch Historical Society.

Kinloch Historical Society

Personal items belonging to an 18th-century suspected murder victim, found in a peat bank on the Isle of Lewis, were loaned for *Arnish Moor Man* at Kinloch Historical Society in Balallan from March 2025 to March 2026. The body of the young man, thought to be aged between 20 and 25, was discovered in 1964, around 250 years after his death. He had sustained a fracture to the back of his head. The display, including a knitted bonnet, wooden comb, horn spoon and two writing quills, gives a rare insight into life in the Outer Hebrides in the early 1700s. The young man’s intricately patched and repaired clothing is too fragile to be included but local crafters created small replicas for display. Anna Mackenzie, Heritage Manager at Kinloch Historical Society, said:

“By hosting this exhibition, we hope members of the public will be inspired to revisit the tales they grew up with and seek the answers of this 18th-century murder. The Kinloch Historical Society are very proud of the relationship we are building with National Museums Scotland. They have been a great source of support and it is a privilege to be displaying these items, that have never been shown locally before.”

Collections Development

National Fund for Acquisitions

National Museums Scotland administers the National Fund for Acquisitions. This annual grant of £150,000, provided by the Scottish Government, supports museums throughout Scotland to acquire objects for their collections. The Fund normally offers grants of up to 50% of purchase price while the Special Funding Scheme can offer up to 100% support to museums unable to raise match funding.

In 2024–25 the Fund paid 58 grants totalling £187,702, actively developing and enhancing the collections of 25 organisations across 17 local authorities in Scotland. The total purchase value of the objects to which the Fund contributed was £451,700. Grants include:

- £20,000 to The Hunterian, University of Glasgow, to support the purchase of an oil painting on canvas, *Glasgow Green*, c1823, by John Knox (1778–1845). *Glasgow Green* was the focus of a major civic improvement scheme to create a green social space a short distance from the urban environment depicted in the background of Knox's painting. The acquisition is a valuable addition to the University's collection of artworks documenting the development of the city, an important resource for interdisciplinary teaching and research.



Vespa scooter, 1994, with custom Paisley pattern bodywork.
© OneRen, the trading name of Renfrewshire Leisure Limited

- £1,110 to Dundee Heritage Trust to acquire a photograph of the first ascent of Mount Erebus on Ross Island, Antarctica, in March 1908. The British Antarctic Expedition was led by Ernest Shackleton who had been a junior officer on Robert Falcon Scott's first Antarctic expedition aboard RRS *Discovery*. The vessel and Dundee Heritage Trust's associated polar collection is a Recognised Collection of National Significance.
- £4,000 to Paisley Museum to support the acquisition of a 1994 Vespa scooter with custom Paisley pattern bodywork. The scooter was used to deliver Paisley's bid for UK City of Culture 2021 and represents the continued importance of the Paisley pattern to the cultural identity of the town. It will go on display when Paisley Museum reopens following extensive redevelopment.



Oil painting on canvas, *Glasgow Green*, c1823, by John Knox.
© The Hunterian, University of Glasgow

More information, including the Fund's Annual Report 2024–2025, can be found on the [National Fund for Acquisitions webpage](#)



William Lumsden's Maths Week Scotland 'Mathscot' design. © Duncan McGlynn

Engaging and Inspiring People

Maths Week Scotland

Maths Week Scotland, funded by the Scottish Government and coordinated by National Museums Scotland, is a national celebration which inspires and engages people with maths through a wide range of activities across the year. The 2024 theme, *Maths Tales*, explored the connections between maths and storytelling, from literature and the history of mathematics to notable mathematicians and the narratives embedded in maths trails and escape rooms.

In its eighth year, Maths Week Scotland continues to grow. The 2024 programme featured over 125 public events and awarded more than £45,000 in grants to support projects, events and resources across the country. Over 70 partners took part, including museums, science centres, local authorities, community groups, and individuals.

The programme reached 106,378 pupils from 590 schools in every local authority in Scotland. This year also saw the debut of the official mascot, *Finn Finity*, designed by seven-year-old William from Edinburgh. Finn appeared throughout our campaigns and competitions, including a nationwide story writing competition in partnership with Read Write Count with the First Minister, which received around 2,000 entries from pupils across Scotland.

Schools

Digital Schools Sessions

Supporting delivery of the Curriculum for Excellence, our Digital Schools Sessions bring the National Collection to classrooms across Scotland. Topics include dinosaurs, ancient Egypt, the Romans, Second World War, Fantastic Flying Forces, and biodiversity. A new session for 2024–25, *Meet the Vikings*, explored the lives of Vikings in Scotland. Providing national reach, in 2024–25, 13,339 pupils in every local authority in Scotland participated in these live, free of charge sessions.

Films of Scotland

Inspiring young filmmakers, *Films of Scotland* invited young people to make and submit films about Scotland. In January 2025, pupils from Preston Lodge High School were invited to the National Museum of Scotland to gain inspiration from the collections. Their film and 12 others shortlisted were screened at a premiere and prize-giving event at the National Museum of Scotland in March 2025. The initiative was delivered in partnership with the National Library of Scotland, Moving Image Archive, Scottish Youth Film Foundation and Visit Scotland.

Community Engagement

Additional support and inclusive programmes

Creating a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment within our museums ensures that everyone, regardless of age, ability, background or identity, can find community and connection. A rich programme brought the museum experience to life for thousands of people and celebrated the diversity of Scotland's communities. In 2024–25 a total of 8,295 participants engaged with our onsite and community outreach programmes.

Welcoming neurodiverse audiences

Throughout the year, we continued to expand support for neurodiverse visitors. Monthly *Relaxed Mornings* and *Sensory Sundays* at the National Museum of Scotland offered quieter, more sensory-friendly experiences for children with additional support needs. Exploring dinosaurs, insects, archaeology, robots and space, these sessions brought museum collections to life in ways that were engaging and accessible. In September 2024, this initiative expanded to include *Relaxed Mornings* at the National Museum of Rural Life and the National Museum of Flight, marking a significant step in making all our museum spaces more inclusive.

Supporting D/deaf and visually impaired communities

At the National Museum of Scotland, a wide range of events were tailored for D/deaf and visually impaired audiences. Audio-described tours of the *Wildlife Photographer of the Year* exhibition, BSL-

interpreted talks, and *Friday Friends* sessions for children created spaces where everyone could engage meaningfully with the collections.

During the Deaf Festival in August 2024, BSL tours of the *Scottish Inventors* and *Ancient Egypt* galleries offered a rich and immersive experience. Inspired by the exhibition *Injecting Hope: The Race for a COVID-19 Vaccine*, a film created with funding from the Science Museum Group captured the Deaf community's experiences during the pandemic. Led by BSL facilitator Trudi Collier and Deaf filmmaker Will Clark, the project gave voice to stories from members of the Deaf community across Scotland. The film premiered on 23 April 2025 to attendees from the Deaf community and beyond. It was a powerful reminder of the importance of representation and storytelling in healing and understanding.

Opening up the world of gaming to visually impaired audiences, programming for the exhibition *Game On* included an accessible games night in October 2024. The event featured a panel discussion on the future of accessible gaming and was organised in partnership with RNIB Scotland and accessible gaming organisation Triple Tap Tech, with support from Hyper Luminal Games and Rebellion Games.

Members of the Forth Valley Sensory Centre Visual Impairment Group visited the National Museum of Scotland in June 2024. Outreach sessions at the Forth Valley Sensory Centre in Stirling and the Macular Society in Bathgate brought the museum experience to visually impaired audiences who might not otherwise be able to visit.



Game On Accessible Games Night for visually impaired audience. © Andy Catlin

Dementia-friendly programming

Our monthly *Museum Socials* for people living with dementia and their carers explored themes including wartime memories, Victorian Christmas, and animal adaptations. A special highlight in June 2024 was a session supported by Scottish Ensemble, exploring music as a powerful tool for wellbeing.

Inclusive family outreach

Our *Museum Pick-Me-Ups* programme brought discovery and creativity to hospital spaces with hands-on collections and craft activities at the Edinburgh Children's Hospital. Sparking curiosity and connection, themes ranged from Scottish wildlife to ancient Celts.



Natasha Iregbu leading a yoga class for young people.

Wellbeing Week: A celebration of mental health

We launched our first Wellbeing Week, aligning with Mental Health Awareness Week in May 2024. The programme included mindfulness tours, slow-looking sessions, and live music from the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Families were invited to join yoga and storytelling sessions with artist and author Natasha Iregbu whose book *Slow Down Maya* supports children with ADHD. A mindfulness booklet, co-created with NHS Lothians and the Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity Foundation, offered families tools to continue their wellbeing journey beyond the museum walls.

Embracing multicultural Scotland

In June 2024, South Asian community group NKS visited the National Museums Collection Centre to view material for their *South Asian Legends* project. Members of the local Granton community collaborated with artist Natalie Taylor on a biodiversity-themed art project.

During the Scottish Refugee Festival in June 2024, new migrants were welcomed to the National Museum of Scotland with specially curated tours, *Who Makes Scotland Home?* and *Burgh Life in Scotland 1400–1700*, offering a warm introduction to Scottish history and culture.

The *Fashion Fusion* project from January to March 2025, part of the *Edinburgh 900* celebrations, brought together Black and minority ethnic women to explore cross-cultural fashion inspired by museum collections. Sessions highlighted the work of Phoebe Anna Traquair and celebrated personal stories through textiles, design and sustainability.

Youth engagement: Creativity and co-creation

Exploring sustainability and gaming, young people created their own prototype games, inspired by the *Game On* exhibition and museum collections. Running in November 2024, this project was organised in collaboration with Tinderbox and SCORE Scotland.

Co-creative writing and design sessions, delivered with LGBT Youth Scotland, enhanced the LGBTQIA+ *Hidden Histories* trail at the National Museum of Scotland. A contemporary collecting workshop encouraged young people to see themselves as part of the Museum's evolving story.



Young people from SCORE Scotland participating in a *Game On* project. © Neil Hanna



Integrated Pest Management workshop at the National Museums Collection Centre.

Strengthening Skills and Expertise

National Training Programme

Our popular National Training Programme offers free collections knowledge and skills training for museums across Scotland. In 2024–25 we delivered 17 events, providing 355 learning experiences to staff and volunteers in 92 museums across 29 local authority areas in Scotland.

The programme is developed through consultation with the sector to ensure we meet skills gaps and respond to needs. Practical hands-on workshops, along with our larger auditorium events, provide valuable knowledge exchange and networking opportunities. Online events support colleagues in their own environment.

“I think it is a fantastic thing that National Museums Scotland supports the wider sector with knowledge sharing and accessible training - it pushes the entire sector forward”. George Watson’s College

Online resources

Our online [Training and guidance for museums](#) includes resources on collections care, specific advice in areas such as archaeological human remains and entomology collections, and guidance on photographing collections. The resources received 29,895 views during 2024–25.

Collections care

Our collections care workshops provide core skills training in caring for museum collections through practical advice, demonstrations and sharing best practice. In October 2024, *Introduction to Object Handling, Packing and Labelling* was followed by a new workshop, *Advanced Object Packing*, for storing, moving and lending objects. This session shared advice on dealing with more complex objects in terms of shape, size, material and degree of fragility, and looked at sustainable approaches to the use of packing materials. *Introduction to Integrated Pest Management* workshops in October 2024 and February 2025 shared the principles of good pest management, a vital part of caring for and managing museum collections.



Object Handling, Packing and Labelling workshop at the National Museums Collection Centre.

Collections management

Collections Disposals - National Museums Scotland Approach in September 2024 was organised in partnership with Museums Galleries Scotland. This shared our approach to this fundamental aspect of collections management and aimed to give participants the confidence to proactively implement disposal procedures in an ethical and accountable way. *Introduction to Couriering* in October 2024 helped participants to develop the knowledge and practical skills required to successfully courier objects from their collections. The workshop covered when and why to use external couriers, logistics and shipping, legal requirements, and key conservation principles for lending objects.



Introduction to Furniture Collections workshop at the National Museums Collection Centre.

Subject specialist collection workshops

Going behind the scenes at the National Museums Collection Centre, subject specialist collection workshops provide opportunities to meet curators and visit stores and conservation labs. *Introduction to Furniture Collections* in June 2024 shared best practice methods for identifying, handling, documenting, storing and caring for furniture collections. *Introduction to Dress and Textiles Collections* in September 2024 offered practical skills in handling, labelling, measuring, packing and storing dress and textile collections.

“I think it's great that as one of Scotland's few National Museums, you are trying so hard and so well to lead the sector and provide everyone with support, advice, and opportunities for development. In an overwhelmingly struggling and increasingly shrinking sector, this is more important than ever. Thank you!” Paisley Museum

Maths in Museums

Two online workshops explored using museum collections to develop maths-focused programmes and events and get involved in Maths Week Scotland. In May 2024, Yvonne Somerville from Education Scotland looked at maths and numeracy in the Curriculum for Excellence and colleagues from the Museum of Scottish Fire Heritage and the R&A World Golf Museum shared case studies from their collections. At an event in July, Mathematics Educator and Museum Learning Consultant, Tom Briggs, showed participants how to look for the maths stories in their collections and share these with school and family audiences.

Opening up collections through hybrid volunteering

Communities and Crowds: Opening up collections through hybrid volunteering demonstrated how participants could work with local community members and online volunteers from across the world to research and digitise their own collections. This online event in August 2024 shared a new toolkit based on learning from the research project *Communities and Crowds*. Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, this was a collaboration between National Museums Scotland, National Science and Media Museum in Bradford and the Zooniverse teams at University of Oxford and the Adler Planetarium in Chicago. The project tested hybrid volunteering approaches in collections digitisation, working with local volunteers and the online volunteering community to digitise photographs and provide enriched data.

Introduction to Buying at Auction

Featuring valuable insights from auction house specialists and a mock auction, *Introduction to Buying at Auction* in November 2024 was delivered in partnership with auctioneers Lyon & Turnbull. Participants went behind the scenes at an auction house and gained knowledge and confidence in making acquisitions at auction. Advice on applying to the National Fund for Acquisitions was followed by case studies from colleagues at Glasgow Life Museums, Culture Perth and Kinross and Glasgow Women's Library who shared their experience of successfully bidding at auction with support from the Fund.

Reveal and Connect: Review of African and Caribbean Collections in Scotland

The *Reveal and Connect* project published a [Review of African and Caribbean Collections in Scottish Museums](#). This online event in December 2024 introduced the review, alongside reflections on the project shared by project partners Iziko Museums of South Africa and University of the West Indies Museum. Colleagues from Paisley Museum and ANGUSalve shared the work they are undertaking to facilitate new partnerships, collaborations and wider audience engagement with their collections.

“Whenever I attend an NMS workshop, I always feel part of a Scottish museum community – this is really invaluable as someone who is still at the start of her career”.
North Lanarkshire Council

Environmental sustainability, biodiversity and the climate emergency

Addressing increasing engagement with the challenges of environmental sustainability, biodiversity and climate change, we welcomed a new strand to our programming this year.

By 2027, National Museums Scotland aims to be well advanced on the path to net zero carbon. *Carbon Management and Net Zero Planning* in November 2024 shared our approach to reaching this goal, including our Carbon Management Plan, lessons learned, and advice on how participants can engage with this work in their own museum.

“As a very small organisation with limited resources, the training programme is invaluable”.
The Abbotsford Trust

Enhancing Biodiversity at Museum Sites in January 2025 explored how we are developing the grounds at the National Museums Collection Centre to foster biodiversity, part of our Strategy for Sustainability. Since work began in 2020, regular surveys have recorded over 330 species of plants and animals on the site. This online event looked at initiatives to encourage wildlife, including sowing native wildflowers, reducing mowing during the growing season and leaving areas uncut over winter, as well as lessons learned and tips on how to approach this work at participants' own sites.

Making Space for Creative Climate Action in February 2025 shared learning from *Sewing Hope* and *Planetopia: Agency for World Change Agreements*, two climate-focused engagement projects at National Museums Scotland, funded by the Scottish Government's Climate Engagement Fund. This online event explored how museums can provide safe and hopeful spaces to inspire and engage local communities in conversations about climate change and creative climate action. The project team shared delivery and evaluation methods and a toolkit for running a *Sewing Hope* workshop. A case study was presented by The Great Tapestry of Scotland, one of eight project partners who were supported to deliver *Sewing Hope* quilt-making workshops with their communities.

Collecting Environmental Change: Case Studies from Scotland and Europe explored how museums are developing collections and exhibitions that represent the impacts of, and responses to, environmental change. The symposium, hosted at the National Museum of Scotland in March 2025, included case studies, knowledge and experiences of collecting material culture on this theme. Contributions came from national and international colleagues, including National Museums Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland, Culture Perth and Kinross, Timespan, London Museum, and the House of European History in Brussels.

Curatorial advice and support

The need for additional, more specific collections advice and support is met on a case-by-case basis and supported by colleagues across National Museums Scotland. More information can be found in our [training and guidance webpages](#) including our *Guide to Collections Advice*. The following are just a few examples of advice and support during the period of this report.

Members of our Natural Sciences department visited colleagues at the Watt Institution in Greenock in August 2024 to provide advice on their stored collections, primarily bird specimens. A visit was also made to ANGUSalive colleagues at Montrose Museum in October 2024 to share advice on caring for their natural history collection. This covered a wide range of issues including environmental conditions, pest management, collection hazards, remedial conservation, specimen storage systems and data recording. A follow-up visit was made in November to conduct a radioactive survey of geology specimens.

In November 2024 members of the Global Arts, Cultures and Design department visited colleagues at Leisure and Culture Dundee to advise on interpretation of the Inuit collection on display at The McManus: Dundee's Art Gallery and Museum and help with identification of objects from the Arctic. The visit also provided an opportunity to make links between collections from Greenland held in Dundee and the National Collection.



Mary, Queen of Scots Casket on display at the Kirkcudbright Galleries. © Andy Jardine

Collaboration and Capacity Building

Programmes designed to build capacity also help us to develop strong partnerships across the sector and expand our shared understanding of collections. Collaborative work supports developing skills, sector guidance, best practice advice, and collections reviews.

Highlight Loan

Our Highlight Loans programme supports our strategic aim of diversifying our audiences and enabling more people to connect with the National Collection and its stories. We worked closely with our partners and tested new ways of working. Partner museums have developed distinct new interpretations and secured additional funding to support long-term improvements to display spaces and visitor experiences.

Kirkcudbright Galleries

An exquisitely decorated silver gilt casket associated with Mary, Queen of Scots was loaned to Kirkcudbright Galleries from 2 November 2024 to 27 April 2025. It attracted over 17,000 visits, an increase of 20% on the previous year. Made in Paris in the late 15th or early 16th century, the casket is believed to have been a gift from Mary's first husband, François II of France, brought with her to Scotland in 1561 after his death. Sources claim that it played a significant role in Mary's downfall when it was produced at a hearing ordered by Elizabeth I against Mary in 1568. It contained correspondence implicating Mary and her husband, the Earl of

Bothwell, in a conspiracy to murder her second husband, Lord Darnley. The casket was acquired for the nation by National Museums Scotland in 2022 for £1.8 million, thanks to support from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, Art Fund, the Scottish Government, trusts, foundations and individual donors. The loan was supported by the Weston Loan Programme with Art Fund. Councillor Jackie McCamon, Dumfries and Galloway Council, said:

“This is such an exciting loan. We are pleased to be working with National Museums Scotland once more, a key partner for Kirkcudbright Galleries over the years, and have no doubt this will be an emotional and stirring exhibition”.



Mary, Queen of Scots Casket on display at the Kirkcudbright Galleries. © Andy Jardine

Reveal and Connect: African and Caribbean Collections in Scottish Museums

Reveal and Connect is a partnership with Glasgow Life Museums, The Hunterian and University of Aberdeen Collections. In the first phase of the project, funded by Museums Galleries Scotland, we worked with museums across Scotland to produce a national review of African and Caribbean collections in Scottish museums and establish a collaborative network of museums in Scotland, Africa and the Caribbean, and descendant communities in Scotland. The review report, [Reveal and Connect: African and Caribbean Collections in Scottish Museums](#), highlights the scale and diversity of 32 collections, identifying over 23,000 objects from at least 53 countries in Africa, and over 1,000 objects from at least 17 countries in the Caribbean.



Ivory bracelet, Sudan. © Collection of Scottish Borders Council - Live Borders Museums, Galleries and Archives

The review has helped us to better understand the colonial and imperial histories and legacies of these collections. The next phase of the project is focusing on connecting and engaging source and diaspora communities with the collections. *Reveal and Connect: Caribbean Natural Sciences in Scottish Museums*, funded by John Ellerman Foundation, is identifying Caribbean natural science collections and developing research with partners in the Caribbean. *Reveal and Connect: Participatory Practice and South African Collections in Scottish Museums*, funded by Museums Galleries Scotland, aims to develop

community-led research around South African collections in partnership with museums and communities in Scotland and South Africa.

Scotland's Archaeological Human Remains Collections

A major new project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, will enhance existing research facilities for archaeological human remains in Scotland. National Museums Scotland currently holds Scottish archaeological human remains from more than 500 sites, spanning human history from the earliest settlers around 8,000 years ago to the medieval period. Research on these collections can give valuable insights into how people lived and died. Launched in October 2024, *Scotland's Archaeological Human Remains Collections* is a collaborative project, led by National Museums Scotland with Historic Environment Scotland. In 2025, we have expanded and enhanced research facilities at the National Museums Collection Centre and, with our project partners, will develop sector-wide strategies for research and the ethical care and curation of archaeological human remains.



Please use this QR code to find out more about our work across Scotland.

The National and International Partnerships team can be contacted at partnerships@nms.ac.uk

Cover image: William Lumsden with his Maths Week Scotland 'Mathscot' design. © Duncan McGlynn

National Museums Scotland, Scottish Charity SC011130

