

Museums and Galleries Edinburgh Temporary Exhibitions Policy (2023-2026)

Implementation Date: 11 May 2023

Control schedule

Approved by	Culture and Communities Committee
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Senior Responsible Officer	Joan Parr, Service Director Culture and Wellbeing
Author	Maeve Toal, Curator: Exhibitions
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Version Control

Version	Date	Author	Comment
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0.2			

Subsequent committee decisions affecting this policy.

Date	Committee	Link to report	Link to minute
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Museums and Galleries Edinburgh

Temporary Exhibitions Policy (2023-2026)

Policy statement

This Temporary Exhibitions Policy is designed to align with Museums and Galleries Edinburgh's Service Plan for 2023-2026. The Service Plan, which covers all our work, is informed by the recently approved [Citywide Culture Strategy \(2023-2030\)](#). The Temporary Exhibitions Policy is also informed by the [City of Edinburgh Council Business Plan \(2021-2024\)](#) and its aims in relation to poverty, sustainability, wellbeing and equality.

This policy reflects the vision of [Scotland's Museums and Galleries Strategy 2023-2030](#) produced by Museums Galleries Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government and its focus on the post-pandemic period, wellbeing, the climate crisis and decolonisation. It also speaks to the aims of the [Museums Association's Strategic Framework \(2020-2025\)](#), which aims to empower museums across the UK to positively change lives.

It is designed to sit alongside and reflect work being undertaken internally by the Museums and Galleries Edinburgh Inclusion group, the Decolonisation working group and the Collections Management group, as well as the Learning and Engagement Framework being developed by the service. It takes into account the development of an Income Generation Strategy for implementation across museums and galleries.

The above strategies and policies have informed our prioritisation of audiences within this Temporary Exhibitions Policy.

Scope

This policy should be followed by Museums and Galleries Edinburgh staff and read by external partners in relation to the planning of forthcoming temporary exhibitions.

Definitions

'MGE' denotes Museums and Galleries Edinburgh.

'AS' denotes an Audience Spectrum segment, the details of which can be found on The Audience Agency website (see link in related documents).

'EDI' denotes Equality, Diversity, Inclusion.

'IIA' denotes Integrated Impact Assessment.

Policy content

Mission

MGE is the City of Edinburgh Council's Museum Service. It enables people to connect with the city, its many histories, and its role in presenting art from around the world. We do this through our collections, temporary exhibitions and public programmes, both physical and digital. We balance our responsibility to preserve, display and interpret collections with our mission to encourage debate, interaction, reflection and exploration.

Temporary and Long-term Exhibitions

The City of Edinburgh Council holds over 200,000 items and artworks in its permanent collections. Much of this is on display and free to access year-round in long-term, fixed displays across its museums and galleries, and by appointment in its stores. The aims and objectives of this policy apply both to these spaces, as and when displays are refreshed, and to those used specifically for short-term or changing exhibitions.

Policy Aims

1. To appeal to existing audiences and new visitors through provision of a diverse and inspiring range of exhibitions.
2. To demonstrate the value of public engagement with art and heritage as means of improving wellbeing, addressing inequalities and enhancing the quality of peoples' lives.
3. To champion creative partnerships with local artists and groups, prioritising those from under-represented communities to ensure inclusive programming.
4. To profile, raise awareness, and actively seek new perspectives on the city's nationally and internationally significant collections in both long-term and temporary displays.
5. To contribute to the resilience of the Museums Service through effective exhibition marketing, promotion and evaluation.

Objectives

1. Centre Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) principles in our approach to exhibition design, programming and delivery.
2. Work in partnership and through co-production.
3. Ensure physical, sensory and intellectual access.

4. Innovate in our use of digital skills and technology.
5. Develop our climate literacy and eco-friendly practice.
6. Develop and enhance our knowledge and understanding of our collections, and where relevant, seek to add to them.

Audiences

As a service, MGE has a strong record of creating, developing and maintaining lasting relationships with a diverse range of audiences. We put audiences at the heart of what we do, and this includes our temporary exhibition programme. We aim to not only maintain our existing audience relationships, but strive to build new ones, in line with our Service Plan, the [Citywide Culture Strategy \(2023-2030\)](#) and the [City of Edinburgh Council Business Plan \(2021-2024\)](#).

We have recently used The Audience Agency's segmentation model, Audience Spectrum, to identify our existing and potential audiences. Audience segmentation is a method of categorising people based on shared characteristics, whether demographic, geographic or behavioural. Understanding our audience segments allows us to cater to each of their needs more effectively. A full description of Audience Spectrum segments can be found on [The Audience Agency website](#).

An understanding of our existing audiences has been gained through the following surveys:

- 2019 survey of visitors to MGE sites
- 2019 survey of attendees at MGE public programme
- 2022 digital survey of MGE audiences

The Audience Agency has also provided us with information on audiences for cultural activities in Edinburgh and across Scotland. This data has enabled us to identify the following audience segments for development (note: 'AS' denotes an Audience Spectrum segment, the details of which can be found at the link above):

Existing audiences we hope to maintain, deepen our relationship with and develop new exhibitions/ activities for:

- Commuterland Culturebuffs (AS)
- Dormitory Dependables (AS)
- Tourists
- Schools
- Art lovers

New audiences we hope to create relationships with and develop ways of working together are:

- Frontline Families (AS)
- Kaleidoscope Creativity (AS)
- Experience Seekers (AS)
- People with access needs
- Young adults
- People from Black or Asian communities

We already reach many people in the categories above, but we recognise the need to focus on developing and maintaining these relationships. This focus is guided by the wider strategies and plans listed above.

Access

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

As a public sector organisation, we are bound by the [Equality Act \(2010\)](#) and by Public Sector Equality Duty. We wish not to just meet our legal requirements, but to proactively go beyond them.

We have developed an EDI plan which outlines priority areas for development. We have also committed to ensuring that our work is included in [Edinburgh and Lothians Equality Framework \(2021-2025\)](#), and our own [Anti-Racism Pledge](#).

EDI should be factored in at all stages of the exhibition planning process from development through to display. We will develop exhibitions which aim to draw diverse audiences to our venues and represent the multiplicity of experiences within the city through platforming, co-development and co-curation where appropriate. We will ensure that our exhibitions, digital presence and marketing are accessible and inclusive.

Inclusion is also progressed through digital content, outreach and public programmes, and through community exhibitions which enable the service to reach out to those out with the city centre, and to those unable to visit our venues in person.

An IIA has been carried out on these policy proposals and actions outlined.

Digital

MGE are aware of the potential of digital to help us connect with new audiences and deepen our existing audience relationships. We also consider targets within the [City of Edinburgh Council Business Plan \(2021-2024\)](#) to improve digital literacy and accessibility.

As a service, MGE take a 'digital first' approach. In practice, this means that when we make plans to reach audiences with exhibitions or other projects, we always think at an early stage about the ways in which digital activities might play a useful part. We assess

the exhibition's objectives and intended audiences and, where appropriate, develop digital approaches that can improve user experiences.

When we talk about digital, we do not simply mean online content and social media. Digital could mean introducing tablets with relevant content into in-person workshops, showing filmed content in a school classroom, live-streaming a museum event or providing an extra layer of interpretation in a gallery. It could mean using technology to start conversations or learn things from our communities. It includes making sure visitors to our website find the information and inspiration they need.

Our digital work has our audiences' needs and perspectives as its foundation. Our audience segmentation work assists with this, but we also continually collect data from our digital work and adjust our approaches to better serve our audiences, reach more people and improve accessibility.

Engagement

Public Programmes

MGE develops a dynamic programme of events to engage with a range of groups and to create diverse events.

The learning programmes encourage family groups to enjoy the buildings and collections together. A varied programme of workshops, historical lectures and special events is also aimed at adults. Community groups are encouraged to visit the venues, and MGE will tailor an event to suit these groups.

Public Programmes also work on a project basis with different communities across the city. Learning experiences are developed to reflect the needs and preferences of specific groups, such as the learning spaces in the galleries.

MGE cultivates partnerships with a variety of organisations to develop projects and events, with a particularly strong tradition of working with and developing programmes for schools and Higher and Further education institutions.

Public Programmes organise a variety of different activities to accompany select exhibitions including:

- British Sign Language tours and tours for the visually impaired
- Talks and lectures
- Adult craft events
- Family learning programmes
- School programmes
- Venue-based community programmes
- Programmes and project-based work with Further and Higher education institutions

- Programmes for children under five

Outreach

The aim of MGE's Outreach Programme is to work in partnership with Edinburgh's communities and to connect them with museum and gallery resources. Through our outreach work community groups can participate in, or co-create a wide variety of activities, exhibitions or events. The programme focuses on those who, for various reasons, face barriers to accessing MGE resources. This involves working in partnership with community and special interest groups across Edinburgh's different neighbourhoods.

Temporary exhibitions displayed in community venues such as libraries, schools, care homes and shopping centres are a key part of our outreach programme. This aligns with the [City of Edinburgh Council's 20-minute neighbourhood plan](#) and [Citywide Culture Strategy \(2023-2030\)](#), bringing cultural opportunities to local neighbourhoods across Edinburgh.

Spaces are also available for community organisations to mount temporary exhibitions within MGE venues, following approval of proposals submitted which fit with the requirements of this policy.

All proposed community exhibitions complement or enhance MGE's collections and the themes that they illustrate. They also either:

- Relate specifically to the Edinburgh area, or
- Explore topics relevant to the people of Edinburgh.

Priority is given to exhibitions which enable us to meet the aims of the Museums Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan and priority audiences identified for outreach.

Implementation

Programming and Decisions

MGE delivers an exhibitions programme across five of its 13 venues, all of which have a slightly different remit in terms of long-term and temporary exhibitions.

City Art Centre

The City Art Centre is home to the City's collection of Scottish art, one of the most comprehensive in the country. Its vision is to champion historic and contemporary Scottish visual arts and crafts within a diverse, innovative and ambitious exhibitions programme.

Museum Venues

Alongside rich and varied permanent collection displays, the Museum of Childhood, Museum of Edinburgh and Queensferry Museum have designated temporary exhibition spaces where a broad range of topics are explored.

Travelling Gallery

Travelling Gallery is a contemporary art gallery in a bus and is unique to Scotland. Its function and core mission is to take its exciting and experimental programme to communities across Edinburgh and beyond, allowing access and learning for all. Its exhibitions and learning programme cover diverse practices from local and international artists, which inspire and engage a wide audience and lead to conversation and healthy discussion.

Programming

The programme covers a broad range of subjects and allows for a combination of internally and externally curated exhibitions, and co-produced exhibitions, as well as touring shows for loan and hire. Across the service we stage an average of 11 shows a year, which include exhibitions that:

- Focus on or draw inspiration from our collections of fine and applied art, history, childhood, literary and archaeology collections.
- Use our collections as a starting point from which to explore wider aspects of Scottish history, art and design.
- Feature Scottish or Scotland-based artists and makers with links to our wider collections, including those who have been largely passed over by art critics and historians.
- Seek to engage with the artistic community within Edinburgh giving opportunities for collaboration and the display of contemporary work being produced within the city.
- Reflect diverse practices from local and international artists.
- Have a legacy of new perspectives and insights to our collections.
- Explore current debates and topical issues, including subjects related to the environment and climate change, and subjects related to social inequalities, inclusion and diversity.
- Celebrate Edinburgh's heritage and culture.
- Provide a platform for community-led display.
- Celebrate local or major events, where relevant.

- Are welcoming and family friendly.

To ensure the programme is relevant, achievable and complementary to the focus of each venue and that the widest audience can be reached, consideration is given to the service's engagement programme, availability of staff and resources, sustainability, security and insurance requirements.

The exhibition programme is planned two to four years in advance. The running time for temporary exhibitions varies from venue to venue. The majority of the exhibitions have free entry; however admission charges are levied at times to help cover costs and ensure MGE continues to provide excellence and variety for visitors.

Decisions

The City Art Centre, Travelling Gallery and Museum Venues hold regular exhibition meetings to discuss and agree the programming, budget and delivery at their sites. These meetings are chaired by the relevant museum manager or curator, where relevant, external stakeholders and an advisory group are in attendance. Advice and comments may also be sought from colleagues, senior management and independent experts. The various exhibition mandates are presented to the Museums Management Team for comment and approval.

Exhibitions will only be considered for selection if they demonstrate that they fulfil one or more of the aims and objectives of this policy and the remits of the various venues. For further guidance on how to submit an exhibition proposal, please contact the relevant venue. MGE reserve the right to refuse work that may be deemed controversial or offensive to its staff and visitors.

Roles and Responsibilities

MGE will:

- Provide the majority of our exhibition and event spaces free of charge once proposals have been approved by the appropriate forum and provide charged for exhibitions that support our cultural ambitions.
- Ensure our venues are open to the public at published times, and that adequate security measures are in place out with these times.
- Comply with Health and Safety and Fire regulations with regards to all aspects of exhibition design and construction.
- Provide curatorial, documentation, conservation and technical assistance in the preparation and delivery of temporary exhibitions.
- Provide welcoming and informed staff to deliver high quality visitor experiences across our venues.

- Adhere to the standards required by the [UK Museum Accreditation Scheme](#), the [Museums Association Code of Ethics](#) and follow our internal standard procedures of best practice in relation to the selection, handling and display of all exhibits.
- Ensure that all items on display, including items on loan, have been ethically acquired, in accordance with our collections' procedures, which in turn comply with the [Museums Association Code of Ethics](#), and due diligence has been undertaken.
- Ensure that all exhibits are inspected, and condition checked upon arrival at our venues.
- Provide editorial control of all text written by internal staff members or external partners.
- Provide high quality interpretative materials in a range of formats to enable audiences of all abilities and learning preferences to actively engage.
- Ensure that learning and public engagement are fully integrated into exhibition planning.
- Provide full insurance cover for all exhibits at agreed values where insurance criteria are fully met.
- Develop press and marketing campaigns in partnership with Council colleagues.
- Where feasible, work with external partners to develop a range of retail materials associated with exhibition proposals.
- Provide assistance regarding potential sale of works.

External partners will:

- Submit exhibition proposals in an agreed format. Proposals should include a short summary of the exhibition with an explanation as to how it meets the criteria described in this policy. The content of the exhibition should be described alongside a provisional budget and a description of how it might be funded. Proposals should also indicate the research and education potential of the project as well as identify target audiences.
- Abide by the terms of any contracts setting out agreements by which projects are to be delivered.
- Provide a final list of loaned exhibits within the timescale set out in the loan agreement. The list should include full object descriptions, insurance valuations, and any specific transport and display requirements.
- Arrange for any necessary conservation work to be undertaken of exhibits prior to delivery.

- Provide high quality images of a range of exhibits for use in promotional and publicity materials.
- Provide all written interpretative and publicity materials within agreed schedules.
- Ensure all necessary copyright clearances have been obtained.
- Develop proposals for public engagement and retail with relevant MGE staff.
- Undertake funding applications to help deliver and bring added value to exhibition proposals.

Evaluation

Evaluation is undertaken during and after exhibitions to ensure that the objectives of the Temporary Exhibitions Policy are being met. The evaluation process involves gathering both quantitative and qualitative data and may be carried out in conjunction with external partners.

A post-exhibition analysis is conducted at the end of each exhibition (or combined exhibition season). This provides an opportunity for staff from across MGE, who are involved in the delivery of each exhibition, to share and review findings. External project partners are invited to participate where appropriate.

Performance indicators may include:

- Visitor figures (including group visits and attendance at related events - both on-site and outreach).
- Income generation (retail, admission charges, events charges and donations).
- Visitor comments (in-person and online).
- Media coverage and reviews.
- Online engagement (website and social media).
- Audience research (surveys, focus groups and reports).
- Legacy outcomes (partnerships, research, publications, online resources, touring opportunities, collection acquisitions).

The post-exhibition analysis encourages staff to consider the impact and effectiveness of each exhibition project. This includes any unexpected outcomes and suggestions for improvements. The findings are used to guide future programming and audience development.

Related documents

[Citywide Culture Strategy \(2023-2030\)](#)

[City of Edinburgh Council Business Plan \(2021-2024\)](#)

[City of Edinburgh Council's 20-minute neighbourhood plan](#)

[Scotland's Museums and Galleries Strategy 2023-2030](#)

[Museums Association's Strategic Framework \(2020-2025\)](#)

[The Audience Agency website](#)

[Equality Act \(2010\)](#)

[Edinburgh and Lothians Equality Framework \(2021-2025\)](#)

[Anti-Racism Pledge](#)

[Museums Association Code of Ethics](#)

[UK Museum Accreditation Scheme](#)

Integrated impact assessment

The results from the IIA Summary Report show that this updated policy will better align with other Council policies, EDI and sustainability objectives in relation to MGE's temporary exhibitions programming and associated activities.

It will also explore better ways to evaluate exhibition outputs including consultation with staff from across the MGE's Service who are involved in the delivery of each exhibition, and where relevant, external project partners, to share and review findings and to ultimately improve what we offer to members of the public.

Risk assessment

The risks associated with the non-compliance or misuse of this policy ranges from low to high and are as follows:

Low Risk

- Damaged relationships with existing audiences and a failure to engage with new ones.
- Under-represented groups being further disconnected with the venues and the work of MGE Edinburgh.
- Community groups who cannot easily access MGE resources are further alienated.
- Knowledge and understanding of our collections is reduced.
- A reduction in funding from Creative Scotland for the Travelling Gallery.

Medium Risk

- The temporary exhibitions arranged by MGE are adversely compared to other visitor attractions within the city with regard to digital innovation and technology.

- Lack of variety, quality and reduction in cultural provision for Edinburgh residents and visitors to the city.

High Risk

- Reputational damage to MGE, and by extension, the City of Edinburgh Council among the museums, galleries and heritage sector and the wider public.
- Visitor numbers fall through lack of ongoing investment in our exhibition spaces, public and outreach engagement, and marketing capacity.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years and expires in May 2026. The City of Edinburgh Council Culture and Communities Committee is the approving committee.
