

2 Renaissance in the Regions and the Education Programme Delivery Plan

At the end of 2002 the Government awarded £70 million to Renaissance in the Regions - the first ever sustained central government funding of its kind for regional museums. The first phase of the project, spanning 2003/06, is already well under way, with an ambitious plan of action to improve resources and services across England's museums.

The initial focus for investment will be the regional museum 'Hubs' which have now been established in each of the nine English regions. While all Hubs will receive support for Renaissance objectives and initiatives in the next three years, three regions have been chosen to receive accelerated funding: the North East, West Midlands and South West. Their task is to develop themselves as centres of excellence, demonstrating how the sector can impact on social and economic priorities in their region and deliver quality services.

The North West Hub is a partnership between Manchester City Galleries; Manchester Museum; the Whitworth Art Gallery; Bolton Museum and Art Gallery; Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston; and Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery, Carlisle. It includes the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester, the People's History Museum in Manchester and Lancashire County Museums Service as 'first partners'. Manchester City Galleries is the lead partner. The Hub has attracted funding of £2.46m for a development programme of projects and posts delivered between 2003 – 2006. The funding will help achieve 38,000 new contacts between children and the Hub museums and 57,000 visits by new users predominantly from social classes C2DEs and black and minority ethnic groups by the end of 2005/06. The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA, formerly Resource) instigated, and is now leading, the development of Renaissance in the Regions. For a detailed description of its development see MLA's website (www.mla.gov.uk).

A priority for the Renaissance in the Regions settlement is the creation of a 'comprehensive and integrated' service to schools, starting with the larger museums in each of the regional Hubs. In 2003-4 MLA provided funding for the development of Education Programme Delivery Plans (EPDP) in each of the Hubs. The aim of the EPDP is to demonstrate how the Hub museums can extend and strengthen their services to schools, with a view to achieving a 25% increase in 'contacts' with school children (aged 5-16) by 2006. The long-term goal is to realise the vision of the "comprehensive and integrated" service to schools across the region.

In the North West, MLA North West and the Hub have worked closely together on the development of the plan, with advice and guidance from a small steering group. The research described in this document was carried out in order to ensure that the plan responds to real educational need. MLA required the EPDPs to be developed through an extensive consultation exercise with the education sector, rather than to be based on museums' views of what they could offer schools. A lead consultant and a team of five consultants worked closely with the Hub museums and MLA North West to carry out this research. There were two main parts to their work: firstly, researching nine of the LEAs in the region to find out about their priorities and the

degree to which museums figure in their thinking and plans; secondly, examining teachers' views through focus groups.

The research and consultation which was carried out to inform the EPDP involved many conversations and the exchange of ideas with teachers and LEAs. This cross-sector dialogue is leading to greater understanding of the pressures and preoccupations faced by each sector and will hopefully lead to greater collaboration. The research also enabled MLA North West and the Hub to have conversations with other useful allies and potential partners, for example, Government Office North West, Creative Partnerships, Arts Learning North West, Arts Council North West, and the Heritage Lottery Fund. This could lead to greater cohesion within the cultural and education sectors, so that effort and investment can be maximised for the benefit of teachers, children and young people.

The main focus of the Hub's future advocacy campaigns will be on LEAs and other agencies (e.g. Excellence in Cities, Education Business Partnerships). The climate is clearly receptive and there is much to be done in promoting the more creative approaches to teaching and learning without which, arguably, levels of academic attainment will not rise.