

ADVOCATING FOR THE MUSEUM AND GALLERY SECTOR

OCTOBER 2026



Museums Aotearoa is the peak advocate for New Zealand’s public museums and galleries. Our vision is to see museums and galleries valued, championed and invested in by the people of Aotearoa New Zealand.

The purpose of this pack is to support museum and gallery teams to understand how central government policy impacts our sector, and where constructive conversations might be had with politicians across the political spectrum.

Our priority is to educate and involve politicians and candidates in our work and value. This document will be updated as new policies and positions that impact our sector are made public. We welcome members’ observations and additions as conversations flow.

HOW IT WORKS:

PARTY STANCE	CONVERSATION	SECTOR STANCE
This section outlines a policy or position applicable to the museum and gallery sector.	Here we outline where we believe there could be alignment between political positions and the priorities of the museum and gallery sector.	Here is the position from Museums Aotearoa.

ASK THEM:

The pack suggests questions that you can ask representatives from the relevant parties that speak effectively to policy alignment and what we need as a sector.

WHAT WE DELIVER: CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

OCTOBER 2026

Museums

Aotearoa

Museums and galleries need sustainable investment to continue to deliver on our collective responsibilities to care for and protect taonga and ensure New Zealanders have a thriving museum and gallery sector for generations to come. In order to drive this message it is important that we outline **what we deliver as cultural infrastructure**.

WHAT IS CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE?

By cultural infrastructure, we mean museums and galleries and the spaces, services, and structures that allow people to produce, consume, share, and preserve culture. This infrastructure delivers on New Zealand's **education** and **tourism objectives**, as well as being places that **enhance community, social cohesion**, and **wellbeing**.

Current approaches to evaluating cultural infrastructure do not adequately account for the social, scientific, cultural and intergenerational value generated by institutions that steward our collective knowledge and memory. This has contributed to a failure to recognise museums and galleries as essential civic infrastructure and fund it appropriately.

For example, investment in cultural infrastructure is already present in many council long-term capital plans but is largely absent from national infrastructure investment pipelines.

THE TOPLINE AND OUR PROOF POINTS

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Museums

Aotearoa

OUR PROOF POINTS:

In 2021, museums and galleries:

- Were valued at **\$5.6 billion**.
 - \$3.6 billion in collections across 45 million objects.
 - \$2 billion in buildings.
- Received **17.5 million visits**.
- Employed **3,365 full-time equivalent jobs**.
- Provided education benefits equating to **\$24.6 million to students**.

THE TOPLINE:

Given the significant social, cultural, scientific and intergenerational value generated by museums and galleries, it is crucial that they are supported by a balanced and resilient funding model. No single source can sustainably meet the full cost of preserving and sharing our collective knowledge and memory.

Instead, **a strong funding system rests on complementary pillars:** public investment from local government, national investment from central government, and support from philanthropic, iwi and community partners. Sustainable funding frameworks are essential to preserving and activating our cultural, scientific, and collective assets for generations to come.

KEY MESSAGES

OCTOBER 2026

It is essential that we are united on what it is we want for museums and galleries as a whole. These are the **key messages** that we want to get across to **every politician** that enters our spaces both on the campaign trail and beyond.

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“New Zealand has an **intergenerational responsibility** to invest in the knowledge, skills, and institutions that future generations will inherit.”

“Museums, galleries, heritage organisations, and research institutions are **essential cultural infrastructure** that deserve long-term investment.”

“National memory and capability is built over **decades** and once lost, cannot be quickly or cheaply rebuilt.”

“Sustainable funding frameworks are essential to **preserving and activating** our collective knowledge and memory inheritance for generations to come.”

“Long-term challenges require **cross-party commitment** and policy certainty that extends beyond election cycles.”

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PARTY STANCE	CONVERSATION	SECTOR STANCE
<u>Bed tax alternative</u> National will distribute a portion of the International Visitor Levy (IVL) directly to councils based on their share of international visitor nights. This alternative to a bed tax aims to support regional tourism by better funding councils. <u>Enriching Local Curriculum Programme</u> Currently under review by the Ministry of Education. This programme acknowledges the importance of providing authentic and enriching learning experiences outside of the classroom. <u>Rates cap</u> National are proposing to cap local council rate increases by 4%. The aim is to ease costs-of-living and to ensure focus on services such as potholes, rubbish collection, and running polls and parks.	<u>Bed tax alternative</u> Museums and galleries are important tourism assets yet receive no Crown funding to invest and maintain this value. Despite the clear economic benefits of having multiple cultural institutions and a distributed national collection, these tourism assets are at risk. Investment into our cultural attractions is an investment in economic growth. <u>Enriching Local Curriculum Programme</u> We support the review and reset of the ELC programme. It is important for museums and galleries to be included in those conversations. The sector translates core curriculum goals into tangible, real-world learning experiences. <u>Rates cap</u> Museums and galleries provide essential cultural infrastructure and much of the funding comes from ratepayers. It is essential that the role that they play in communities is considered when evaluating changes to rates.	We have an intergenerational responsibility to invest in museums and galleries. As essential cultural infrastructure, they preserve and activate our heritage, support education, strengthen community wellbeing, and contribute to tourism and regional development. Yet years of underinvestment have created a nationwide cultural infrastructure deficit. New Zealand needs a sustainable partnership between local and central government to ensure these assets endure into the future. Museums and galleries are tourism assets, associated with economic growth and social benefit for local communities.

ASK THEM:

“There is a huge economic benefit in investing in museums and galleries. We encourage tourism, provide jobs, and educate our communities. How is your party planning to drive sustained investment, alongside councils, to ensure that we can deliver on our intergenerational responsibilities to avoid large amounts of economic, educational, and social damage in the future?”

PARTY STANCE	CONVERSATION	SECTOR STANCE
<u>Civic Regional Infrastructure</u> NZF believes in protecting regional heritage and culture. They also have a desire to invest in the economic development of the regions. There is an appetite to spend sustainably in order to achieve these goals.	<u>Civic Regional Infrastructure</u> Museums and galleries provide civic touchpoints across Aotearoa. Investment in the sector will encourage preservation and education around heritage assets. Museums and galleries encourage economic activity from both domestic and international tourists, as well as the ability for them to engage with New Zealand's culture and heritage.	We have an intergenerational responsibility to invest in museums and galleries. As essential cultural infrastructure, they preserve our heritage, support education, strengthen community wellbeing, and contribute to tourism and regional development. Yet years of underinvestment have created a nationwide cultural infrastructure deficit. New Zealand needs a sustainable partnership between local and central government to ensure these assets endure for the future. We are key economic enablers for our communities, bringing in domestic and international tourists, delivering educational experiences, and fostering participation, connection, and civic pride.

ASK THEM:

“Museums and galleries allow people to directly engage with local histories and cultures, and are touchpoints for regional economic development. We can see this in military museums, which continue the legacy of soldiers’ military service. In the face of an intergenerational infrastructure deficit, how are you going to ensure that museums are able to deliver on their responsibility as civic touchpoints, particularly in the regions?”

PARTY STANCE	CONVERSATION	SECTOR STANCE
<u>Local Tourism Dividend</u> This policy aims to directly reward increases in local tourism. Councils will receive an automatic payment of \$1 for every night a commercial guest stays. <u>Regulatory reform</u> One of the key principles underlying ACT policies is the desire for regulatory reform. This has seen a desire to consolidate government agencies and alter regulations that cause inefficiencies.	<u>Civic Regional Infrastructure</u> Museums and galleries encourage economic activity from both domestic and international tourists, as well as the ability for them to engage with New Zealand culture and heritage. <u>Regulatory reform</u> As the GLAM sector does not have its own dedicated piece of legislation, museums and galleries must be consulted to prevent unintended consequences impacting day-to-day operations.	We have an intergenerational responsibility to invest in museums and galleries. As essential cultural infrastructure, they preserve our heritage, support education, strengthen community wellbeing, and contribute to tourism and regional development. Yet years of underinvestment have created a nationwide cultural infrastructure deficit. New Zealand needs a sustainable partnership between local and central government to ensure these assets endure for the future.

ASK THEM:

“The sector welcomes policies, like the tourism dividend, that acknowledge the bind local councils find themselves in with shrinking and stretched ratepayer bases and infrastructure deficits, including cultural infrastructure. How will you work with councils to further support investment in the sector?”



Labour

PARTY STANCE	CONVERSATION	SECTOR STANCE
<u>Apprenticeship Boost</u> This policy aims to expand the current programme focused on the trades. Labour aims to tackle rising youth unemployment and prevent young tradies from having to move to Australia for better opportunities. <u>New Zealand Future Fund – Investment</u> The New Zealand Future Fund aims to support small businesses to build productivity and provide meaningful job opportunities within their local communities. <u>Social outcomes</u> In a time of economic hardship, Labour wants to support wellbeing outcomes alongside economic growth.	<u>Apprenticeship Boost</u> There is an opportunity to invest in qualification pathways within the GLAM sector. By investing in training pathways into qualifications that relate to museums and galleries, we can build stable and meaningful employment opportunities, while encouraging sector growth. <u>New Zealand Future Fund – Investment</u> Museums and galleries support regional economic development by drawing in domestic and international tourists, as well as providing opportunities for community engagement. Investment in productivity in the sector will help support the social outcomes that we can deliver. <u>Social outcomes</u> Museums and galleries serve as community hubs, building a sense of connection in the face of economic hardship, and provide trusted places for discussion.	We have an intergenerational responsibility to invest in museums and galleries. As essential cultural infrastructure, they preserve our heritage, support education, strengthen community wellbeing, and contribute to tourism and regional development. Yet years of underinvestment have created a nationwide cultural infrastructure deficit. New Zealand needs a sustainable partnership between local and central government to ensure these assets endure for the future. Museums and galleries are critical to community cohesion and wellbeing, research, social and scientific advancement, and the creation of new knowledge. We preserve taonga and the nation's memory, and we deliver learning and education for every age group.

ASK THEM:

“Museums and galleries are key economic and social assets. They contribute to local economies, strengthen community wellbeing, and preserve our shared heritage. How will you ensure investment in cultural infrastructure and the cultural workforce to support the long-term sustainability of the sector?”

PARTY STANCE	CONVERSATION	SECTOR STANCE
<u>Arts, Culture, and Heritage Policy</u> Actions in this policy include: • Ensure cultural heritage funding provisions are sufficient to increase participation. • Support Māori art forms, building an ongoing arts education strategy, and building a network of art and heritage spaces. <u>Green Party Manifesto 2026</u> Culture and creativity are vital to the building of vibrant communities and cities. There is a need for long-term, stable funding, and development of cross-ministry infrastructure.	<u>Infrastructure</u> Due to years of underinvestment, we are experiencing a nationwide cultural infrastructure deficit. It is important to see the benefit of building a network of art and heritage spaces to meaningfully rebuild. <u>Preservation</u> By investing first in cultural infrastructure, we can better preserve our local histories. This includes preserving and uplifting Māori art forms. <u>Social good</u> Following investment and preservation of these spaces, we can create community spaces for people to connect and develop an enriching and tangible education programme, as well as delivering economic growth for communities.	We have an intergenerational responsibility to invest in museums and galleries. As essential cultural infrastructure, they preserve our heritage, support education, strengthen community wellbeing, and contribute to tourism and regional development. Yet years of underinvestment have created a nationwide cultural infrastructure deficit. New Zealand needs a sustainable partnership between local and central government to ensure these assets endure for the future. Museums and galleries are critical to community cohesion and wellbeing, research, social and scientific advancement, and the creation of new knowledge. We preserve taonga and the nation's memory, and we deliver learning and education for every age group.

ASK THEM:

“The Green party recognises the intergenerational responsibility to build, preserve, and grow museums and galleries across Aotearoa so we can understand what a healthy future might look like. How are you going to ensure strategic, long-term investment so that we can deliver on preserving local histories, uplifting Māori voices, and provide community-wide social outcomes for future generations?”

PARTY STANCE	CONVERSATION	SECTOR STANCE
<u>Toi Māori</u> The Toi Māori policy commits to: • Invest in Toi Māori and creative industries. • Protect Māori cultural rights and expressions. • Back Māori-led arts infrastructure, funding, and pathways. It says this matters because Toi Māori is not decoration. It is truth-telling, resistance, healing, identity, and legacy.	<u>Training and pathways</u> The sector can serve as important pathways for Māori to enter the creative industry through skilled positions within the sector. This can further allow Māori to uplift, preserve, and celebrate their stories and taonga. We need to ensure that spaces for Māori within the GLAM sector are built, respected, and protected. <u>Māori-led development</u> Through investment in cultural infrastructure, Māori can develop how they want to present and share their stories, art, and taonga. <u>Repatriation</u> Museums and galleries play an important role in repatriation. It is essential to ensure to support forward planning and shared investment in iwi led whare taonga.	We have an intergenerational responsibility to invest in museums and galleries. As essential cultural infrastructure, they preserve our heritage, support education, strengthen community wellbeing, and contribute to tourism and regional development. Yet years of underinvestment have created a nationwide cultural infrastructure deficit. New Zealand needs a sustainable partnership between local and central government to ensure these assets endure into the future. Museums and galleries are critical to community cohesion and wellbeing, research, social and scientific advancement, and the creation of new knowledge. We preserve taonga and the nation's memory, and we deliver learning and education for every age group.

ASK THEM:

“How will you support investment in museums, galleries, and cultural institutions to ensure Māori histories, taonga, and stories are preserved, protected, and presented under Māori leadership for generations to come?”

PARTY STANCE	CONVERSATION	SECTOR STANCE
<u>Intergenerational infrastructure</u> Opportunity aims to work with parties across the political spectrum to lock New Zealand's 30-year infrastructure plan into law. This includes putting maintenance ahead of new projects and appropriate financing models; as well as giving local councils grants and visitor levies to ensure that rate-payers don't carry the load alone. This is to ensure the next generation is able to inherit better infrastructure assets. <u>Arts: More than a 'nice to have'</u> The policy recognises that the arts as a sector is essential to a functioning and thriving economy and needs to be a part of decision-making. It aims to achieve sustainability through bi-partisan unity.	<u>Cultural infrastructure deficit</u> Due to years of underfunding, New Zealand is experiencing a national cultural infrastructure deficit. This is significant as the sector delivers economic growth and social benefits for communities. This includes driving domestic and international tourism as well as serving as community hubs. Long-term investment is needed to maintain and grow the sector. <u>Intergenerational responsibility</u> There is an intergenerational responsibility to preserve museums and galleries. Because of the social good that it provides, including tangible and meaningful education opportunities, we need to pass on our heritage and culture to future generations. <u>More than a 'nice to have'</u> It is crucial to recognise the arts as a part of an essential industry that plays a key role in economic growth. We need to continue to consider the ways that museums and galleries as infrastructure should be future-proofed.	We have an intergenerational responsibility to invest in museums and galleries. As essential cultural infrastructure, they preserve our heritage, support education, strengthen community wellbeing, and contribute to tourism and regional development. Yet years of underinvestment have created a nationwide cultural infrastructure deficit. New Zealand needs a sustainable partnership between local and central government to ensure these assets endure for the future. Museums and galleries are critical to community cohesion and wellbeing, research, social and scientific advancement, and the creation of new knowledge. We preserve taonga and the nation's memory, and we deliver learning and education for every age group.

ASK THEM:

With your party's focus on long-term investment in infrastructure, how are you going to address the cultural infrastructure deficit to allow the sector to deliver on its intergenerational responsibility to preserve museums and galleries?"