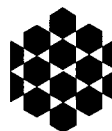


FROM THE MINISTER



Department of  
**Culture, Arts  
and Leisure**

[www.dcalni.gov.uk](http://www.dcalni.gov.uk)

AN ROINN

**Cultúr, Ealaíon  
agus Fóillíochta**

MÁNNYSTRE O

**Fowkgates, Airts  
an Aisedom**

**Your Ref: C04/09  
Our Ref: SUB/32/2009**

10 March 2009

Mr Barry McElduff MLA  
Chairperson  
Culture, Arts & Leisure Committee  
Parliament Buildings  
Stormont

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Dear Mr McElduff,

## **INQUIRY INTO THE DEVELOPMENT OF MUSEUMS POLICY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

I am writing in response to the "Report of the Committee's Inquiry into the Development of Museums Policy for Northern Ireland".

I would like to reiterate my thanks to the Committee, Assembly staff and all of your contributors to the inquiry. It has been a useful exercise and I have given the report careful consideration. In my evidence to the Committee and also to the debate in the House, you will be aware that I share many of the views of the Committee. My main concern was delivering the desired outcome in the most cost-effective manner.

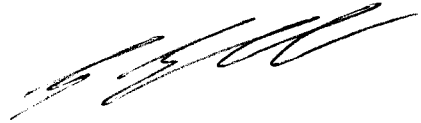
My view is that there is much common sense and merit in the recommendations in the report. I propose to set up a small group to take this work forward with DCAL taking the lead. The other four Departments mentioned in the report have agreed to participate as have the two main museum bodies, National Museums and the Museums Council. The attached annex provides a brief response to each of the recommendations in the report pending further discussion with the working group and interested stakeholders.

The Committee is familiar with previous attempts to devise a way forward for museums, in particular, the Local Museum and Heritage Review. Trying to meet the needs of the disparate nature of the groups in the sector will continue to present a challenge. The policy/strategy will continue to reflect the current economic climate and be realistic in its objectives given the pressures on capital and revenue funding. The Review of Public Administration will also have an impact and consultation with local authorities will be important as we move forward.

GREGORY CAMPBELL MP MLA

The Department will proceed without delay to get the working group established.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Campbell', written in a cursive style.

**GREGORY CAMPBELL MP MLA**  
**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure**

**DCAL RESPONSE TO THE CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE  
INQUIRY INTO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MUSEUMS POLICY FOR  
NORTHERN IRELAND.**

**1. We recommend that the Department develops a formal museums policy**

DCAL will establish a working group, with key partners including NIMC and NMNI, to develop a policy/strategy on the way forward for museums.

**2. We recommend that the museums policy covers all museums in the sector – independents, local council and nationals.**

In developing the policy we will examine how all museums: national; local council and independent, can be included.

**3. We recommend that the policy sets out how the national, local council and independent museums can best work in partnership to maximise the potential of all museums, and to create a cohesive museums sector.**

Agreed as per 2.

**4. We recommend that a strategic body is in place, whether the Northern Ireland Museums Council or a successor body, which co-ordinates the development of museums on geographical and thematic lines, to ensure Northern Ireland has a comprehensive provision of museums.**

The Department accepts that the co-ordination of development of museums on geographical and thematic lines that will provide a comprehensive provision of museums is important. We will examine the best mechanism for doing so taking account of developments in the Review of Public Administration.

**5. We recommend that the policy recognises the requirement by museums to be able to tell the stories of their communities in an independent manner, albeit within the context of the Programme for Government commitment to the Shared Future agenda. The policy must ensure an appropriate balance between integration and self-government for museums.**

Agree in principle that this is a significant issue to be taken forward for consideration by the working group.

**6. We recommend that the Department develops a museums policy which raises the profile of museums within government and firmly places museums in a broad, cross-departmental context.**

The Department agrees that a desirable outcome should be to raise the profile of museums. The recommendations which follow (7,8 and 9) recognise the need to strengthen museum links with lifelong learning, tourism and how museums can contribute to a Shared Future. The Ministers of the relevant Departments have been asked for assistance in developing these aspects and for a Departmental official to join the Working Group.

All the relevant Departments, i.e. DETI, DEL, DE and OFMDFM have agreed to participate.

**7. We recommend that the museums policy addresses how the links between museums and education can be strengthened and taken forward at a departmental level. DCAL should establish formal links with DE and DEL to do so.**

The response to recommendation 6 refers.

In addition, Museums have been key partners in developing a new Learning Strategy for DCAL alongside DE's Education and Training Inspectorate. A significant performance indicator for NMNI is the quality of their education provision including the delivery of extensive high quality learning programmes. Also, NIMC is currently working on a Learning Framework for museums in Northern Ireland. This evolved in part from a 2005 report carried out for DCAL by the Education and Training Inspectorate, 'Scoping Study of the contribution of museums and galleries in supporting education in Northern Ireland'.

In 2008 DCAL commissioned the Inspectorate to undertake a survey of the quality assurance of the educational provision by the National Museums, W5 and the Armagh Planetarium. The aim of the survey was to report on the effectiveness of education provision and to inform the development of both quantitative and qualitative performance indicators for these organisations. This work is ongoing.

**8. We recommend that the museums policy addresses how the links between museums and tourism can be strengthened and taken forward at a departmental level. DCAL should establish formal links with DETI to do so.**

The response to recommendation 6 refers.

In addition, DETI recognises the value of museums in the promotion of Northern Ireland. In particular the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum and Ulster American Folk Park have been major tourist destinations. NITB use museums for media familiarisation and other promotional activities and has supported the development of genealogy resources in some local museums.

NITB has also been communicating with NIMC on a number of issues and opportunities. DCAL will consider with DETI how these opportunities can be enhanced.

**9. We recommend that the museums policy addresses how museums can contribute to the Shared Future agenda. We recommend that the Department consults with OFMDFM on this issue.**

The response to recommendation 6 refers.

OFMDFM recognises the value of museums as safe, shared spaces which enable everyone, regardless of their background or beliefs, to increase their understanding of the cultures and events which have shaped our history. In this way, museums have made a significant contribution to good relations and this must continue.

One of the cross-cutting themes of the current Programme for Government is to build a shared and better future for all, where equality, fairness, inclusion and the promotion of good relations in policies and programmes across Government. On this basis it is appropriate that this be reflected in the development of a policy for museums.

**10. We recommend that the museums policy addresses how the current functions of the Northern Ireland Museums Council will be carried out after the RPA comes into effect. There is a need for the high quality of service which is currently being provided by the Northern Ireland Museums Council to be continued. Particularly for the non-national museums who often rely heavily on its support and guidance.**

The Department is currently considering the future of NIMC and recognises the value of the services it provides to non-national museums. The Department will consult with NIMC and local Councils on the way forward.

**11. We recommend that the Northern Ireland Museums Council continues in its present form until the museums policy is implemented, and we urge the Minister to note the strong support within the museums sector for the continuation of the Northern Ireland Museums Council in its current form or as a successor body.**

The Department notes the strong support from local museums for the services provided by NIMC. It is likely that the timescale for the development of a museums policy will precede any transfer of NIMC functions as part of the RPA arrangements.

**12. We recommend that the museums policy includes a strategy for how the accreditation scheme will be administered after the RPA comes into effect.**

The Department recognises that accreditation is fundamental to the quality of provision of museums services. The accreditation function, presently undertaken by NIMC on behalf of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, is important.

**13. We recommend that the museums policy considers what is an appropriate level of museums provision across the post-RPA council areas. The museums policy should work to ensure that there is a greater degree of equality in museums provision across the different council areas than exists presently.**

The working group will examine how best to address this. This is a matter in which local councils will have a view and they will need to be consulted.

**14. We recommend that the museums policy provides local Councils with guidance on how best to develop the museums sector in their area.**

As with recommendation 13, this will be considered in consultation with local councils.

**15. We recommend that the museums policy sets out a strong vision of the role which museums can play in our society going forward. The policy must be clear about what museums do and who they are for, including both the needs of the local communities in which they are situated and the needs of tourists.**

This is a fundamental question that will be addressed in the policy.

**16. We recommend that the museums policy addresses the issue of staff training/development, including curatorial skills.**

Agreed.

**17. We recommend that the museums policy addresses the issue of access to museums and whether there is the case for extending free access to more museums in Northern Ireland.**

The working group will consider this as part of the development of the policy.

**18. We recommend that the museums policy addresses how museums can contribute to education and lifelong learning.**

Museums have much to contribute to education and lifelong learning and considerable work has already been done in this regard. The working group will consider how this can be formalised in a policy/strategy.

**19. We recommend that the museums policy addresses the issue of acquiring and managing collections.**

We are aware that accredited museums have individual collections management policies and that the Northern Ireland Museums Council has embarked on a Collections Development Strategy Consultation which the Department has contributed to.

The working group will examine how best to address the issues in the policy.

**20. We recommend that the museums policy addresses the issue of accreditation.**

As per 12.

**21. We recommend that the museums policy addresses the issue of how the military and maritime museum sectors can be developed.**

This will require fuller examination as there are significant capital and resource implications. The working group will consider this as part of the development of the policy/strategy.

The Department has and continues to engage with key stakeholders in the maritime and military heritage sectors on addressing their concerns.

**22. We recommend that the museums policy addresses which themes are not currently being covered by museums and how these themes can be developed. In particular, the Committee noted the need for the area of sporting history to be covered in museums provision.**

This will require fuller examination. The working group will consider this as part of the

development of the policy.

As with maritime and military heritage, the Department is willing to engage with those interested in developing a museum of sporting heritage.

**23. We recommend that the museums policy addresses the issue of how the private sector investment in museums can be increased.**

This will require fuller examination. The working group will consider this as part of the development of the policy.

**24. We recommend that the development of the museums policy is taken forward by a panel of key stakeholders, including among others, the Northern Ireland Museums Council, National Museums Northern Ireland, and a range of departments.**

The Department has sought the participation of the key stakeholders, Northern Ireland Museums Council, National Museums Northern Ireland, DEL, DE, OFMDFM and DETI, to develop the policy. Other Departments and stakeholders will be consulted by the working group, as required.

**25. We recommend that the museums policy itself is drawn up by the Northern Ireland Museums Council, drawing on the expertise of its board members, and by the National Museums Northern Ireland.**

The Department recognises the expertise of both organisations and their importance in taking this work forward.

As a number of the recommendations relate directly to the Northern Ireland Museums Council and National Museums Northern Ireland, the Department does not consider it appropriate that these organisations should lead on development of the policy. The Northern Ireland Museums Council said in their evidence to the Committee that they, "should not be formulating policy".

DCAL will lead development of the policy alongside the key stakeholders mentioned in recommendation 24.

**26. We recommend that the policy process includes consultation with all stakeholders in the museums sector, as well as the Arts Council and Sport NI and those in other fields such as education, tourism and community regeneration, who have an interest in the policy.**

The Department agrees that it is important that those with an interest in museums, as employees or consumers should have a say in the development of the policy.

Public consultation with interested parties will be carried out as part of the policy making process.

**27. We recommend that the policy making process includes the examination of the museums policies which exist in other countries. This will assist in identifying examples of best practice which could be incorporated into a museums policy for Northern Ireland.**

Agreed.

**28. We recommend that a first draft of the museums policy is produced within a six month period.**

The Department recognises the desirability of having a museums policy in place as soon as possible.