

Inquiry into Inclusion in the Arts of Working Class Communities



1.0 Introduction

1.1 National Museums Northern Ireland plays a vital role at the heart of our society – supporting key objectives of the Programme for Government in ways which enrich the experience of so many of our population and offer opportunities to explore our history and to imagine our future.

As well as fulfilling statutory roles in relation to our collections and our sites, we maintain energetic and creative focus on a dynamic public engagement strategy which across recent years has contributed with real substance to social inclusion, purposeful cultural participation, a broad learning agenda and tourism.

National Museums has a long standing commitment to tackling inequality, poverty and social exclusion and has strived to ensure that we offer a programme which attracts the widest possible audience, reflective of our society. In particular, during 2013-14 we have delivered a major Social Inclusion Programme across our sites, funded by the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure. This has focused on tackling poverty and social exclusion in areas experiencing disadvantage. It consists of a number of wide ranging programmes, targeting people and groups from the top 25% of areas of multiple deprivation across N.I. These initiatives include:

- Community Volunteering, Work Inspiration and Employability Programmes;
- Partnership and Lifelong Learning opportunities for older people, minority ethnic communities and other groups from socio economically deprived backgrounds;
- Formal education programmes (day visits, residential programmes and summer schemes) for schools and community organisations;
- Outreach programmes aimed at breaking down barriers and encouraging non-traditional museum users to visit our sites

- Specific parental engagement and early intervention programmes for Nursery and Primary schools in the *Achieving Belfast* initiative, aimed at empowering parents to find ways of supporting their children's learning.

1.2 During 2013-14 we provided in excess of 14,000 people from areas of multiple deprivation with cultural experiences and opportunities. We worked with more than 16,000 children from schools in need of support and intervention, 10,000 of which were from the most deprived areas of Northern Ireland. We provided bespoke programmes, free transport and outreach with our Social Inclusion funding and worked in half of the schools in the top 10% of the most deprived areas of our community.

1.3 This year, 2014-15, building upon these achievements, we will launch five new strategies, all of which are designed to develop contact with communities, develop programmes and initiatives which meet their needs and which contribute to breaking the cycle of poverty and deprivation that some many people face:

- A new **Community Engagement Strategy** placing continuing emphasis on developing our engagement with people living in areas of multiple deprivation. We are using our programming to make a meaningful and unique contribution in supporting the focus on improving opportunities for people living in areas of cyclical disadvantage.
- A new **Collections Engagement Strategy** designed to ensure that as many of the national collections as possible are available to the public. This will include a new initiative to bring art that is currently in storage to a wider range of venues.
- A new **Digital Engagement Strategy** offering more collections content and images online and optimising the opportunities afforded by e-communications and social media engagement.
- A new **Social Responsibility Strategy** with initiatives to support employability skills, charitable activity, community development and helping to tackle biodiversity and sustainability.
- A new **Infrastructure & Investment Strategy** that aims to develop master plans for each of the museum sites, in conjunction with our sponsor department DCAL, with other partners and funders and that receives cross-departmental support.

2.0 Investigate the accessibility of the arts in Northern Ireland to working class communities and to ascertain the key challenges and barriers to the involvement of those communities in the arts.

2.1 In responding to this remit, 'arts' is taken to include museums, and indeed all other aspects of the broad cultural and heritage offering within Northern Ireland. Museums are a major source of engagement for our communities and visitors alike and our national museums constitute a key part of the arts infrastructure and offering.

National Museums is mindful of the barriers that exist to participation in museums and such impediments both real and perceived have been recognised for some time in the sector. They may include:

- Organisational barriers – such as opening times, the feeling of welcome or inclusivity
- Physical barriers – such as accessibility of the building, their location or the facilities that are offered
- Sensory barriers – such as how the needs of people with sensory impairments are met
- Cultural barriers – does the content reflect or acknowledge the interests and life experiences of the people it is trying to attract
- Financial barriers – such as the cost of entry or the cost of transport to get to a venue

2.2 It is often the case that perceptions around the offering, the type of people who access the offering, and the relevance of it, are stronger than the reality. We have recognised the need to invest time and resource in explaining what is on offer in the museums and why it will be beneficial, should people choose to visit.

It is also the case that Northern Ireland is a fragmented society and although proximity to venues is rarely a major issue, leaving one's own immediate neighbourhood is. For many people living in areas of multiple deprivation this is a very real problem and one that can only be addressed by reassuring them that transport will be provided to and from the venue. In this way reluctance to leave their area and travel to a museum can be overcome.

3.0 Examine the outreach activity of our arts venues and bodies with respect to how they make a meaningful contribution to social inclusion within working class communities; including the degree to which they can help tackle particular social issues.

3.1 The Museums Association, in its policy document, “Museums Change Lives” states boldly that:

- Museums enhance wellbeing
- Museums create better places
- Museums inspire people and ideas

It argues that every museum should have the ambition to change people lives and find ways of maximising their social impact. Much of the focus of activity, in pursuit of such goals, revolves around active engagement with local people and local communities. The Museums Association also argues that the most important step to reducing poverty is to increase engagement with people who are in poverty.

3.2 National Museums Northern Ireland would cite the following in relation to outreach activity, which focuses on making relevant and meaningful interventions with local people and local communities:

- During 2013-14 we undertook in excess of 160 initiatives in local areas; much of this activity was focused in areas of multiple deprivation and on non-traditional or underrepresented audiences.
- As part of our Social Inclusion Programme we engaged with 2751 people in their own communities to create an awareness of what they could expect from a museum visit and to build confidence to enable people to fully engage with and benefit from the programmes we were offering on our sites.
- We utilised the data provided through NISRA to target the top 25% of the 890 areas of multiple deprivation to facilitate targeting of our resources. Analysis shows that we were very active in the top 10% and even the top 5% of the most deprived areas of Northern Ireland.
- We built partnerships with a range of organisations working at community level to deliver programmes for older people, young parents from working class areas, young people leaving care, refugees and asylum seekers and organisations ranging from Sure Start to Barnardo’s and the Workers Education Association.

Partnerships are highly significant for a number of reasons. Firstly we are conscious that funding streams can be short term and such interventions when made directly can be viewed as not very tactical or at worst tokenistic or opportunist. Secondly the knowledge of the local community, its needs and aspirations, are often known best by those who have been involved in community capacity building over a longer period of time. Finally it is important to target resources in areas that add value and again this knowledge is held by the local community, in local schools or in the various organisations that are active on the ground.

3.3 The degree to which museums can help tackle particular social issues is often resource dependent and it is obvious that long term involvement in and with local communities will generate better outcomes than short term or temporary initiatives. Indeed it has been suggested that short term projects are neither generative nor sustainable and can have little impact on the wider community. Mark O'Neill of Glasgow Museum Service has likened cultural engagement to exercise where consistent and repeated encounters are more effective than short term, intensive bursts of activity. National Museums Northern Ireland recommends that there is a strong need for defined funding streams which enable long term strategic activity which tackles inequality, poverty and social exclusion rather than short term funding. In this area of work it is often difficult to establish cause and effect and perhaps a more meaningful analysis is based around the contribution that outreach programmes, however constituted, make to break the cycle of poverty and deprivation.

3.4 In 2014-15 National Museums Northern Ireland will undertake a number of specific initiatives, as part of its business plan, to make a meaningful contribution to social inclusion within working class communities. In 2013-14 we were required by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure to undertake a zero-based budgeting exercise which reviewed all business activity and associated costs. The exercise required a forensic analysis of all expenditure in the organisation against non-discretionary (i.e. statutory) activity, and discretionary activities, in order to provide transparency in relation to public spend. In addition, the Minister required visibility with regard to specific activity against the Department's priority to promote equality, and tackle poverty and social exclusion.

The work carried out was based on the indicative budget for 2014-15 and assumed similar funding levels for 2015-16. We set targets related to promoting equality and tackling poverty and social inclusion based on those funding assumptions. Additional targets and programming are also outlined in specific contingency bids which would require funding beyond the indicative allocation.

3.5 The following programme which will be delivered this year, does, we believe, indicate a strong commitment to tackling poverty, inequality and social exclusion. It provides a strong framework for engaging with local people and communities and all aspects of the work have a degree of outreach activity built into them. We have brought new and innovative initiatives such as the provision of free admission for 5000 households who wouldn't otherwise visit museums; summer schemes for children from the most deprived communities in our midst; early intervention programmes which seek to engage parents with their children's learning; a new programme which will bring art from our collections into schools in working class areas; and a new pricing structure that introduces free admission for unemployed people.

Promoting Equality and Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion	Measureables	Targets 2014-15	Targets 2015-16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop relevant and tailored programmes which attract visitors from the top 20% most deprived areas (2014-16) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exciting exhibitions and programming that attract wider and more diverse audiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2011-12 Continuous Household Survey provides a baseline of 32% of those living in the 20% most deprived areas had been to a National Museum within the previous year. • Provide free admission to our paid-for sites for 5,000 households in hard to reach areas • Achieve 30-33% audiences from lower income households (C2DE) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33% CHS • Free admission opportunity for 2,500 households • 31% C2DE • 32% first time visitor profile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 34% CHS • Free admission opportunity for 2,500 households • 33% C2DE • 32% first time visitor profile

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop the provision of affordable opportunities for school children at risk of social exclusion caused by educational under performance (2014-15) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver 14 early years programmes across all NMNI sites for audiences from areas of multiple deprivation Deliver 30 summer scheme programmes across NMNI sites for audiences from areas of multiple deprivation Provide 7,000 learning places for a range of children from areas of multiple deprivation (including free programmes / free entry for 20 schools and bespoke programming for participants) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7 early years programmes 7,000 learning places Free programmes / free entry 20 schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7 early years programmes 7,000 learning places Free programmes / free entry 20 schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To deliver lifelong learning site based programmes targeting individuals from communities where engagement with the museum is low and where individuals will 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver 12 lifelong learning programmes for participants living in areas of multiple deprivation Deliver 8 partnership community based programmes for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Treasure House lifelong learning programmes 3 Live and Learn lifelong learning programmes 4 partnership community based programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Treasure House lifelong learning programmes 3 Live and Learn (Year 6 application pending) 4 partnership community based programmes

benefit from museum resources (2014-15)	participants living in areas of multiple deprivation		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To deliver outreach programmes targeting individuals who are not traditional museum users or are from communities where engagement with the museum is low (2014-15) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver 20 specific outreach initiatives targeted in areas of multiple deprivation (delivered by generating income from other paid for outreach initiatives) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 specific outreach initiatives targeted in areas of multiple deprivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 specific outreach initiatives targeted in areas of multiple deprivation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To deliver a programme of employment initiatives and training targeting the most deprived which enhances transferable skills, self-confidence, self-esteem, and the ability to compete in the labour market (2014-15) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30 volunteers engaged in museum-related activities two Internships Work placements for 10 people through Steps to Work scheme; 12 student work experience placements; 10 NEETS placements two apprentices in traditional skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30 volunteers 2 Museums 2 Work placements One apprentice Blacksmith placement 5 community engagement initiative placements 12 school age placements 5 FE/HE placements 15 placements for unemployed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30 volunteers 2 Museums 2 Work placements 5 community engagement initiative placements 12 school age placements 5 FE/HE placements 15 placements for unemployed

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase access to the National Collection and increase access to collections knowledge (2014-15) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Online (Collections Highlights, Blogs, Social Media) ○ Digitisation ○ Exhibitions, events, public programmes ○ Loans & Outreach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 'Museums on the move' collection awareness sessions in libraries/community centres in areas of multiple deprivation • 50 loans in local museums – particularly in rural and hard to reach areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 art outreach sessions in schools in areas of multiple deprivation • 10 loans in local museums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 art outreach sessions in schools in areas of multiple deprivation • 10 loans in local museums
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4.0 Identify any examples of good practice in accessibility and outreach work – either within Northern Ireland or elsewhere – which could be usefully replicated by arts venues and bodies here.

4.1 In responding to this statement, National Museums Northern Ireland is cognisant of the fact that each arts venue, museum or other body will have a different context, a different perspective, a different funding environment or a different set of priorities. There is therefore no one definitive model of community engagement which can be cited, rather there is a value set which sees the museum as having a social role and responsibility. However, there are numerous examples of good practice which have an overarching ethos which is around putting people and communities at the heart of what we do – working with and for communities to enable them to derive the maximum possible benefit from the resources at our disposal.

In responding to the above we will cite, in the context of the Museums Association's vision for the impact of museums, examples of activity which demonstrate good practice.

4.2 Museums enhance wellbeing

- Live and Learn is a 5 year Big Lottery funded project which seeks to engage older people with collections and museum sites. It focuses on older people who are socially isolated, vulnerable and in need of support. Accordingly it seeks to encourage physical activity, through museum visitation and participation in organised events and ultimately to contribute to increased mental wellbeing.
- The Live and Learn team deals with around 4,000 older people each year, all of whom are from lower socio economic groups, and contribute to a range of learning programmes for adult learners across our sites. All participants are involved in work in their own communities, with museum staff, for a number of weeks before they visit the museum, building confidence and personal capacity. Responses to programmes on site are highly positive with direct learning and social outcomes. Participants in programmes are also encouraged to volunteer within our museums, contributing with their skills and knowledge and enabling them to be active citizens.
- The success of Live and Learn has been reflected in the awarding of an additional £0.5m for a spin off project for older people known as Treasure House, bringing the Big Lottery's investment in this area of community engagement to £1.5m to date. Live and Learn are holding a seminar to share best practice in engaging with older people, both in their own communities and in the museum context, in May 2014.

4.3 Museums create better places

- *'National Memory- Local Stories'* is a creative participation project which we ran, during 2013, in partnership with the National Portrait Gallery, London, and four national and local area museums across the UK. This innovative project explored how the discovery of locally relevant objects from museum collections, via creative digital media production workshops, could engage young people and artists in responding to significant moments in the history of the First World War. As the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War approaches, the stories and knowledge of this conflict are no longer in living memory. This contributes to the history being perceived as distant and disconnected from many individuals including young people. However, on examination the links are still there through personal stories, objects and museum collections. The project therefore sought to develop local stories as a way into understanding the scale and impact of the First World War at the time and its on-going legacy today, and in relation to current conflict throughout the world.
- We chose to work with New Lodge Arts, an organisation based in one of the most deprived areas of Northern Ireland, whose community did not have a tradition of engaging with the Ulster Museum.
- The project took place over two weeks in August (2013) with workshops based both in the New Lodge and the Ulster Museum. The young people explored objects from the Ulster Museum's collections, along with themes and ideas relating to the First World War. In the museum they met curators, handled museum collections and were encouraged to think about war, identity and their own precious objects. In the New Lodge they worked with an artist and a local historian, learning about the history of the area and its connection to the First World War. Using their own precious objects the young people explored ideas about collections and collecting and combined pictures, word and digital images to make their own panel, which was part of an exhibition displayed at the Ulster Museum.
- The exhibition was staged in the Ulster Museum and in March 2014 the young people travelled to London to see the project unveiled on the National Portrait Gallery website. The overall project has been funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and will be used to develop a best practice toolkit for creative participation projects.

<http://www.npg.org.uk/whatson/national-memory-local-stories/participants-work/explore-the-participants-work-national-museums-northern-ireland.php>

- National Memories Local Stories is an example of meaningful engagement with a working class community and illustrates our view that museums are rooted in places, that they help shape and convey a sense of identity and contribute to local distinctiveness. It also illustrates the capacity to engage non-traditional audiences and meet their needs in ways which reflect their own life experiences and expectations.

4.4 Museums inspire people and ideas

- National Museums' Social Inclusion Programme focused on tackling poverty and social exclusion in areas experiencing disadvantage. A key element of National Museums' Social Inclusion Programme was **Weekends at the Museum**. The key aim of the *Weekends at the Museums* programme was to empower parents to find ways of supporting their children's learning. The importance of early intervention is recognised in the Delivering Social Change Framework and the need for investment during the early years of a child's development is agreed by all those involved with and interested in the development of children.
- We developed a strategic partnership with the Belfast Education and Library Board and worked specifically with their Parent Support Initiative, which focuses on 19 primary schools which are part of Achieving Belfast. Achieving Belfast Schools are in need of intervention and are based in some of the most deprived areas of the city. The partnership aspect was important as relationships existed with schools, staff and parents.
- The programme set out to increase awareness of the resources and facilities we held; increase confidence amongst parents which would assist in enabling them to access and use museums and finally to increase day to day interaction between parents and their children. Outreach activity was a critical part of the programme and this broke down barriers and perceptions as well as creating a sense of welcome. Free transport was provided and parents and their children were accompanied by the Outreach worker they had met in their own school and community. Bespoke programmes were offered including the very popular "Night at the Museum" which is an experience which was provided free of charge to these groups.
- Evaluation of this programme points to high levels of engagement by parents, often beyond that experienced by the schools; strong learning and social outcomes and higher levels of engagement with teachers and children's learning. The programme will be continued as we develop our relationship with BELB but the quantum of it will be directly reflective of budget availability.

5.0 Make recommendations for improvements in policies, delivery mechanisms and collaboration among key stakeholders, which will maximise the potential of our arts venues and bodies to address social inclusion issues in both urban and rural working class communities and across communities in Northern Ireland.

5.1 Funding

- To deliver a consistent programme of community engagement and outreach activity which delivers high quality learning and social outcomes for working class communities is long term, consistent and resource intensive work. Often numbers are small as the focus must be outcomes and quality driven, rather than merely focused on outputs. Consideration needs to be given to the development of a dedicated funding stream if inclusion of working class communities in the arts is to become a priority.
- To deliver on the Northern Ireland Museum Policy commitment of providing a museum visit for every child in Northern Ireland also has funding dependencies and requires careful co-ordination and strategic planning. Consideration must be given as to how this aspiration can be made a reality.
- National Museums has committed to levels of free entry and free programming to encourage non-traditional users to engage with our programming. Consideration should be given to a DCAL wide initiative, similar to Test Drive the Arts which reaches areas of multiple deprivation.

5.2 Transport

- Access to transport is a perennial problem and experience working in areas of deprivation would indicate that it is an essential part of the offering as it is both a cost barrier and a necessity for people travelling outside of their areas to places where they may not feel comfortable.
- Education and Library Boards in Northern Ireland have a major transport resource available to them and perhaps the time is right to see how this can be utilised by schools and communities to access cultural provision. A recent report by the Welsh Government, "Culture and Poverty "(March 2014) suggests a group be established, comprising local and national government as well as transport providers to consider solutions. One option may be to integrate provision for visits to cultural venues into transport contracts.

5.3 Co-ordination

- The Welsh Government have been asked to consider the development of a Cultural and Social Inclusion Board which would focus on the challenge of getting people from disadvantaged communities to get involved in cultural activities and access cultural sites. National Museums Northern Ireland would support this proposal and suggests that such an initiative would have merit in Northern Ireland.
- Co-ordination of resources and activities needs to be considered to ensure that initiatives are undertaken in a planned and strategic manner. The danger of concentrating resources in some areas to the detriment of others is an on-going possibility and co-ordination needs to take place at both a local and regional level.
- The NISRA Areas of Multiple Deprivation Index is a vital tool in targeting resources and is used by a number of Arms Lengths Bodies in profiling their work and targeting resources. It is important that the individual offers made by ALBs are not replicated in a few areas and that a standard approach is taken to targeting efforts. Likewise a standardised approach needs to be taken to measurement of performance which considers outcomes and which does not increase bureaucracy to the level of micro management.
- Cross departmental collaboration is essential if we are to add value and build upon strategic interventions made by individual sponsor departments. Initiatives such as Achieving Belfast, Closing the Gap, Achieving Derry and the work of the Public Health Agency / Resurgam Trust, to cite some examples, have all been put in place, in areas of multiple deprivation to tackle underachievement and to improve the life chances of children in those areas. Information about such programmes across all departments should be circulated to allow for leverage to be gained through the strategic investment of resources and added value through potential cross sectorial partnerships to be gained.

5.4 Additional information

- National Museums Wales held a research seminar in October 2013, bringing together a range of professionals to discuss the theme of Cultural Participation for Children and Young People Experiencing Poverty. Whilst it was recognised that museums and other cultural organisations cannot alone solve poverty, they have a more important role to play than is currently acknowledged.
- The key recommendations of this seminar have been used to brief the Welsh Government and to establish an agenda which can be taken forward nationally. They are:
 - Establish a code of ethics or set of principles for cultural participation in relation to child poverty.
 - To establish a steering group to drive forward this agenda in Wales
 - To open out the conversation with funding bodies
 - To strengthen the research base by supporting in-depth collaborative research.
- National Museums would, in the context of Northern Ireland, very much endorse such proposals and point to the merits of holding such a seminar here.
- National Museums Wales have also developed a resource pack which provided support for arts, cultural and heritage organisations as they create pathways to cultural participation. A similar resource in Northern Ireland which takes account of the regional context would be welcomed.
- *“Culture and Poverty, Harnessing the power of the arts, culture and heritage to promote social justice in Wales. A report with recommendations by Baroness Kay Andrews OBE for the Welsh Government.”* (March 2014). This report builds upon much of the work developed in the National Museum Wales seminar and strategies and makes 33 specific recommendations about how cultural and heritage bodies can contribute effectively to reducing poverty and raising ambition.