



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR
CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE**

**OFFICIAL REPORT
(Hansard)**

**Review into the Value and Impact of
Museums in Northern Ireland**

3 February 2011

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE FOR CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE

**Review into the Value and Impact of Museums in Northern
Ireland**

3 February 2011

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Barry McElduff (Chairperson)
Mr Declan O'Loan (Deputy Chairperson)
Lord Browne
Mr David Hilditch
Mr William Humphrey
Mr Kieran McCarthy
Mr David McClarty
Mr Ken Robinson
Mr Pat Sheehan

Witnesses:

Dr Elizabeth Crooke)	University of Ulster
Professor Pól Ó Dochartaigh)	
Mr Chris Bailey)	Northern Ireland Museums Council

The Chairperson (Mr McElduff):

With us today from the University of Ulster are Dr Elizabeth Crooke, senior lecturer in museum and heritage studies, and Professor Pól Ó Dochartaigh, dean of the faculty of arts. You are both very welcome. Thank you for coming. I invite you to make an opening statement.

Professor Pól Ó Dochartaigh (University of Ulster):

Elizabeth will make most of the comments. At the end, I will give a bit of context as regards the university and the faculty.

Dr Elizabeth Crooke (University of Ulster):

I thank the Committee for inviting us to speak to you today. We are delighted to speak on this subject, because, for us, Northern Ireland's museums sector is very important. In my written submission I responded to the four areas that you outlined and considered the social and economic value of museums. I looked at how that might be monitored; the methods for measuring social and economic value; how we might assess value for money; and, indeed, the very concept of economic and social value.

I am sure that you share my awareness of the importance of museums: as employers; their significance in attracting international visitors; their role in regeneration; the spending power of those who use museums; the spending power of museums themselves; and the importance of museums and their collections for Northern Ireland's creative industries. Research has been done into the social, economic and cultural value of museums, much of it in the UK museums sector. I recommend that you consult those reports.

One interesting report, which was published last year for the Natural History Museum in London, broke down specifically how it calculated economic value. It looked at the institution's economic turnover. For example, it may cost £83 million to run the Natural History Museum. The report looked at the spending power of visitors to the museum and added that to the turnover factor. It then used a multiplier effect to find out how much money a museum with a budget of £50 million, for example, brings into the economy after its trade with local business and so on has been factored in. It used a multiplier effect to expand the figure. The 2010 study used a report from the Office for National Statistics to calculate how much money museum visitors spend.

The report took guidance from a Treasury report that recommended a multiplier effect; the figures were not just made up. There is longevity to the research into this factor. The report showed that for every £1 of government grant to museums the benefit to the local economy is quadrupled. It is useful to bear that in mind.

However, the wider social impacts of museums are slightly more difficult to quantify: the pleasure of a museum visit, of knowing that museums are there, the importance for lifelong learning and for social and community groups, community cohesion, and for civic pride. It is more difficult to assign figures to those factors, and that is where research is always of benefit. Those figures must be borne in mind. We need to look at the importance of diversity when taking account of social and economic value. Research into the diversity of what museums can bring to the community and into value for money across government is important.

The final area is seeking good practice. Again, the issue is about nurturing what we have here. For example, we have two Masters degree programmes in museum studies at the University of Ulster, the aim of which is to foster good practice and to maintain contact with the sector. We have worked closely with the Heritage Council in developing museum studies programmes to enhance good practice.

Like universities, museums are places of lifelong learning. We want to nurture in Northern Ireland a love of learning for the benefit that it brings to the economy. Expanding that in whatever way we can is our motivation, and expanding the idea of partnership and collaboration is extremely good value for money when it means people working together.

Professor Ó Dochartaigh:

I would simply add to that by stressing, inevitably, the importance of museums in the educational environment for us and for the wider promotion of heritage. Too often there is an impression that unless a subject falls into the sciences — the STEM subjects — it has no economic relevance. The opposite is true in the realm of museums, heritage and culture; there is tremendous benefit.

The university sees its engagement with museums on the two MA courses as part of a wider engagement with heritage, which has included, in recent years, the Institute of Ulster Scots Studies based on the Magee campus and the Academy for Irish Cultural Heritages. As the outside funding for those is coming to an end, they are merging into a centre for Irish and Scottish studies. A validated online MA for Irish and Scottish studies will come online next January.

We collaborate with the Ulster Historical Foundation on a course on tracing your Ulster ancestors, which brought 25 Americans — and their spending power — here in June 2010. That programme is bringing another 40 people, so far, here for a week this June. That is part of a wider engagement in education, higher education and the university, alongside museums and heritage. That engagement is extremely important; there is tremendous potential for Northern Ireland to exploit it in educational, social and economic terms.

Mr Humphrey:

I listened carefully to what you said about the value for money that museums provide, not least through education, particularly for our young people. I have two questions. My concern with museums in Northern Ireland, particularly the Ulster Museum, is that many of the artefacts on display can be seen anywhere in the world. People come here to see indigenous and recent cultures, whether Irish Gaelic, Ulster Scots, orange or whatever. More of that needs to be put on display rather than artefacts that can be seen anywhere around the world. Secondly, I know that it is policy across the UK for museums to be free. Given the current economic climate, can that be sustained? If it cannot be and a charge is put on entry to establishments such as the Ulster Museum, what will be the effect?

Dr Crooke:

First, I will answer the question about collections and what motivates people to go to museums and what people want to see in a museum. Visitors to Northern Ireland go to more than one museum. National Museums Northern Ireland contains a range of museums, including the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, which has a collection that is very much based on local history, local artefacts and local collections. The Ulster Museum does have a fair bit that is unique to Northern Ireland in its applied art collections and history galleries. Therefore, there is a uniquely Northern Irish story being told by the Ulster Museum.

There are collections that one could say are not local to Northern Ireland, but I have had that conversation with curators in the Ulster Museum on, for example, the applied art collection. They say that having a collection of international relevance and significance is important, because it means that somebody such as me can go and learn about the excellence and high standards in, for example, glass making or ceramics. I may not be looking at a piece of Belleek pottery from

County Fermanagh, but, if I am an artist, I could be looking at a piece of pottery that will inspire me to become a global artist of global significance. There is a diversity of collections of local importance and international importance, which is important for museums.

Mr Humphrey:

There is an excellent facility at the Ulster American Folk Park in Omagh. However, given that Belfast is the tourism and transportation hub, many people who come to Northern Ireland will travel through Belfast. Many people who are here only for a short time will not get to Omagh. We need to be reaching out to cultural tourists, who make up 50% of tourists and travel the world to investigate genealogical issues and family history and to go back to see the old homestead.

The diaspora in America and Canada is huge, whether they are Irish Catholic or Ulster Presbyterian. I would like to see things on display in museums that tell Americans who come here — they come in huge numbers, not least when the cruise ships dock — that Ulster has provided 17 Presidents, that the Great Seal of the United States was designed by an Ulster Scot and that the Declaration of Independence was printed by an Ulster Scot. That is not being done, but it is hugely important. That may be done in Omagh, but it should also be done elsewhere.

Those are the sorts of things that set us apart and that we can use as an example of the uniqueness that is Northern Ireland and of a story that cannot be told anywhere else.

Professor Ó Dochartaigh:

The point about genealogy is a fair one. However, we are running a course with the Ulster Historical Foundation for people who are tracing their genealogy, and it is not just about going to museums but about going to places such as the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) and all sorts of other archives, such as the headquarters of the Presbyterian Church, to trace ancestry. People who are tracing their roots do not expect to find everything in a museum, and we should not be aiming to provide everything in our museums.

The other point is that museums are not just for cultural tourism but are an educational resource for our schoolchildren. The content should not just be about their place in Northern Ireland, Ireland or the UK.

Mr Humphrey:

Yes, but schoolchildren will not go to PRONI or to Church House. That is my point. I am aware of the work that the Ulster Historical Foundation is doing; William Roulston designed the Presbyterian Historical Society's website. The issue is about educating our own people as well.

Professor Ó Dochartaigh:

Sure, but educating them about the wider world, not just Northern Ireland. There is a balance to be struck.

The Chairperson:

To bring the conversation back to the specific terms of reference of the review, William, I remind you that Omagh is also in this jurisdiction. That is not contrary to anybody's definition.

Mr K Robinson:

Was that a political statement?

The Chairperson:

It was, actually. I am happy to stand over it.

Mr Humphrey:

I welcome your statement.

The Chairperson:

I want to focus on a couple of questions that we need developed for our mission in the review. You referred to the range of work that is being undertaken by museums, which is matched by considerable diversity in the method used to ascertain their value. In view of that, is there a need for agreement among academics, the museum sector and DCAL on the economic and social benefits? How should they be measured? I think, Professor, that you used the word "tremendous". The question for both you and Elizabeth is: how can they be measured? Is that possible? Is there a lack of robust and consistent data and, if so, what steps need to be taken to address those gaps and get up-to-date intelligence across the sector to inform future policy and

strategy? Is that hampered by a lack of data?

Dr Crooke:

The economic and social value of museums has been measured outside Northern Ireland for other museums, and there are certainly well-established models that could be used here. The reports are quite open about the research methods used. It would be a matter of going through them and finding out what the criteria were, how they were measured, what figures were collected, and how they justified that multiplier effect. There are quite clear models that can be used.

Some of the reports were compiled by academics from the London School of Economics (LSE). They have carried out a range of research, as have other bodies, such as the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA). A lot of work has been done in that area, so there certainly are models out there that can be consulted. It is just a matter of having a group of capable, interested people sitting down with the reports and working out the formulae — to put it crudely — that we could use in Northern Ireland.

Those are the things that are easy enough to quantify. There are things that are more qualitative and difficult to quantify, such as civic pride or how a visit to an exhibition or participation in a workshop can change people's attitudes to one another or to history. It is more difficult to put a figure on that, but the information has certainly been gathered in comparable projects across the water. There will be some gaps in knowledge. A lot of that research is mostly based in England, so one could say that there are gaps here in Northern Ireland and that we need to sit down and do similar work. It would be a matter of bringing people together to undertake that.

The Chairperson:

Is there a will to undertake that exercise? Is there a passion for it?

Dr Crooke:

There certainly is; absolutely. We know what the museum sector will come out with: it will come out in support of museums. We certainly hope so. There is absolutely no hesitance to do

that sort of work. It is a matter of bringing together the people to do it. Research has some costs.

The Chairperson:

Who should take the lead?

Dr Crooke:

You could turn to the University of Ulster.

The Chairperson:

Well said. You are well trained.

Mr K Robinson:

Elizabeth, you mentioned the change of attitudes. I am trying to balance two things. You want to give people the opportunity to see fine art and lift them to a greater level, you want to change attitudes and educate people, and so on. We are a bunch of philistines here. We are looking at an economic situation in which we have to get the maximum return that we possibly can from any investment that we make.

William mentioned the cruise ships. How do we strike a balance between doing all those fine and worthy things that you are suggesting and actually getting some of the American dollars, the pounds and euros into our hands so that we get a return on our investment? There has been a massive investment in museums, both at central level and local government level. How do we get the return? We are sitting as local councillors looking at the cost of all those things, looking at the rates creeping up and looking at an election on the horizon. We are very hard-headed. We want the museum and we want it to do all those things, but how do we get the balance between doing that and what we need the museums sector to do?

Dr Crooke:

It is always a difficult argument. When people have that overview of the entire economy and of everywhere that money can be spent, they have to sit down and work out what return they are looking for. That is the macro level of decisions that have to be made. When one comes right down to the micro level of looking at museums and tourism, there are means of trying to assess

the value of an American visitor to Belfast — to Northern Ireland — and how much they are drawn by the fact that we have really good museums. Would they have come anyway, even without the museums? Those are all research questions on which work has to be done in order to get definite answers.

Mr K Robinson:

Is there evidence to show that other places have deliberately gone out and almost put the package — perhaps not as an easily identifiable package — out into the ether so that, when folk come here, they go to PRONI because they were always going to research the ancestors, but they also know there is a cracking museum up the road. There may even be another one in Omagh, I believe.

The Chairperson:

It is very significant.

Dr Crooke:

It is a matter of having that joined-up thinking, and different Departments must work together so that the museums, PRONI —

Mr K Robinson:

Sorry to interrupt you. Is there any evidence out there already of where other places have done that consciously? For instance, Royal Armouries moved to the north of England. It did so consciously because London was swamped, there was space up there and there were social and economic benefits. Is there any research out there that looks at that?

Dr Crooke:

I recommend the Natural History Museum reports. One was published in 2010 and another in 2003. They looked at the economic and social value of the Natural History Museum and tried to work out the value of the museum to the last penny, how much of a draw it is for visitors and how much those visitors spend. Is it possible to justify the number of museums in London, given that there are so many? It is very important for those individual institutions to have that argument fully formed. There is research out there that makes that case.

Mr O’Loan:

Thank you for your excellent paper and for the pointers on where we might look for evidence on the matter. Can you tell us a bit about your MA courses to which your paper refers? Why did you see a need for those? How long have they been established? What numbers participate in them? Where are those students heading in career terms?

Dr Crooke:

The original museum studies programme was established about 10 years ago with the Academy for Irish Cultural Heritages. When it was formed, one of its roles, as well as the research, was the training programmes. We were very aware that there was no similar programme in museum studies on the island of Ireland. I did a museum studies course when I left university, but I went to England to do it. There was an awareness that we did not have that exact type of museum studies training on the island of Ireland. The programme is there, and it is not just a matter of training people how to hang a painting or how to look after the museum stores. The training prepares people to critique and evaluate the museum as an institution and to study the full meaning and impact of museums and of heritage.

The course has gone from strength to strength, and, as I said, it has been running for 10 years. In the early years, we recruited about eight students, whereas this year we have 20 students. The students on the course are a mixture of recent graduates in their early twenties who have degrees in geography, archaeology, history or fine art. Other students have worked for perhaps five years in another sector and want to go back to their original discipline. They might have studied history but worked in insurance ever since. Some of our other students actually work in the museum sector and want to upskill. They want the opportunity to take some time out from the office and think about what is important about museums and museum visitors. That is the profile of the students on the programme.

Every year, students come up on the train from Dublin to do the course. We have around three students from Dublin and a couple of students from the border counties. Therefore, we have a mixture of Northern Irish and Southern students. When the course finishes, some go back to Dublin, some go across the water and some stay. Some go on to do PhD research, and a good

number go into the museum sector. I have great alumni of contacts in museums across Northern Ireland. That is very useful.

The Chairperson:

You could work for the marketing team. Richard Barnett should be told about that.

Dr Crooke:

Alongside that, we have the distance-learning programme. That developed when the Heritage Council in the South of Ireland introduced its museum standards programme. It advertised in the newspapers asking for a third-level institution to come to it to provide the skills and training to meet the skills necessary for that programme. We, along with other universities in the South of Ireland, pitched up and made a case for it to come to the University of Ulster and let us develop the programme. We got through, so, along with the Heritage Council, we developed the distance-learning programme. We now have around 20 students, with students in England, a student in Germany and a student in America. However, most are Irish-based students, and the Heritage Council pays their fees for the programme.

Mr O'Loan:

I am very interested in, and aware of, the social and educational aspects and benefits of museums, but I am more interested in highlighting the economic side in the report, because I think that it is not sufficiently recognised and availed of. Do you agree with that perspective?

Dr Crooke:

It depends whom you are asking. Some people are very aware of the economic value of museums and have a full grasp of that, but if you are asking whether the Northern Ireland population at large realise the economic value of museums, some people may not appreciate the full economic value. There is a case for the economic impact of museums to be made more public.

Mr O'Loan:

To follow that up, in our departmental system here, the economy sits far away from this Committee. There are a number of Departments with responsibility for economic issues and tourism, particularly the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI). Do you feel

that, on the issue of the economic impact of museums, policy and — very importantly — funding strategies are adequately thought through and joined up?

Dr Crooke:

There have been a lot of changes in the museum sector recently and a lot of changes in the National Museums Northern Ireland group. It has lost a lot of staff over the years through redundancy. There has certainly been a big drop in the number of staff, and that organisation would argue that it has that issue to deal with. However, as far as I am concerned, for the future, it is a matter of understanding what the budget is. One does not get everything that one wishes for all of the time, so it is a matter of being sensible with what one has got.

Mr O'Loan:

I will put the question in a different way. When you are teaching students and researching, I am sure that you look at documentation coming from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. Do you even explore what DETI and the different tourism bodies are saying that might affect museums? Do you find that they are picking it up at all?

Dr Crooke:

Some of the sectors are aware of the importance of museums, but it is always a case of having partnerships across the different sectors so that they can come together to make best use of the funds that are available. It is often through joined-up thinking or collaboration that the best value can be achieved for the money that is spent.

Professor Ó Dochartaigh:

The wider point to be made is that, often when we talk about economic benefits and so on, there is a narrow focus on the idea that, from a higher-education perspective, the STEM subjects are going to be the economic drivers. Far too often, we miss a trick when it comes to the potential of culture and arts for generating economic revenue, rather than just being something in which people engage as a pastime and on which they spend a little bit of their pocket money. There is a far greater potential there that is not fully exploited. With the STEM agenda — the STEM bluff, as I call it, frankly — we are missing a big trick. I would welcome any moves towards remedying that on the political side.

Lord Browne:

Thank you for that very detailed paper. I have to declare an interest, and I will do a bit of self-advertising. I am a trustee of the Somme Heritage Centre at Conlig. If we were to implement all the suggestions that I have heard, I think that we would be very successful. At Conlig, we have the educational value. For schools, we have two or three days, which are totally oversubscribed, from both communities. We also have the heritage element. However, we are obviously in difficulties with the economic climate.

How will you get the museums to address the problems that you identify in your paper? How do we implement the proposals? You can produce papers, but you then have to convince trustees and other people that this is the way in which to improve the structure and standards of our museums.

Dr Crooke:

Some of the smaller museums should go down the marketing and tourism route. There can be small museums in local communities that, although much loved and well visited, do not demonstrate a revenue stream. It is a matter of having a close connection with tourism and other institutions, branding, getting known and getting the bus tours in. That is the extra step that museums have to take to up their profile.

Professor Ó Dochartaigh:

You mentioned the education days at the Somme Heritage Centre. I have given lectures at Conlig on those sixth-form days for history students. That is a classic example of a museum enhancing its profile through engagement with education. Students can go to the Somme Heritage Centre to hear lectures on topics that may have nothing to do with Northern Ireland or Ulster and not even necessarily much to do with World War I. For example, I gave a lecture on the rise of Nazism, which, although linked to World War I, does not have an obviously immediate connection.

Students can go there and hear those sorts of lectures, but they will also get a tour through the reconstructed trenches, and so on. I have taken the tour myself. They get access to a specific museum resource in Northern Ireland through a partnership with education. I suspect that,

otherwise, a lot of those sixth formers would never even see Conlig. The potential for museums to exploit, benefit and enhance their profile through links with education is underdeveloped. However, the Somme Heritage Centre is an example of one that is doing well in that regard.

The Chairperson:

How is the value for money of public funding for museums currently measured? How are those measures used to assess success, or otherwise, against the targets set by the Programme for Government? Those are technical questions, but I ask them in the context of our review.

Dr Crooke:

I recommend turning to the work of the Northern Ireland Museums Council. It has done research into how it has achieved the aims of the Programme for Government and its value for money. The Museums Council is an example of an institution that has looked very closely at museums across Northern Ireland, whether they be independent museums, private collections, private museums, and so on.

The Chairperson:

A representative from the Museums Council is about to join us. If members have no further questions, I will thank Professor Pól Ó Dochartaigh and Dr Elizabeth Crooke from the University of Ulster for helping us.

Our final witness is Chris Bailey from the Northern Ireland Museums Council. Good afternoon, Chris. Thanks for coming. It is over to you to make an opening statement on the value and impact of museums in the context of our review. Perhaps you will also remind us of your remit and title.

Mr Chris Bailey (Northern Ireland Museums Council):

Good afternoon. I am the director of the Northern Ireland Museums Council.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to come along and respond to your review. We submitted written evidence, and I presume that that has been circulated to Committee members.

On its inception 17 years ago, the Northern Ireland Museums Council was charged with supporting local museums, as opposed to national museums, and with improving their standards of collections care and their services to the public. To that end, we offer grant assistance, we provide training and we give guidance, advice and information, not only to the sector but to the general public.

We also provide specialist support to government, particularly DCAL, we assist with the acquisition and development of collections, and we undertake research for the support of policy and strategic development. We have done that throughout the tenor of the organisation. We also manage the UK-wide museum accreditation scheme in Northern Ireland. At the moment, 38 local museums are accredited.

I want to make four points. First, the Northern Ireland Museums Council welcomes the intent of the review, because it is an important step in giving further recognition to the contribution of the sector to the betterment of society and the economy in Northern Ireland. My council has done some basic research into the benefits that accrue from that investment, and I have listed the relevant studies in the written evidence.

Of particular note are the estimated contribution to the local economy and the obvious potential across the sector to advance education and learning, which has yet to be fully unlocked. Although museums have obvious financial and learning impacts, they play a part in a much wider range of other benefits. Those benefits include being a fundamental resource for the creative industries; generating civic pride in towns and cities across Northern Ireland; being the home of societal memory; being a place to explore cultural identities and build community relations; assisting with the development of our image abroad; enhancing well-being through, for example, volunteering, reminiscence projects or programmes that foster mutual understanding; and often serving as orientation points for both residents and tourists alike.

That breadth of impacts is matched by a similar diversity in the vocabulary and language of what might be called the impact industry. The range of methodologies used for assessing the economic and social impacts is notable. It seems that there is such a range of understandings, definitions and approaches that measuring impact is becoming both nuanced and complex.

Certainly, from our experience, there is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to measuring such impacts.

My penultimate point is that, although economic and social benefits flow invariably and inevitably from what museums do, such benefits depend on the capacity of museums to undertake their principal *raison d'être*; namely, to collect, preserve, display and interpret their collections for the edification, inspiration and enjoyment of the public. I suggest that the economic and social benefits that we all aspire to are proportionate to the levels of investment that is made in those primary functions. It is difficult to provide, obviously, stimulating learning experiences, for example, with a narrow collection that is not well cared for or exhibited properly.

Finally, I want to stress to the Committee that we need to be cognisant of the inherent value of cultural impacts alongside that of social and economic impacts. Together, they create a virtuous triangle. Without the first, we are left with a two-legged stool.

The Chairperson:

Paragraph 5.4 of your submission refers to direct conflicts between economic and social impacts. Can they be reconciled or should they be measured separately?

Mr Bailey:

On occasion, if you are seeking to gain economic benefits and wish to enhance the money that museums can bring in through, for example, entry charges, that can be in juxtaposition to any social dynamic that you wanted to develop, for example, creating greater access. The two are not necessarily always in opposition, and a balance point must be found depending on the scale of the museum and the community that it works with.

Lord Browne:

You said that it was difficult to measure the success of museums' social and economic impact. However, your submission states that there is a preference for the use of the multiplier analysis methodologies across the museums sector. Why would you recommend that and do you think that its indications are important?

Mr Bailey:

The Northern Ireland Museums Council is involved in a partnership with its counterparts in Scotland, Wales and England, and, at the moment, we are embroiled in an analysis of the economic impacts and trying to create a toolkit so that museums can do such work for themselves. There are four basic economic impact methodologies, and our research to date suggests that the multiplier analysis, which captures the location and scale of expenditure associated with procurement, employment and visitor-related experience, gives a much clearer picture for museums. For libraries you might do a contingent valuation of return on investment.

Mr McCarthy:

Northern Ireland has taken part in the measurement of the value of museums. Are we developing our own strategies, and is there good practice elsewhere on these islands that we could use? What lessons can be learnt from examples of good practice elsewhere to improve the social and economic impact of museums in Northern Ireland?

Mr Bailey:

There are very good examples of where museums have embarked on and attempted to measure their impact across the wonderfully diverse area of social impacts, including economic impacts. Elsewhere, and I have listed a few of the studies in my submission, the important element is that there have been studies that have tried to look at the veracity and strength of the process by which those impacts are measured. We are involved in some of those studies; I mentioned the ALMA-UK study. The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council has developed the inspiring learning for all standard, which is a good method by which the qualitative aspects of the learning offer can be quantified and thus be given greater substance in terms of what has been seen to be the hard social impact.

Mr O'Loan:

Thank you for your submission. I take as a given the huge social and educational contribution that museums make. My interest is in the economic contribution, which has not been analysed adequately or focused on. Has there been much measurement of the economic benefit of Northern Ireland's local and niche museums? Given their size and niche market, would there be an issue of capacity surrounding such measurements?

Mr Bailey:

I will make three points in answering your question. First; yes, we have done work. Our earliest work dates from about 2003, when, through partnership with the Heritage Lottery fund, we commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers to do an analysis of the economic impact of museums in Northern Ireland. That found that there was a slight impact but nothing substantial. Again, that used the multiplier analysis.

The large return comes through the unlocking of tourism spend. Using the same methodologies as PricewaterhouseCoopers, we have marked that on occasion down through the years. I will give you three snippets of information showing the overlap between museums and the economic impact of tourism.

In 2003, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board — this is based on its figures — estimated that about 9% of visitors to Northern Ireland’s museums were from out of state and that they spent about £24.2 million. By 2005, 28% of out-of-state visitors went to a museum during their time in Northern Ireland, and museums assisted in unlocking their spend of £37.8 million. By 2009, the figure had remained virtually the same — about 28% of out-of-state visitors went to a museum — but their spend had risen to £48.7 million. That gives you an indication of the significant part that museums play in the tourism offer to out-of-state visitors in particular.

Mr O’Loan:

That leads me nicely to my next question. You referred to museums’ contribution to tourism. When the museum sector looks at government here, it obviously has a strong link to DCAL’s policy and funding streams. Do you engage in the same way with DETI? Is DETI alert to museums’ contribution to tourism and to furthering DETI’s objectives?

Mr Bailey:

I must admit that our association or linkage with DETI is not there. Our tendency is to let the Departments work one to one; our linkage is more directly with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and with the development units in local councils.

Mr O'Loan:

What is the quality of your engagement with the Tourist Board?

Mr Bailey:

It recently employed a person whose job is to assess and develop the cultural product across Northern Ireland, and we try to ensure, through our liaison with the Tourist Board, that it is aware of what museums are up to.

Mr O'Loan:

You refer to museums as a resource for the creative industries. Can you amplify on that point? What exactly does that mean and what value comes from it?

Mr Bailey:

I cannot give you a financial value, but I will make a general and a particular point about creative industries. The general point is that when people engaged in fine and applied arts look for inspiration, influence or answers, they normally find it in the work of artists and craftsmen of the past. They come across such work directly in museums. The particular point is about fashion and textiles students from the University of Ulster using and having first-hand experience of the costumes in the Springhill collection.

The Chairperson:

The University of Ulster said that the following questions might be more appropriately asked of you, Chris. Can I have a big drum roll, please?

Mr Bailey:

I will try my best to answer them.

The Chairperson:

How is the value for money of public funding for museums measured? How are those measures used to assess the success or otherwise of the targets set by the Programme for Government?

Mr Bailey:

I see what you mean: they are big questions. We undertake specific pieces of research, including a quinquennial review of the sector, so we are starting to build quite an intelligence base to inform the likes of the nascent museums policy. It also informs our strategy and, I hope, DCAL's work. Our work cascades back into the Programme for Government, in that we respond at ground level to the emphases of the Department's strategic plan. Our difficulty is that there are serious weaknesses: we could make a more robust case if we had the capacity to do so. That is down to, on the one hand, resources and, on the other, to how we collect data and the sort of data that we collect. Emerging from our analysis of the learning in, and the marketing of, local museums is the need for greater standardisation in the type of information and data that are captured. At the moment, we have a fragmentary approach. It is nobody's fault. However, we need to rectify it so that we can demonstrate, economically and socially, how museums support the Programme for Government.

The Chairperson:

How has the economic value of museums changed in the past five years, and is it likely to change in the spending review period up to 2015? Who should take the lead?

Mr Bailey:

In answer to the first part of your question, in 2003, as a result of our work with PricewaterhouseCoopers, we estimated the museums sector's value at about £17.2 million. At that point, there were about 540 full-time equivalent jobs in the sector. When we looked at the figures three or four years later, we did not find a great deal of change. In our last quinquennial review of staffing and employment trends in the sector we saw a reduction in the number of full-time posts. We estimate that there has probably been no expansion in the amount of revenue funding available to or going into the sector. However, capital has been set aside. In the past decade, we have seen immense investment in the capital infrastructure of museums. I would like to think that the Northern Ireland Museums Council's work contributed to that. We are focused on gathering robust, sound intelligence on the sector, and we would like to continue doing so.

The Chairperson:

We will leave it at that for now. As ever, Chris, thank you very much for your contribution. You

have been a friend to the Committee.

Mr Bailey:

It has been my pleasure. Thank you very much.