

Written Ministerial Statement

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Culture, Arts and Leisure

DCAL: Arm's-length Bodies

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Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): I am writing to members to notify them of the commencement of the second phase for the Review of our Arms Length Bodies (ALBs).

The Department initiated a review of its ALBs in December 2010 on a phased approach, with the first phase (a desk based review) completed in March 2011. Following Phase 1, the following bodies will now be taken forward to Phase 2, Sport NI, Arts Council NI, National Museums NI, NI Screen, NI Museums Council, Armagh Observatory and Planetarium.

I have established a small team to take forward the second phase of the review. The team is currently drawing up a project initiation document for completion of Phase 2 review.

The purpose of this review is to determine if the functions of the ALB are still required and, if so, whether the current status of the body is the most effective way of delivering these functions. The Project team will carry out a detailed examination of each ALB and will look at how functions are currently delivered, the legislation under which the body operates and consider the implications - legislative, operational etc, for any proposed change of status included in a delivery options analysis.

In deciding the order in which bodies should be reviewed the project team have considered the level of spend, the Departmental Risk Rating for each ALB, clarity around setting and agreeing business plans and budgets and any cross cutting issues for all the bodies (e.g. Armagh Observatory and Planetarium operate under the same legislation and are considered as one body) and have concluded that Sport NI and National Museums should be first. No decisions have been taken on the sequence of reviews for the remaining bodies but will be agreed with a Project Board prior to commencement of each review.

The Project team will take into consideration any recommendations from BRG (Budget Review Group) and they will also consider any implications that arise from any future decisions under the Review of Public Administration (RPA)

In conclusion, I would like to assure members that my Department has no preconceived view on the preferred outcome for any of the six bodies and that we will be open and transparent and will consult with the ALBs and all key stakeholders throughout the review.