



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Inquiry into Inclusion in the Arts of Working-
class Communities: National Museums
Northern Ireland

13 May 2014

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Miss Michelle McIlveen (Chairperson)
Mr William Irwin (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr David Hilditch
Mr William Humphrey
Ms Rosaleen McCorley
Mr Michael McGimpsey
Mrs Karen McKeivitt
Mr Oliver McMullan
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín

Witnesses:

Ms Pamela Baird	National Museums Northern Ireland
Mr Paddy Gilmore	National Museums Northern Ireland
Ms Jude Helliker	National Museums Northern Ireland

The Chairperson: I welcome the officials to the meeting. We have Paddy Gilmore, the director of learning and partnership; Jude Helliker, the director of people and performance; and Pamela Baird, head of strategy. Thank you very much for coming this morning. I ask you to make your statement, and members will then follow up with some questions.

Mr Paddy Gilmore (National Museums Northern Ireland): Thanks very much for inviting us along. It is a pleasure to be able to give you some evidence on the work of National Museums.

Fundamentally, we believe that everyone in our society has a right to engage with and benefit from our museums. Therefore, we welcome the Committee's interest in including more people from working-class communities in the arts. We have a strong commitment and a track record of delivering community partnerships, broadening audiences and developing social inclusion initiatives. National Museums has consistently sought to secure funding to develop such initiatives, mostly, it has to be said, from external sources. I will give you some examples. Coming to Our Senses was a programme that we ran for the visually impaired with the Blind Centre. Live and Learn, which we mention in our submission, is a programme for socially isolated and vulnerable older people. Treasure House, which is also for older people, is a partnership with Clanmil Housing Association. Recently, we secured some funding for a community engagement initiative which is about developing staff competencies in community engagement and working in local areas. I think that it is probably fair to say that we have also consistently reflected government objectives, policy imperatives and departmental priorities through our annual business plans and through the social inclusion programme, which we concluded at the end of March.

Across the museum sector, generally speaking, it is fair to say that there is a strong desire to effect social change and tackle issues of inequality, poverty and social exclusion. The Museums Association sets out its policy framework for museums, and that is called Museums Change Lives. It says that museums change lives in a number of ways. They enrich the lives of individuals, contribute to strong and resilient communities and help to create a fair and just society. Museums, in turn, are immensely enriched by the skills and creativity of the public, and you will see in our submission that we follow that on with some examples of where museums enhance well-being, create better places and inspire people and ideas. So, in many ways, museums are ideally placed to deliver programmes that engage working-class communities.

Regarding visits to museums, I am glad to see that we have seen the reach of museums grow since 2009. As far back as 1991, 30% of people surveyed had visited a museum in the past 12 months. By 2009, that figure had risen to 32%, and, during 2010, 2011 and 2012, the figure grew to 41%, 44% and 48% respectively. The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) continuous household survey last year gave us additional facts, and some of them are quite interesting. It says that 78% of the people who live in the most deprived areas have visited a museum in Northern Ireland in their lifetime. Obviously, that means 22% have not, which is a bit of a concern for us, but 78% is a reasonable figure. Forty-two per cent of people living in the most deprived areas have visited a museum or science centre in the previous year. From our perspective, 33% of the people living in the most deprived areas had visited a national museum in the previous year, and this is a bit of an increase from 32% in 2011-12.

Obviously, for the people who do not visit, there may be some barriers, and the continuous household survey looked at that. The reasons given were as follows: they were not interested; it never occurred to them; it was difficult to find the time; there was a lack of transport, and there was no need to go. So, there are well-known barriers to visiting museums, some of which are about perception in that people feel that museums are not for someone like them. Some barriers are to do with awareness in that they are unaware of the facilities or have no experience of visiting a museum. There is also the reality of factors such as the cost of getting there, transport and so on. One issue that is probably missing from the continuous household survey is income, and poverty may come into it. Belfast, Derry and Strabane are in the top four districts in the UK most impacted by the welfare reforms, so poverty and lack of disposal income must be an issue for people.

Regarding the barriers, we look back to some work we did during the closure of the Ulster Museum. PLB Consulting did some work for the Heritage Lottery Fund, and the barriers it anticipated were things such as cost, which I just mentioned, lack of awareness, and specific facilities. It also anticipated limited intellectual access, the management ethos of the place, poor physical access to and from the venue and in the venue, and user perceptions about relevance, welcome and so on.

National Museums responded to those research findings; so, in many ways, we have a list of things that we think mitigate those barriers. We provide free entry to the Ulster Museum. We have funded programmes that target people from areas of multiple deprivation. A number of our marketing initiatives will also do the same and will raise awareness about things such as free entry.

During the closure of the Ulster Museum, we had a cultural change initiative. At that time, before closure, 22% of our audience came from the C2DE demographic. The initiative was about three years of outreach, working with local communities and engaging with people and telling them that the Ulster Museum was free. After the initiative, 44% of our audience came from the C2DE demographic. So, a change is possible, and you can attract people from these areas.

We also worked to create a sense of ownership through the engagement initiative. It is not enough to simply say that we want to develop audiences; we want to become an inclusive site and tackle social exclusion. My directorate is the directorate of learning and partnership, and in that title there is a clue. We are very interested in community partnerships, and those are hugely important.

The consultancy report says that about 12 different audience groups are underrepresented, ranging from people who lack basic skills right through to preschool kids. We have found that the underrepresented groups among our audience tend to be the over-65s, people from the C2DE demographic, families with children, teenagers and young adults, and visitors with disabilities. That is not to say that those people do not visit, but they are underrepresented among our audience groups. Therefore, we have put a series of mitigations in place. We have programmes such as Live and Learn, which we mention in our submission, and Treasure House, and we have just secured in the region of £1.7 million of funding to put programmes in place that attract older people to engage with museums. The social inclusion programme, which we have just finished, was an initiative that,

happily, was funded by DCAL to the tune of £306,000. We got money on 1 July, and we had to have it spent by 31 March. That was very welcome, and I will tell you about it in a bit more detail.

We are also aware of the fact that people engage with museums in different ways and learn in different ways. Our discovery areas in the Ulster Museum have been hugely popular because they allow people with different learning styles and different abilities to engage with museum content. I am happy to say that disability access is now at something like 97% or 98% at the Ulster Museum, so it is totally accessible.

Regarding engaging teenagers and people from non-traditional backgrounds, we mention New Lodge Arts in our submission. We did a programme about the First World War with a group of kids from the New Lodge who, traditionally, are not visitors to the Ulster Museum and, traditionally, have not engaged with that history. That programme has been hugely successful and has shown them the benefits of working with the museum and the impact of the First World War on their local community. It ends up with an exhibition that is now part of a programme in the National Portrait Gallery. That is hugely successful and very affirming for those kids.

One area that is very interesting is learning, because, in many ways, learning is a route into museums. In 1999, a study found that one of the main criteria influencing visitation was a person's attitude to learning, and social class and work status tend to correlate with education levels. There is then an issue about the emerging profile. One of our interventions is to address learning barriers, so the Explore, Engage, Enjoy ethos that we have embedded in National Museums is very much about that. It is about learning and the ability to come to our museums to enjoy the process and learn as part of that. The discovery areas, which I mentioned, are there for people with different learning styles and abilities, and, effectively, we have developed a much broader learning programme that provides a learning offering for everyone and an interpretation programme that suits the needs of everyone.

I will just mention the social inclusion programme funded by DCAL. It was great to get that money on 1 July 2013 and, I have to say, it was a challenge to spend it within the year. Happily, I can confirm that we did so. We broke it into three major programme areas: volunteering and employability; partnership and lifelong learning, and formal learning programmes. We had 18 different initiatives, all of which sought to tackle poverty and inequality and improve people's life chances, breaking the cycle of deprivation. We had 14,000 participants, all of whom were from areas of multiple deprivation. We worked with different organisations to ensure that that happened. We had strategic partnerships with Belfast Education and Library Board, which targeted underperforming schools. We worked with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive social inclusion unit, and with organisations like Barnardo's and Sure Start. We worked with the Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers and the Workers' Educational Association. All those organisations work on the ground with communities that we want to reach. Some of the programmes we provided directly by ourselves, some with community organisations. There were things like parental engagement and early intervention, all of which make a difference to people's life chances and all of which were based in our local museums.

As to our reach, I said that we wanted to target people in 25% of the most deprived areas. Actually, we were able to target probably the top 10% and even the top 5%. When we looked at it, we found that we had worked in eight of the 10 most deprived super-output areas in Northern Ireland. So that was the social inclusion programme. My only concern about it was its short-term nature. It would be nice to run it again.

Just for the Committee's reference, some of this work is already happening in Wales. Baroness Kay Andrews has produced a programme for the Welsh Government which includes a series of 33 recommendations. She said that there are common drivers which enable change, some of which will ring true to the Committee. She cites things like:

"greater strategic capacity at the top to optimise knowledge and resources; clearer policy direction to drive purpose on the ground; integration of funding streams to maximise opportunities; common platforms for knowledge to make it easier for teachers, community organisers and families to know what is there"

— in respect of the arts and how to access it —

"easier and more appropriate access to a richer menu of opportunities with more understanding of impacts and benefits"

— and there is a real thing about how we measure benefits and impacts —

"common training initiatives to exchange professional skills; and connectivity on the ground: partnerships led locally and connecting the key cultural, learning and community people."

We asked ourselves whether it is possible to provide more opportunities and improve working class inclusion in the arts. I think our answer to that is yes. Strategically, we require an interdepartmental approach to coordinate resources and ensure value for money. On the delivery side, is there a possibility that the Government can look at the Delivering Social Change framework as an effective tool or vehicle for delivering defined funding streams to target initiatives and organisations?

There is, I am afraid, the perennial issue of transport, but I do not think that it is beyond our wit to sort that out and coordinate transport provision to facilitate access to all our cultural venues. We think that community partnerships are really important and should be funded because they are a way of reaching people on the ground.

There are two other things which we must add. Dedicated resources are required for this. Specific skills are required to undertake social inclusion programmes. The work is often resource intensive and provides limited financial return, so the money needs to be there to make sure that it is done in the proper way. We also need to make sure that it is additional to the current levels of investment, because we have to maintain our existing audiences; and the money that provides the flexibility is that which provides the creativity, and allows us to respond in ways which are more creative.

Finally investment has to be consistent. It has to be long term and sustainable. With long-term, sustainable interventions, we can build social capital and tackle social exclusion and effect meaningful change.

Thank you, Chair; that is our opening submission.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much, and thank you for the detailed paper you provided to accompany your presentation. You have figures for 2013-14 to show that you have been able to engage with in excess of 14,000 people from areas of multiple deprivation and give them cultural experiences and opportunities. Outside the NISRA figures, how do you collate information on the background of the people who visit all your sites?

Ms Pamela Baird (National Museums Northern Ireland): We conduct annual exit surveys which are conducted throughout the year representing the audiences and our visitor-number patterns across all sites. We ask questions about profile, such as whether there are children in the household. There are also questions about income. The surveys are conducted by an independent research company. They provide us with C2DE figures that give us an indicator of deprivation, but it is only one of the seven contributing factors. That is the main method by which we measure audiences but we also use questionnaires through the social inclusion programme which are evaluated to capture some additional information.

The Chairperson: Would the majority of people from that particular background have visited the Ulster Museum or would they have visited the other sites?

Mr Gilmore: All three sites, in fact. We were keen to make sure that everybody had an opportunity. One of our programmes was a two-site-based programme, so, our visitors could have had a trip to the Ulster American Folk Park or the Folk and Transport Museum and then a trip to the Ulster Museum. We also had a nice Weekends at the Museum initiative whereby people were able to stay overnight, which might have been beyond the means of most ordinary people because it is expensive in many ways.

We were also keen to make sure that people got our normal programmes. We were not putting on special programmes in any way. People were looked after in slightly different ways because we were aware of the fact that they might not have been traditional users, but they got the ordinary programmes that we have, such as The Magic of Time, the Egyptology programme, the transport programme or Discovery Farm. We were not differentiating in that way; we were simply, I suppose, enhancing access.

The Chairperson: In your presentation, you mentioned that you spent money on marketing initiatives to promote the Ulster Museum because entry is free, but obviously that is not the case for the other sites, which is clearly a challenge.

Mr Gilmore: Yes, it is. There is that barrier to participation, so one of the things we were able to do, for instance, with the DCAL money during the year was to provide free entry. This year, as part of our business plan, we have — how many do we have, Jude?

Ms Jude Helliker (National Museums Northern Ireland): We have 2,500 free family tickets, which are being targeted at schools in the super-output areas.

Mr Gilmore: Beyond that, we will also provide another 20 schools with free entry. There are things that we can do to mitigate the cost effects, but one of the things that we cannot cope with, without additional funding, is transport. Having said that, it seems to me that there is a lot of transport in this country and certainly in the Belfast Education and Library Board area; in fact, in all the education and library board areas. There are a lot of yellow buses that are used at 9.00 am and 3.00 pm, so there may be something we could do, in between, to make better use of those things.

We tend to target our resources in certain areas. Even when we have no money, and if we are offering free entry, we will use the NISRA index to look at the schools, for instance, or the community organisations. Quite often we find small pots of money. Last summer, we brought around 48 community groups and summer schemes to the Ulster American Folk Park and the Folk and Transport Museum. We did that from a slightly different pot of money that we had and we provided free transport and free entry and, obviously, free programming.

The Chairperson: You mentioned your partnership engagements with community organisations such as Barnardo's and Sure Start. Are for those for a set period or can those types of engagements continue?

Mr Gilmore: Those partnerships will continue. For instance, the Workers' Educational Association works with inner-city communities, people in rural areas and a lot of places that we cannot reach without dedicated outreach staff. That has been an ongoing relationship, as has the relationship with Sure Start. We started our relationship with Barnardo's last year and will continue it. It is always nice to have additional resources because you can be creative in your programming, but those partnerships can continue with or without resources and that is what we will do.

The Chairperson: We would be concerned that, sometimes, initiatives are great while they are on, and while you have the money there, but that, once that stops, the community is left behind and there is no further engagement.

Mr Gilmore: That is a problem. Short-term money is absolutely fine but I suppose that cultural engagement is like exercise. Short bursts are absolutely fine, but only sustained exercise will make a difference; it is a bit like that with cultural provision. Sustained, ongoing engagement with a cultural institution will build relationships and benefits. There is a danger with "short-termism", but that is why community partnerships are really important. Those people are on the ground and are aware of what is happening in local communities and can respond to their needs. Quite often, an institution arrives with a small pot of money to do something. Parachuting in might be the nicest way of describing it, but that can actually probably do more harm than good. It is much better to have a long-term, sustained relationship that delivers longer-term benefits.

Ms Helliker: We were very fortunate last year to have that additional money, but all of our programmes are scalable, and we have submitted bids to the Department, because the Minister is very keen on the programme we are running. We can do a lot with £300,000 but, equally, £30,000 can make a difference. We are very keen to ensure that the programmes are sustained in some form.

The Chairperson: There are also challenges for the museum in relation to its own funding and the type of exhibitions that you can put on. Surely, if you have an interesting exhibition that has a draw, that will bring people from across all areas and backgrounds, regardless. Surely that is also a challenge for you.

Ms Helliker: It is. For example, in 2012 we had the very successful Age of the Dinosaur exhibition, which brought in an additional 135,000 visitors. That was our record year. It is a very expensive exhibition to put on, but it did broaden the audience as it brought in a whole new family audience. We cannot do that every year, but we have to ensure that a lot of the work that we do is mainstreamed into the general programming. With lower programming funding, it becomes a greater challenge to fulfil all of our objectives.

The Chairperson: Before I move on to other members I just want to ask about your collections engagement strategy and how that works.

Ms Helliker: This is a new strategy that we are in the process of developing. The board is very keen to ensure that you get access to the collections not just through visiting the museums, and that it is about ensuring that the public are able to engage with the national collections, because, effectively, they belong to the public. It is about ensuring that there is outreach as well as visits to the collection. We are seeking to deliver a number of different programmes, one of which is to take artworks to schools on the extended schools list.

We are hoping to work with Achieving Belfast and Achieving Derry to bring artworks to schools, probably to the GCSE and A-level art classes and then do some work in our main collection store, where we can bring small groups of art students to see how paintings are restored and conserved for exhibition. There is a range of things that we want to do, such as Collections Online — increasing the number of images that are online to the public and making that information meaningful, rather than just a photograph of an object.

Mr Gilmore: It is also important to say, as Jude mentioned, that one of the things we like to do is add benefit to what is happening in schools. Although we certainly want to concentrate on areas of deprivation, one of the things we are also keen to do is to engage kids with art in a project as part of our social inclusion programme with Corpus Christi College, which is really about giving those kids exposure to what we do in the museum, giving them a wee bit of intense educational support and so on and end up with a small exhibition in the school. It is very important that we work with strategic partners. Achieving Belfast and Achieving Derry will have already identified the schools that are in need of support and if we can add our resources then we are creating a lot more leverage, because we are working with kids who will really benefit from the programme.

Mr Humphrey: Thank you very much for your presentation, which is very impressive. I commend your organisation for the partnership approach it has taken. I think it is common sense to work with so many organisations that you have identified, and establish so many programmes, which are clearly reaching out, and 78% is a very good figure, to be fair. I think that moneys coming from regional government and DCAL are clearly being well spent.

I am not being critical; that is not the intention of this question, but there is, obviously, 22% that you are not able to reach. That is not for the want of trying. I am just wondering whether there is an opportunity with the new super councils coming on stream, because they have bigger budgets. I served for a time on Belfast City Council, which took tourism seriously. However, some of the smaller councils have not had the funds and the wherewithal to be as actively involved in tourism. I know that this is not tourism, but is there a way in which you can work with the super councils, given their new extended and enhanced budgets, to allow you to hit some of the 22% that you have not been able to reach hitherto. As I say, that is not a criticism.

Mr Gilmore: That is absolutely fine. Let us bear in mind that some people in the 22% may have no real interest in coming to museums. Let us be honest about that. However, to start at the very basic level, a lot of the work that we do involves sending people out to local communities to break down those sorts of barriers and to tell people, "This is what you can expect when you come to a museum". A lot of people have not been to a museum over the past number of years because they have forgotten about it, because it has not occurred to them or maybe they are there with their kids. So, that is part of that sort of rationale as well.

I would have thought that the super councils' increased focus on culture, tourism and so on would provide us with opportunities, and we will certainly pursue those. As well as that, I think that the super councils will have a very strong focus on their areas of deprivation and a clear agenda for the communities that they want to serve and reach and that they will be more than happy to do that. Again, the partnership aspect comes into that, because they are the people on the ground with the knowledge. I think that it is very important that we spend our resources wisely. If they are spent strategically, through a partnership like that, I think that you will start to see results.

Mr Humphrey: I want to say in conclusion that reaching out to schools is very important. When I was at primary school, we went on trips to the Ulster Museum, as it was then, to see the mummy, to the Folk Museum and so on. I know that you have many more museums in your estate now. I suggest perhaps reaching out to youth organisations and youth clubs in some of those areas. I declare an

interest as a member of the Scout Association. I think that, sometimes, kids in that environment, as opposed to a school environment, will go along and participate.

Mr Gilmore: Absolutely. I mentioned earlier that we got some money from the Heritage Lottery Fund. I think it was in the region of £40,000. We brought 30 youth and community schemes to the Folk and Transport Museum and 18 to the Ulster American Folk Park. This summer, as part of our business plan, we will bring in 30 similar groups. Again, our criteria are that those groups have to be based in areas of deprivation. It is about trying to build a relationship with them. You are absolutely right: quite often, informal learning opportunities are even better than the opportunities provided in school. So, that is very much part of our programme, and we will continue with that, because it has been hugely successful.

From our perspective, our sites are big during the summer. The open-air sites can absorb groups like that, and we can provide them with a really interesting and informative programme. The feedback we got has been really good. As I say, we are continuing to develop that area.

Mr Humphrey: Thanks very much for your answers. Very well done. Congratulations to everybody involved.

Mrs McKeivitt: Thanks very much for your presentation; I thoroughly enjoyed it. Some of the points that I was going to raise have already been raised. How has the problem of transport affordability been tackled? If you are elderly, you might get a free bus pass and be able to go, but a lot of people out there who would like to visit a museum cannot afford the entry fee and the bus fare. How are you tackling that?

Mr Gilmore: I would have to say, "With difficulty". That is where the discretionary money comes into play. Our Live and Learn programme, for instance, is funded by the Big Lottery. We have just received word that we have an extra £200,000, so we have six years of funding as opposed to five. On the strength of that, we also received £500,000 for a programme with Clanmil called Treasure House. So, we have £1.7 million to spend in that area. In many ways, it is quite easy for us to provide transport for all the community groups and older people's groups that we work with. So, in some senses, that is available to us. However, generally, we would not be able to provide free transport within this year's budget. We can certainly provide free entry, free programming and so on, but we definitely would not be able to provide free transport, because a transport bill can mount up quite significantly. It is when we have discretionary money, such as the social inclusion programme, that we are able to provide it. What we would do, for instance, is go out to a group, a school or an organisation and work with them in their local area, give them the outreach and provide transport to and from the local area. The cost thing is interesting, and it is definitely a barrier. However, one of the other things that we have found about transport is that people feel reassured when they come from their local community to one of our museums, should it be only two miles down the road, if transport is there for them, because a lot of people do not travel out of their local community that much. There is that apprehension, and we have found that; therefore it is very important that transport is provided there as well. The transport issue is a perennial one. It is quite expensive, but having said that, there seems to be a lot of transport in this country in many ways.

Mrs McKeivitt: With regard to the social inclusion programme moneys, you said that you had difficulty spending the money within a year. Were any moneys handed back?

Mr Gilmore: No.

Mrs McKeivitt: OK. That is good. How would you advertise the 2,500 free family tickets that are on offer to the likes of me, who has a family of five and lives in Newry?

Mr Gilmore: I suppose that it really depends on how affluent you are. Without wishing to sound flippant, we are trying to target those as well. We have worked with the Polish community over the past number of years, and the Polish community is, in many ways, under a bit of stress at the minute. They have a Saturday school, and 400 kids go to that school. At the end of May, we will provide a free session for them at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum. They will come along with their parents and so on and, as part of that, we will target specific families — not the entire group — with free tickets. With regard to the thing that Jude mentioned, if, for example, we are working on art in the local communities, the local schools and so on, we will use some of the tickets for those families. We work with the Belfast Education and Library Board on the Achieving Belfast initiative to target some of

its schools. We hope to use the tickets strategically. Therefore, it is not a case of advertising 2,500 free tickets, because it is not first come, first served. We are trying to make those tickets as accessible as possible to people who would be non-traditional visitors. Beyond that, we are also trying to make those tickets work for them. Therefore, if someone gets a free trip — for want of a better explanation — to the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, the folk park or the Ulster Museum, it is about saying that if they enjoyed that experience, here is another opportunity to come back; here is another ticket for you. That is how we intend to use those tickets.

Mrs McKeivitt: In previous presentations, mention was made of job losses due to budget restraints. Will new jobs be created within those programmes and the five new strategies, or were new jobs created?

Ms Helliker: As a consequence of the budget pressures right across the board — we are not the only ones affected — we have lost in the region of 100 full-time equivalents during the past six or seven years, and we have had to absorb a lot of additional work within the existing staffing complement. Pay awards put the pay bill up, and the rent, rates and utility bills go up, and that leaves less money for programming. We are trying to do as much as we can with the resources that we have. Any flexibility within the workforce is targeted towards the key priorities. We have undergone significant change in the past number of years to try to ensure that we are focusing on the Programme for Government, promoting equality, and tackling poverty and social exclusion, because that is the only show in town. However, we also have to sustain our visitor numbers, because we rely heavily on around £1 million of self-generated income, and that is an important part of our funding mix.

Mr Gilmore: Around 14,000 people were involved in the social inclusion programme last year, and all of that was delivered by the existing staff; no additional staff were brought in.

Mrs McKeivitt: Thank you very much.

Mr Ó hOisín: Much of my stuff has been covered. However, there are a couple of things there that are quite exciting and far-seeing, particularly the outreach programme, and the idea of a night at the museum is very catchy. I come from a rural constituency that is quite a distance from any of the three museums that we are talking about. Wearing my DRD hat, I think you are right when you say that there is a lot of transport here. The unfortunate thing is that none of it is integrated. There is a pilot programme in Dungannon and Cookstown, but it is going nowhere fast. We had an inquiry within DRD on this issue. Have you tied in anything there with the likes of the education boards, community transport or Translink? There is a lot of failure there, but there is a lot of success when you look at things like the Giro, the World Police and Fire Games and the City of Culture. Transport did work for those for the most part, so have you tied in at all with that?

Mr Gilmore: We are looking for transport provision — say, for instance, within our sites, which is important. In the Folk and Transport Museum we have quite a good package deal with Translink on special event days. We have had trains running in from Botanic, so there is a fairly good value-for-money relationship there. We also ran shuttle buses for the Titanic programme, so we have done that.

The difficulty with education and library boards, as far as I can see, is that they do not see it as their role to provide transport to museums. Over the past couple of years where we provided free transport for a lot of our free programmes, we negotiated regional deals ourselves, so the actual cost of transport has come down. We have been able to facilitate the farthest-flung rural areas, if that is the correct term. We have transport for any area of the Province, but there is a cost to that.

We have not cracked the nut, but I do not think we are on our own on that. A report for the Welsh Government found that transport is an issue there. It is an issue all over, and I am honestly not sure what the answer is. Certainly, the answer is not throwing money at it. There has to be more coordination and a more strategic view. One recommendation in the Welsh report is to set up a cross-departmental committee to look at the transport issue and see whether the problem can be solved. I do not think we have solved it, but certainly we have had some economies of scale and efficiencies.

Ms Helliker: Probably a more general point is around integration and collaboration among Departments. Transport could be quite an easy one to tackle. We cannot build Rome in a day, but one part of the social inclusion programme that we have not touched on is the Museums to Work programme, which is part of our overall employability programme. We recognise, as quite a large

employer across the whole area, that we have a responsibility to try to develop skills and employability around people, particularly the long-term unemployed.

We had a programme as part of the social inclusion programme last year where we brought five people who had been long-term unemployed from areas of high deprivation, and they are just coming to the end of their six-month employability programme. They are gaining WorldHost qualifications and interview and CV skills, and are hoping then to go back out into the world of work. We have a second programme starting this year, but for fewer people because of the cost of running the scheme.

However, the opportunities for collaborating with DEL, for example, are absolutely ripe, and we need to ensure that some of these ideas are being cross-fertilised amongst some of the other Departments. That is a challenge for us all.

Mr Ó hOisín: I think there is general agreement that there is a silo mentality within transport provision across the board. In fairness, some of the far-flung areas, as you talked about, Paddy, are probably best served by the community transport sector. There is an opportunity and an option there. They do serve quite a percentage of the population here — *[Inaudible.]* — greater Belfast area.

Mr McMullan: Thank you for your presentation. At paragraph 2.1 you talk about:

"Cultural barriers – does the content reflect or acknowledge the interests and life experiences of the people it is trying to attract".

How do you plan to go out and look at that? Are we talking about going into deprived areas to see what their cultural interest is and how best you could then portray that in your museums? I am talking about the past conflict here. When are we going to portray that as part of the cultural heritage?

Mr Gilmore: Well, as you know, we already have the Troubles gallery in the Ulster Museum. In many ways, that is the starting point for the work we would like to do there. At this point in time in the Ulster Museum we have Art of the Troubles, which has been very well — this is probably not the right word — visited. In many ways, it looks at the Troubles from a lot of perspectives, certainly through the eyes of the artists; and their statements, made through art, are quite broad.

When we are talking about culture, we are looking at people's tastes. Quite frankly, the things that really work in museums and the things that people want to go to museums for are mummies, dinosaurs and things of that nature. For us, the dinosaur exhibition was what you might call quite a populist exhibition. It brought 136,000 people through the doors and required a very strong programme to support it. It was hugely popular and brought in a very wide swathe of people. When we talk about cultural provision and our programming, we need to make sure that our programming reflects the wishes of all people. That is in the fairly populist sense.

We have the decade of centenaries and the anniversary of the First World War coming up. At this point in time, the Ulster Museum is spending in the region of £600,000 on a new exhibition which will engage with modern history from 1600 onwards, but specifically the decade of centenaries and the anniversary of the First World War. That is the way in which we reflect the different cultural provision.

Ms Helliker: We are also hoping to do some research later in the financial year to try to establish a deeper understanding of what non-traditional users want from our museums.

Mr McMullan: How are you going to go about that? You did reflect, Paddy, that it was down to numbers and what attracts those numbers in, which is different from what the people in those cultural areas that we are talking about here want to see. There is a conflict between getting the numbers in that you need and appealing to these areas in which there are cultural barriers.

Mr Gilmore: There is always that balance, really, between the populist programming and the other stuff.

Ms Helliker: There is "both... and...", really. When we attract large numbers to the museum — and in the past number of years we have been successful in doing that — we are attracting a fairly broad representation of our community. In 2006, before it closed, the Ulster Museum was attracting between 200,000 and 250,000 visitors a year, around 23% of whom were from the lower socio-economic demographic. Since we re-opened in 2009, that number has consistently reached around 500,000 to

600,000 visitors a year, and probably between 35% and 40% of those people were from the lower socio-economic demographic.

The project was all about opening up the museum, not just physically but emotionally, to ensure that everybody felt that the museum represented what they wanted to see. Equally, we then have to get into the communities and find out what they understand about museums and what they would like to see in museums. As Paddy said, people want to see the dinosaurs, the mummies and the Laverys, because those are the things that they connect with. There is a twin-track approach, but if you reduce the overall visitation levels, that has a disproportionate impact on the hard-to-reach audiences.

Mr McMullan: I notice that you have not mentioned the number of out-of-area visitors. We are talking about the numbers coming through the door locally. How many of them are visitors? Do we know what the visitor wants to see? I know that you are putting on exhibitions about the wars, the 1940s and 1914-18, which is fine and very good. When will we move forward and exhibit our modern history? Quite a lot of people are very interested in that theme. Is there reluctance to do that yet? Are we too diverse?

Mr Gilmore: I do not think there is reluctance. A lot of it is funding-driven. Last year, we had a Peace III bid in for the redevelopment of the Ulster Museum's Troubles gallery which was submitted in partnership with the BBC and WAVE, the victims' organisation. To my mind it was a really good bid, but it was not funded. There was a strong belief that if the money became available we would redevelop the Troubles gallery further, and that is something that we intend to do.

The current exhibition in the Ulster Museum really runs up to the 1940s and the end of the Second World War. Then there is a space and there is a wee bit about industrial Belfast, and then we reach the Troubles. We are looking at a more phased ending, so that gallery will expand its storyline up to the late 1960s, and the industrial area will reflect that period of great change and turbulence — it will probably be done through graphics and so on — and then we will move into the Troubles, so that there will be a much clearer link between what happened in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s right through the 1960s and into the Troubles era. It is not a case of not being willing to engage with it; it is something that we will definitely engage with. It will probably be the next iteration of the galleries but again, it is funding-dependent. If the funding is there, we will willingly engage.

Mr McMullan: I would like to see you maybe going into both communities to look at how they reflect their own history and cultures, right through to the modern day. That is something that you could take back into your museums. If you are stopping at the end of the 1940s, we are now 70-odd years ahead. We have to put that in there and keep pace with, for example, what museums in the South of Ireland are doing. They are getting big numbers of visitors, so they have to be doing something right. Maybe it is time that we looked at that. I would look forward to you embarking on a programme like that. I wish you well with that, but I will be curious to see when we will move from the 1940s into the 1960s and 1970s.

Mr Gilmore: That will happen by November; the gallery will reopen then, and that transition will occur. However, the Troubles gallery is yet to be done.

Mr McMullan: I look forward to that.

Mr Hilditch: Congratulations on your figures; not too many people can walk in here and say that they are hitting 78%, so well done. Paddy, you mentioned the decade of anniversaries, and my question is about that. Until last year, I was chair of the Mid-Antrim Museum, and certainly the engagement there with folk who probably had not involved themselves before seemed to be a driver to get people involved. Do you find that as well?

Mr Gilmore: We are very much doing that. We have started into this; our decade of centenaries started with Titanic and the 1912 anniversary, so we have had a fair bit of practice in engaging with a whole range of different communities. One of our things is about trying to create ownership of these things and create a much broader perspective. We have been lucky in securing funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for this, but apart from money for the gallery, we have also secured about £65,000 for programming over a five-year period, which allows us to engage with local communities and local people and organisations over that period.

The programming around the First World War started with two things: the New Lodge initiative, which you have in your papers, and some work we did with the PSNI with young people at risk. We worked

with the PSNI and the Ulster History Foundation to look at artefacts from the First World War. Those were kids who were at risk and could, potentially, have gone one way or the other and the purpose of the PSNI intervention is to help them go the correct road. We have facilitated that and used our curatorial staff, who handle collections and so on, to engage with those kids.

One of the difficulties with the First World War is that it is slightly beyond living memory. There is probably more of a time connection with the Second World War. We are very keen to engage, so our programme will include work with community organisations and the development of videos, drama and poetry. Just last week, I was in France and Belgium to look at some of the sites to get a real idea of their importance, significance and scale and how that ties into local communities.

One of the other things that we have done at the Folk and Transport Museum was run a series of what I suppose you could call mini-dramas on the First World War for secondary-school kids. Those introduced kids to the whole concept of the war and its various outworkings, factions and politics, so that people really get an idea around it. It is a very exciting programme and a real opportunity to bring in people who do not traditionally engage with it and who do not really have a huge awareness of it and to create much more of a sense of the significance of it and the impact that it had on this community and which, in many ways, it continues to have on this community.

Mr Hilditch: On the employment initiative, in your measurables in your submission there are some 66 places. Can you do more than that, or are you sort of maxed out at those figures?

Mr Gilmore: I will let Jude answer that. We are not really. We have more than that in terms of volunteering. We have a volunteering programme that has been hugely successful, and we can take more volunteers.

Mr Hilditch: Is there any indication of the background of those folk?

Mr Gilmore: The volunteers tend to be more widespread. With the Museums to Work initiative, we can take more. We have come across the problem of double funding in that Stephen Farry sent out a letter to all Departments and arm's-length bodies last year to ask whether they can take more, and we said that we could do that. I think that we came across double funding issues.

Mr Hilditch: Are you involved with programmes such as the youth employment scheme?

Mr Gilmore: Yes, we were very keen to address the issue of youth unemployment, and it is an area that I am particularly interested in addressing. Basically, the logistics did not work.

Ms Helliker: This is the difficulty that we have found. Because we are funded by DCAL, we cannot attract funding from other Departments. We found it hard to attract European funding because we are not responsible for employment, in the narrow sense of the word. Our own Museums to Work programme costs us £5,000 to run to give someone a placement for six months. That is a relatively small amount of money in the grand scheme of things. The social inclusion programme last year allowed us to bring through five people. We provide places for apprentices, but that requires us to have a master blacksmith in this case. We need a master joiner to be able to train other apprentices. We are keen to do far more on employability because we feel that we have an important role to play, particularly in developing traditional skills and crafts that are in danger of being lost to us.

Ms McCorley: My points have been made already. Thank you for the presentation. Well done.

The Chairperson: No other members have questions. How does your approach to inclusion compare with similar organisations in other jurisdictions?

Mr Gilmore: First, one of the main intentions in the Northern Ireland museums policy is about giving every child a cultural experience, so we feature in that. The Museums Association has a UK-wide agenda, and the whole idea of social inclusion and doing something proactive to tackle poverty is a very big agenda. That is very strong in Wales currently, and that agenda is also being pursued by National Museums Liverpool. That agenda is becoming more pertinent as you see the report from the Royal Commission on social mobility, which has shown that there is a much bigger gap and that there are now more people in poverty who are working than who are not working. That gap is becoming wider, and, therefore, museums are becoming more conscious of the fact that we have a role to play in tackling social mobility and poverty and addressing issues. I think that the general feeling is that we

cannot tackle poverty and it is not our job to do so, but that we can certainly make a contribution. That is what we are about, and I think that that view is shared across the museum sector across the UK and in Ireland as well.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much. On behalf of the Committee, I apologise that we were not able to make the visit to the Ulster American Folk Park, but we would like to be able to make arrangements with you.

Ms Helliker: We will be delighted to host you, Chair.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation and your briefing. It is very much appreciated.

Mr Gilmore: Thank you very much for the opportunity.