



Development Department

Your reference
Our reference # 110833
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Being dealt with by: David Purchase
Tel: 02890 320202 ext 3792

Michelle McRoberts
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Dear Michelle,

RE: Museums Policy for Northern Ireland Consultation Response

Thank you for asking the Council to respond to your consultation document. The values outlined in the policy align with a number of our corporate values, particularly ensuring equality of opportunity and developing good relations, providing value for money and improving services and also working with partners across Belfast to ensure that our combined efforts contribute to the continued success of our city.

We also think that the aspirations of the policy are very positive and the Council welcomes the priorities outlined. It would be even more encouraging if Local Authorities were specifically detailed as key public sector partners. Effective partnership working with all stakeholders in the public, private and community and voluntary sectors will be key to ensuring that the goals in the policy plan are delivered.

We believe that this policy has particular reference to our Tourism Framework, a draft copy of which is available at <http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/tourism/tourismstrategy2010.asp> and our new Integrated Cultural Strategy, which is in the initial stages of development. The Council has worked hard with stakeholders across Belfast to revitalise and enrich the city's cultural, heritage and tourism offerings. As a result of these efforts Belfast is increasing in popularity every year as a tourism destination with 9.3million people visiting our city last year and generating an estimated £450 million for the economy. Museums are major attractions for both domestic & international tourism and hence a significant factor in both cultural and economic growth for the City but most importantly museums serve people in Belfast and provide a major social asset for the city.

For the rest of this feedback I have used the consultation template provided with the draft policy.

Yours sincerely

David

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Your details

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Are you responding as an individual? No

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please give the name of the organisation, a brief account of its membership and how the views of your colleagues were gathered.

Belfast City Council – the consultation document was distributed to staff for feedback. Meetings were held with appropriate staff to address the draft policy and questions in more detail. Recommendations were passed to the Development Committee for further comment and ratification.

DCAL may publish a summary of the responses to this consultation document. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the author are published along with the response. If you do not wish to be identified as the author of your response, or if there is any information in your response that you do not wish to be disclosed, please indicate here. Please see information relating to Freedom of Information at the bottom of this form.

General Questions:

Do you agree with the draft Museum Policy's overall themes? (please delete as appropriate)

Yes

If no, what should be included?

Does the draft Museum Policy cover the issues you would expect? (please delete as appropriate)

Yes with some additions (see below)

If no, what should be included?

There needs to be an overview of the current situation and resources to put the scale of achieving the goals into perspective. Consideration should also be given to how the success of the policy will be measured (in relation to the current baseline), how the required actions will be resourced and how the policy will achieve value for money.

Questions relating to the five strategic priorities:

1. Developing Audiences

Do you agree with the identified issues and goals for this section? (please delete as appropriate)

Yes with some additions (see below)



If no, what should be included?

There should be greater recognition of the links to tourism and developing audiences and the consequent benefit to the local economy, which may in turn help to support museums.

Museums have a strong role to play, in terms of building a sense of inclusion and citizenship, as well as developing an understanding of our heritage, cultural diversity and dealing with conflict. It is critical that museums are seen as a public place for community interaction and accessible to all. We also believe there may be further possibilities for museums to act as 'gateways' for visitors to Northern Ireland. That is, to give them an appreciation of the history and culture before they develop a deeper understanding by experiencing the area personally.

We feel there may be benefit in including objectives relating to the 'quality' of the experience for visitors to museums. Defining quality may be difficult but it may relate to issues beyond the quality of the displays and information to other issues such as open spaces and the opportunity for visitors to 'see themselves' through museums.

What actions would you suggest in order to achieve the goals?

Joint working/collaboration, especially with regard to an integrated marketing strategy, may help to attract higher numbers for less resource. Appropriate agencies may include the NITB and ourselves via the Tourism Culture & Arts unit, the Belfast Visitors and Convention Bureau, the Welcome Centre and www.gotobelfast.com.

Reference to other frameworks such as the UK 'Manifesto for Museums' may help further refine objectives relating to 'quality.'

Please identify how you or your organisation can contribute to implementing the goals of this strategic priority.

Through collaboration, as above.

2. Education and Learning

Do you agree with the identified issues and goals for this section? (please delete as appropriate)

Yes with some additions (see below)

If no, what should be included?

We suggest that the first bullet may benefit from widening the commitment from a 'learning' organisation to a 'knowledge and learning' organisation that provides scholarship and resource for education and self development. There may also need to be some consideration of the need to attract people into the museum (perhaps based on factors such as quality, fun and enjoyment) as a first step. Once they are in, then learning can occur as a result of the visit.

Delivering some of the goals in this section, particularly EL1 (museums as part of curriculum activity) and EI4 (engagement with education sector) may be very difficult to achieve without support from other agencies. Consideration is needed as to how Museums will be able to fund education visits and services.

We have some concerns that curriculum based study of local history may be difficult due to limited museum provision for schools.

What actions would you suggest in order to achieve the goals?

Clarify how DCAL will work with partners such as the Department for Employment and Learning.



Please identify how you or your organisation can contribute to implementing the goals of this strategic priority.

3. Collections Development, Care, Management and Use

Do you agree with the identified issues and goals for this section? (please delete as appropriate)

Yes with some additions (see below)

If no, what should be included?

There may be benefit in giving consideration to how specialist professional advice can be arranged to support collections in smaller museums. This specialist advice applies to how to create and care for collections as well as knowledge about the collections themselves. Economies of scale may make it difficult to employ such specialists in smaller museums.

A similar issue applies to smaller collections that are not in museums. These may also benefit from specialist support. For example, Belfast City Hall may benefit from advice and support about items that it holds and displays to the public.

Lack of specialist support may also have an equality impact in that specialist museums are likely to be smaller and hence unable to employ specialist support. They may also find it harder to find and acquire items for their collections.

Access to materials for collections generally may also need consideration as other regions enjoy larger economies of scale making it easier to share/loan collections between national, regional and smaller museums.

What actions would you suggest in order to achieve the goals?

There may be opportunities for further partnerships with academic institutions to provide access to specialist advice. Other solutions such as the Scottish SCRAN online 'portal' approach may be useful.

Please identify how you or your organisation can contribute to implementing the goals of this strategic priority.

4. Infrastructure, Investment and Resources

Do you agree with the identified issues and goals for this section? (please delete as appropriate)

Yes with some additions (see below)

If no, what should be included?

We wondered if the Policy should consider issues such as value for money, capital funding and partnerships issues under this theme. There also appears to be no indication of what it will cost to deliver the goals in the policy and where the resources will come from. Consideration should also be given to reviewing different opportunities for funding (private sector as well as public) and how funds are distributed.

We feel that the emphasis in the policy is on the 'bricks and mortar' element of infrastructure and resources. If it has not been already, perhaps a wider view such as the ICON definition could be considered - *organisations that are part of and in the service of society*. This would then include other sources of cultural and historic information local stories, places etc and experiences such as Belfast Taxi Tours, Belfast Literature Tours, Belfast Music Tours etc.



We are pleased to be considered within Goal IIR4 and can confirm that we consider that museums do contribute to our objectives. As a consequence, we feel that it would be useful if the guidance referred to in IIR5 was also available for Councils. As part of the policy development process (consultation), could a wider discussion ensue between central and local government in relation to relevant councils talking a more active role in overseeing or informing the activities and priorities of their local museums?

There needs to be consideration given to the future relationship between museums (particularly local museums) and councils. There is a need for a more integrated and rounded approach to supporting cultural development and achieving wider social, economic and regeneration priorities around 'PLACE'. As part of the RPA proposals, ownership and management responsibility for the Armagh County Museum was proposed to transfer from DCAL to the new Council area covering Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon. Even with the delay in the reform programme and the transfer of functions, it is understood that discussions are ongoing between central and local government in respects to enabling such transfer to happen. Given the uncertainty about the future of RPA, it will be necessary to form very fluid relationship between central (DCMS), regional (DCAL) and local government. Any potential implication of the transfer of powers to local authorities needs to be carefully considered as for example there has been a massive investment in 'Renaissance in the Regions' in England but not here.

What actions would you suggest in order to achieve the goals?

There may be opportunities for providing shared storage space for small museums especially where they may be in closer location to each other such as within Belfast.

Consideration could be give to making greater use of local suppliers from the creative industries to produce display materials. This may help to reduce costs as well as adding to the authentic local experience.

Please identify how you or your organisation can contribute to implementing the goals of this strategic priority.

We welcome dialogue with DCAL to discuss how we can work together for mutual benefit, especially with regard to IIR4 (clarify museums contribution).

5. Cultural Rights

Do you agree with the identified issues and goals for this section? (please delete as appropriate)

Yes with some additions (see below)

If no, what should be included?

We wonder if there needs to be a statement on international conventions and ethics relating to cultural property.

It may also be worth considering the Community Relations Council's response to the NIMC's Cultural Diversity Policy Review, which highlighted the following:

- The Cultural diversity policy should embrace all cultures and traditions in an equal fashion, and not seek to promote any culture or tradition over another. It is important that all exhibitions and projects are placed in context of how our society and communities have changed
- Relationships between the NIMC, local museums, other organisations e.g. private and statutory and communities need to be strengthened to ensure that museums become



<p>more relevant to local communities and consequently increase awareness and participation.</p>
<p><i>What actions would you suggest in order to achieve the goals?</i></p> <p>The Code of Ethics on the Museums Association website may be useful: http://www.museumsassociation.org/ethics</p> <p>The following documents may also be of use “Capturing Public Value of Heritage” and “Museums and Galleries in Britain Economic, social and creative impacts” - Tony Travers, London School of Economics.</p>
<p><i>Please identify how you or your organisation can contribute to implementing the goals of this strategic priority.</i></p>
<h2>Any Other Comments</h2>
<p><i>Please use this space to provide any other comments on the policy.</i></p> <p>The policy may want to consider the impact of the 2012 events and their potential to create interest in local museums. It is yet to be determined if the Titanic Signature Project will house original objects but its presence will create additional interest in Belfast’s history. If it does hold original pieces it will benefit from relevant collection keeping support.</p> <p>The policy would benefit from additional background information to clarify the current resources, situation and performance of museums. This background would also clarify the museum infrastructure in terms of associated departments, partnerships, alignment to accreditation standards, and how the overall structure works. This would make it easier to see how the goals and aspirations discussed are filling any perceived gaps. The recent consultation document “A Museums Strategy for Wales 2010-2013” provides a useful comparison.</p> <p>This background material may also make it easier to see how the policy has addressed the recommendations in the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure: Report on the Committee’s Inquiry into the Development of a Museums Policy for Northern Ireland December 2008.</p> <p>As mentioned previously we see many of the goals in the policy being complimentary to our own and we would welcome the opportunity to work in partnership to achieve them.</p> <p>Finally we recognise that this is an initial policy statement and we look forward to seeing and consulting on the more detailed action plan suggested in section 10.1.</p>