National Museum of Ireland

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT, 1997 and the FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (AMMENDMENT ACT) 2003

Section 15 and Section 16 Reference Book

(2011 edition)

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1. INTRODUCTION

Under the *Freedom of Information Act (FOI), 1997, and the Freedom of Information (Amendment Act) 2003* every person has the right to:

- access information held by public bodies.
- have official information relating to him/herself amended when it is incomplete, incorrect or misleading.
- obtain reasons for decisions affecting oneself.

The Act asserts the right of members of the public to obtain access to official information to the greatest extent possible consistent with the public interest and the right to privacy of individuals.

This reference book has been prepared and published in accordance with the requirements of sections 15 and 16 of the FOI 1997 Act as amended by the FOI (Amendment) Act, 2003 and it contains information on the following:

- outlines the structure and function of NMI;
- gives details of the services we provide and of how they may be availed.
- provides information on the classes of records we hold.
- sets out the procedure for requests under the *FOI Act, 1997 and* as amended by the *FOI (Amendment) Act 2003*

Routinely Available Information

NMI currently makes information routinely available to the public in relation to its functions, collections, activities and services. Such information will continue to be available informally without the need to use the FOI Act. This reference book highlights, in relation to each of NMI's activities, where information of this nature is available.

The FOI Act is designed to allow public access to information held by public bodies, which is **not** routinely available through other sources. Access to information under the FOI Act is subject to certain exemptions and involves specific procedures and time limits. This reference book provides a guide to the structure of NMI so as to help you access information under the FOI Acts.

Section 16 Reference Book - Rules and Practices of the National Museum of Ireland

Section 16 of the FOI Act, *1997,* requires the publication of information regarding rules and practices in relation to certain decisions by public bodies. These are set out in Part 9 of this document - ***Section 16 Reference Book - Rules and Practices of the National Museum of Ireland*** - which sets out the rules, procedures, practices, guidelines, etc. used for the purpose of decisions, determinations and recommendations under schemes operated by NMI.

Confidentiality

NMI undertakes to use its best endeavours to hold confidential any information provided to it in confidence, subject to NMI's obligations under law, including the FOI Act, *1*997 and the FOI (Amendment Act) 2003. Any person wishing that any of the information supplied to NMI should not be disclosed because of its sensitivity, should, when providing the information, identify the same and specify the reasons for its sensitivity. NMI will consult with any individual or body so supplying sensitive information before making a decision on any freedom

of information request received in relation to it.

2. HISTORY AND EXHIBITIONS

2.1 History of NMI

The Museum of Science and Art, Dublin was founded on 14 August 1877 by act of Parliament. The decision to establish a state-run museum arose from requests by the Royal Dublin Society (RDS) for continued government funding for its expanding museum activities. A number of developments led to the *Science and Art Museums Act of 1877*, which had the effect of transferring the buildings and collections of the RDS to state ownership. The collections were further enhanced by the transfer of other notable collections from institutions such as the Royal Irish Academy (RIA) and Trinity College Dublin (TCD).

The Museum was the responsibility of the Department of Science and Art, which was also responsible for the South Kensington museums in London. State support for the institution was manifested in the construction of a new building on Kildare Street, which opened to the public in 1890. The new museum housed coins, medals and significant Irish antiquities from the RIA including the Tara brooch and Ardagh chalice, ethnographical collections with material from Captain Cooke's voyages from TCD, and the collections of the Geological Survey of Ireland. These were joined by material from the decorative arts and ethnographical collections of the RDS along with their Irish collections of antiquities, minerals and plants. The old RDS museum on the Merrion Street side of Leinster House - erected with government assistance and opened in 1856 - was devoted to natural history. It was dominated by zoology throughout much of its subsequent history and had an annexe devoted to geology.

The building on Kildare Street was designed by Thomas Newenham Deane and was used to show contemporary Irish, British and Continental craftsmanship in its construction. State involvement in the running of the Museum allowed for steady funding and a connection with other state museums in London and Edinburgh which was of considerable benefit. The collections grew with material acquired through purchase, public donation and shares of significant collections acquired by the state and dispersed by the London museums. Catalogues were prepared by leading experts in various disciplines and printed in the Museum's own press. In 1900 control passed to the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction and in 1908 its name was changed from ‘the Dublin Museum of Science and Art’ to the ‘National Museum of Science and Art’. The name of the institution was changed again in 1921 to the ‘National Museum of Ireland’.

After the foundation of the Free State in 1922, the old RDS buildings of Leinster House (which had been transferred to state ownership along with that institution’s museum collections in 1877) were chosen to house the new parliament (Dáil). Space had to be found for NMI staff formerly located in Leinster House and a number of exhibition galleries in Kildare Street were taken over for this purpose. The Natural History building was given a new entrance directly onto Merrion Street and the architecture was altered to allow the present opening at the east end and the development of new staircases.

Responsibility for NMI passed to the Department of Education in 1924; in 1984 it was transferred to the Taoiseach’s Department and, in 1993 to the new Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht (later Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands). In 2002, control of NMI passed to the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism before, finally, being established as a semi-state autonomous agency under its own Board in 2005.

Throughout the later 20th Century the key needs of NMI were the acquisition of sufficient space for the exhibition and storage of its collections and the provision of the necessary staff to curate and care for the collections and to provide adequate public services. Opportunities for new premises arose following a Government decision in 1988 to close Collins Barracks, Dublin. The complex started out in 1702 as 'The Barracks', changed in the early 19th Century

to the 'Royal Barracks', and was re-named Collins Barracks in 1922 when it was taken over by the Free State. The original buildings were designed by Col. Thomas Burgh and the complex, which includes 18th and 19th-Century buildings, housed troops for three centuries. It was assigned to Museum use in 1994 and the first phase of exhibitions on the site (Phase 1) opened in September 1997. Work on Phase 2 at the west of the site will commence at a future date. In September 2001 NMI's Country Life branch was opened at Turlough Park, Co. Mayo. Turlough Park House (a Venetian Gothic building designed by Thomas Newenham Deane) and its gardens house NMI's national Folklife collections; these are devoted to traditional crafts and everyday life in rural Ireland in the century or so since the Great Famine.
The provision of these additional facilities has been mirrored by changes to the structure and governance of NMI in the 1990s. An Interim Board was appointed in 1994 to oversee the development of the Collins Barracks site and to address the challenges of this development. *The National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997* provided for the setting up of NMI as a non-commercial semi-state body under an autonomous Board and the transfer of staff out of the Civil Service. The first Board was appointed on 2 May 2005.

2.2 NMI 's Vision is to be:

A first class institution that promotes the widest understanding and appreciation of Ireland's distinctive culture and natural history, and their place in the wider world

2.3 Permanent Exhibitions

National Museum of Ireland - Archaeology, Kildare Street

Prehistoric Ireland
Ór - Ireland's Gold
Rites of Passage at Tara: The Excavation of the Mound of Hostages
Kingship and Sacrifice
Finds From Irish Wetlands
The Treasury: Celtic and Early Christian Ireland
Viking Age Ireland
Medieval Ireland 1150 - 1550
Ancient Egypt
Life and Death in the Roman World
Ceramics and Glass from Ancient Cyprus 2500BC – 300AD

National Museum of Ireland - Decorative Arts and History, Collins Barracks

Curator's Choice
What's in Store?
Airgead: A thousand years of Irish Coins and Currency
Irish Silver
Period Furniture
Irish Country Furniture and Folk Life
The Way We Wore: 300 years of Irish Clothing and Jewellery
Eileen Gray
A Dubliners Collection of Asian Art - The Albert Bender Exhibition.
The Easter Rising: Understanding 1916.
Soldiers & Chiefs: The Irish at War at Home and Abroad Since 1550
Franciscan Silver, 1600-1750

National Museum of Ireland - Country Life, Turlough Park, Co. Mayo
Romanticism and Reality
The Times
The Natural Environment
Life in the Community
Working on the Land and Water
Activities in the Home
Turlough Park House - Period Rooms

National Museum of Ireland - Natural History, Merrion Street
Irish Fauna
Mammals of the World

3. MISSION STATEMENT

Mission
The purpose of NMI is to:

- Collect, preserve, promote and exhibit all examples of Ireland's portable material heritage and natural history
- Interpret and promote the collections and make them accessible to audiences at home and abroad
- Be the authoritative voice on the relevant aspects of Irish heritage, culture and natural history
- Maintain the lead role in education, research and scholarship pertaining to the collections and their contexts

A detailed explanation of the future plans of NMI is contained in the *Statement of Strategy 2008-2012*. This is a five-year plan for NMI.

4. STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF IRELAND

4.1 NMI Structure

NMI is a non-commercial semi state body under the aegis of Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, established on the 3rd of May 2005 in accordance with the National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997. NMI is organised into three divisions namely administration, collections and services. Each division has a head reporting to the Director.

4.2 The Board of NMI

The Board is appointed by the Minister and has a five-year term of office. One post on the Board is reserved for a member of NMI staff. The current Board was appointed in May 2005 and at present the Board members are:

Dr John O'Mahony SC (Chairperson)
Mr Eamonn McEneaney
Mr Gerard Collins
Mr Fergus Mc Kenna O'Hagan SC
Professor Dervilla Donnelly
Professor Peter Woodman
Professor Gearoid ó Tuaithaigh
Ms Eileen Jackson
Mr Eamonn Stack
Ms Frances Rocks
Ms Mary Sleeman
Dr Chris Nicholas
Ms Máirin de Brún
Ms Mary Crotty
Mr Paul Kelly
Mr Olivier Kazmierczak

4.3 Senior Management Group

This group is made up of the Director, Head of Administration, Head of Collections and Head of Services.

4.4 Management Committee

This group includes senior staff of NMI almost exclusively at grades equivalent to Keeper or above and at present includes:

Head of Administration– Anne Grady
Head of Collections – Raghnall O'Floinn
Head of Services – Seamus Lynam

Art & Industry – Michael Kenny, Keeper
Conservation – Anthony Read, Head of Conservation
Education – Lorraine Comer, Head of Education

Facilities – Greg Kelly, Facilities Manager
Finance – Gerry Gleeson, Finance Manager
Human Resources – Anne Grady, Human Resources Manager
Irish Antiquities – Eamonn Kelly, Keeper
ICT - Olivier Kazmierczak, ICT Manager
Irish Folklife – Tony Candon, Manager/Keeper
Marketing – Ann Daly, Head of Marketing
Natural History - Nigel Monaghan, Keeper
Registrar- Paul Doyle

5. STRUCTURAL BREAKDOWN AND FUNCTIONS OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF IRELAND

5.1 Director

The functions of the Director are to manage and control generally the administration and business of the Museum and perform such other functions as may be determined by the Board of the Museum. *Dr Patrick F. Wallace has been the Director of the National Museum of Ireland since1988.*

As Director he has been responsible for the modernisation of the management, operation, exhibitions and services of NMI. It now has five sites where it had two, staff numbers have almost trebled, and a series of new departments enable it to discharge its duties and play a significant role in the cultural life of the country. The four sites (Archaeology, Decorative Arts & History, Natural History and Country Life in Castlebar, Co Mayo) currently attract almost one million visitors annually. There is also a Collections Resource Centre in Swords, County Dublin which will cater for NMI's storage needs in a centralised and accessible way.

5.2 Administration

The Administration Division is responsible for the overall administration of NMI. The main areas of responsibility are financial management, human resources management and information communications technology.

5.3 Services

The Head of Services has overall responsibility for the NMI's public services - education and marketing strategies, visitor facilities, security and buildings. NMI services include the following:

5.3.1 The Education and Outreach Department

The Education and Outreach Department at NMI develops learning programmes based on the NMI's unique collections and exhibitions. These programmes are evaluated on an ongoing basis; are sustainable to ensure lasting impact; and provide for formal, informal and self-directed learning experiences for children, youth, adults and diverse or specialist audiences. It is the aim of the Department to be responsive to and engage with the widest range of audiences including those least likely to participate in our learning programmes. The Department builds on and establishes connections with local, national and international partners in the education and cultural sectors and aims to embed access in its learning programmes by prioritising the public's needs and consulting with them to overcome the barriers they encounter.
NMI learning programmes are designed to meet the needs of a diverse range of audiences throughout the year. Some of these programmes are listed in the NMI's Calendar of Events and in the Schools' Calendars, both of which are posted on the NMI's website. The programme includes tours, workshops, conferences, demonstrations, historical re-enactments, performances and adult gallery talks and cater for audiences' diverse learning needs and styles. Most of these events are free of charge. The programme also includes learning resources in the form of worksheets and activity sheets that can be downloaded from the Museum's website to use as part of a self-guided visit to the Museum.

The Department also provides an outreach service to schools and local community groups throughout the year. In addition, the Department works on more long-term initiatives with a variety of partners from the cultural and education fields in order to deepen people's engagement with the resources on offer at the Museum. Part of the learning service at the Museum also includes the provision of dedicated learning spaces where the public can handle objects, read material to deepen their understanding of the Museum's exhibitions and collections and reflect on what they have experienced in the Museum galleries.
Further information about any of the above can be sourced from the explore and learn pages of the Museum's website or from the Bookings Offices at bookingsoffice@museum.ie or educationtph@museum.ie

5.3.2 Rights and Reproduction Services

NMI operates a reprographic service supplying images of objects in the collections to publishers and scholars. In addition NMI is responsible for its own publications from scholarly texts to popular pamphlets, exhibition guides and a calendar.

5.4 Collections

The Head of Collections is responsible for the day-to-day management of NMI's four curatorial divisions as well as the Conservation and Registration Departments. The collections consist of almost four million objects and specimens. Although focused primarily on Ireland, the collections include material from all over the world.

5.4.1 Art & Industrial Division

The role of the Art & Industry Division is to maintain Ireland's heritage in the decorative arts, as well as its political, military and social history. Its primary aim is to promote a wider understanding of Ireland's decorative arts, culture and historical heritage. Other responsibilities include promoting Ireland's contribution to European decorative arts and an understanding of international cultural heritage. It is estimated that the Art & Industry collections consist of 150,000 objects.

5.4.2 Irish Antiquities Division

The collections, archives and displays of the Irish Antiquities division are housed mainly in the National Museum of Ireland - Archaeology. This division has a staff of nine, including a Keeper, six Assistant Keepers, Senior Technical Assistant and Clerical Officer

5.4.3 Irish Folklife Division

The Irish Folklife division was formally established in 1974 and is, as a result, the 'youngest' of the four collecting divisions of NMI. However, the collection of Folklife objects goes back to NMI's earliest years. The simple, but effective, collecting policy at that time was to gather objects illustrating the domestic life of times that had passed away more or less recently. The first major Folklife exhibition by NMI went on display in Kildare Street in 1937. In 2001, the Folklife division gained a new home at Turlough Park House outside Castlebar, Co. Mayo, when the National Museum of Ireland - Country Life became its new home. Most of the Folklife collections were moved there, although some still remain stored in Daingean in Co. Offaly.

5.4.4 Natural History Division

The ground floor is dedicated to Irish animals, featuring giant deer skeletons and a variety of mammals, birds and fish. The upper floors of the building were laid out in the 19th Century in

a scientific arrangement showing animals by taxonomic group. This scheme demonstrates the diversity of animal life in an evolutionary sequence.

5.4.5 Conservation Department

Remedial conservation involves the treatment of objects from the collections and is extremely time consuming. It can involve such things as the cleaning of items, strengthening fragile objects, revealing surface decoration and the scientific investigation of objects. These treatments are carried out by staff with specialist training in a number of separate conservation disciplines, including textiles, Folklife, natural history, archaeology, furniture, paper and ceramics (with glass and stone), operating in separate studios within the overall umbrella of the Conservation Department. Important archaeological finds are treated in the Conservation Department of NMI, where they are cleaned, stabilised and investigated. In recent years this has included a number of important discoveries from Irish peat bogs, including the Faddan More Psalter. Preventive conservation consists of preserving objects by eliminating environmental factors likely to cause them damage. This includes controlling NMI environment (e.g. light, humidity), preventing insect pests from entering NMI, and ensuring that objects are correctly packed and handled.

5.4.6 Registration Department

The Registration Department is responsible for the documentation, transfer and location management of NMI's collections. It controls and maintains the Collection Management database; manages NMI’s archives and central library; and administers NMI loans. This department and its resources are not open to the public. However, specific research requirements are occasionally accommodated upon request and by appointment only.

5.4.7 Loans

NMI supports an active programme of loans from its collections. NMI also has a substantial number of objects on fixed term renewable loan throughout the country and abroad. NMI must balance the work involved in these loans with its own programme of exhibitions. Likewise, the benefit of increased public access to the objects must be offset against the resource requirements of packing, transportation, handling, installation and exhibition.

It is NMI policy that loans will be confined to legitimate museums and will not include any other venues which, in the opinion of the Director of NMI, do not come up to the required safety, security and environmental standards. NMI does not make loans to private individuals. Loans are only considered where museums employ a full time professional curator. The borrowing institution is open to the public on a year round basis. Loans are therefore subject to a formal approval procedure. All loans are subject to a contract and the conditions of the contract may vary depending on the specific nature of the loan request.

6. ACCESS TO INFORMATION WITHIN THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF IRELAND

6.1 Applications under the Act

Under the FOI Act, anyone is entitled to apply for access to information not otherwise publicly available. Each person has a right to:

- access records held by NMI,
- correction of personal information relating to oneself held by NMI where it is inaccurate, incomplete or misleading,
- access reasons for decisions made by NMI directly affecting oneself.

The following records come within the scope of the FOI Act:

- all records relating to personal information held by NMI irrespective of when created
- all other records created from commencement date 21 April 1998,
- all other records necessary to the understanding of a current record.

NMI is obliged to respond to the request within 4 weeks.
Applications for information under the Freedom of Information Act should be addressed to:

Mary Dowling
Human Resources Manager/Freedom of Information Officer
National Museum of Ireland
Collins Barracks
Benburb Street
Dublin 7
Tel + 353 1 6486 438.

- Applications should be in writing and should indicate that the information is being sought under the *Freedom of Information Act*.
- If information is desired in a particular form, i.e. photocopy, computer disk, etc., this should be mentioned in your application.
- Please give as much information as possible to enable the staff of NMI to identify the record.
- If you have difficulty in identifying the precise records you require, the staff of NMI will be happy to assist you in preparing your request.

6.2 Rights of Review and Appeal

The Act sets out a series of exemptions to protect sensitive information where its disclosure may damage key interests of the State or of third Parties. Where NMI invokes these provisions to withhold information, the decision may be appealed. Decisions in relation to deferral of access etc. may also be the subject of appeals. Details of the appeals mechanisms are as follows:

6.3 Internal Review

You may seek internal review of the initial decision, which will be carried out by the Director if:

- you are dissatisfied with the initial response received, i.e. refusal of information, form of access, charges, etc.,
- you have not received a reply within 4 weeks of your initial application. This is deemed to be a refusal of your request and allows you to proceed to internal review.

- Requests for internal review should be submitted in writing to:

  Anne Grady
  Head of Administration
  National Museum of Ireland
  Collins Barracks
  Benburb Street
  Dublin 7
  Tel + 353 1 6486 430.

- Such a request for internal review must be submitted within 4 weeks of the initial decision.
- NMI must complete the review within 3 weeks.
- Internal review must be completed before an appeal may be made to the Information Commissioner.

6.4 Review by the Information Commissioner

- Following completion of internal review, you may also seek independent review of the decision from the Information Commissioner. Also, if you have not received a reply to your application within 3 weeks, this is deemed to be a refusal and you may appeal the matter to the Commissioner.

- Appeals in writing may be made directly to the Information Commissioner at the following address:

  Office of the Information Commissioner,
  18 Lr. Leeson Street, Dublin 2.
  Tel: (01) 639 5689 Fax: 639 5674..

7. FEES

Pursuant to Section 47 of the *Freedom of Information Act, 1997*, fees may be charged as follows:

- in respect of personal records, no fees will be charged in respect of the cost of copying the records requested unless a large number of records are involved;
- in respect of other (non-personal) information, a fee of €15 is charged in respect of information requested (€10 for a medical card holder – proof will be necessary)
- fees may be charged in respect of the time spent in efficiently locating and copying the records, based on a standard hourly rate. No charges will apply in respect of time spent by NMI in considering requests. The requester will be asked to pay the appropriate fee in advance of the work
- NMI will, if requested, assist the member of the public to amend the request so as to reduce or eliminate the amount of the fee.

Charges may be waived in the following circumstances:

- where the cost of collecting and accounting for the fee would exceed the amount of the fee;
- where the information would be of particular assistance to the understanding of an issue of national importance; or
- in the case of personal information, where such charges would not be reasonable having regard to the means of the requester.

NMI will adhere to any guidelines set out by the Department of Finance in relation to the charging of fees. For further information, contact:

Mary Dowling
Human Resources Manager/Freedom of Information Officer
National Museum of Ireland,
Collins Barracks
Benburb Street,
Dublin 7.
Tel + 353 1 6486 438.

8 CLASSES OF RECORDS

The Office of the Director and Administration and Services Departments hold files relating to the following:

- correspondence with NMI's parent Department
- minutes of Board meetings
- NMI administration (including the engaging of consultants and contract staff)
- financial administration
- strategic management and development
- buildings development and management
- press and public relations

Subject to variation, the files relevant to the various collection areas include:

- archives
- correspondence
- general
- accessions/acquisitions
- research queries
- collection registers and databases
- library catalogue
- conservation records

NMI aims to provide a service for the people of Ireland, as well as visiting scholars and researchers.

9 SECTION 16 REFERENCE BOOK: RULES AND PRACTICES OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF IRELAND

Under Section 16 of the *Freedom of Information Act, 1997*, all public bodies are required to publish and make available to the public:

> "*(a) the rules, procedures, practices, guidelines and interpretations used by the body, and an index of any precedents kept by the body, for the purposes of decisions, determinations or recommendations under or for the purposes of any enactment or scheme administered by the body with respect to rights, privileges, obligations, penalties or other sanctions to which members of the public are or may be entitled or subject under the enactment of the scheme, and*
>
> *(b) appropriate information in relation to the manner or intended manner of administration of any such enactment or scheme."*

This part of the Section 15 & Section 16 Reference Book details the rules, practices, etc. of NMI in relation to enactments or schemes to which Section 16 applies.

Acts under this section are:

9.1 Legislation

The National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997
Licence to export an archaeological object – in accordance with the provisions of Section 50 of the *National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997*

The National Monuments Acts, 1930 & 1994
Licence to alter an archaeological object – in accordance with the provisions of Section 25 of the National Monuments Act, 1930, as amended by Section 20 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994

Publication – Protecting our Past, a short guide to the National Monuments (Amendment Act) 1994

Copyright Act, 1963 and Copyright (Amendment) Act, 1987

Documents and Pictures (Regulation of Export) Act, 1945

National Archives Act, 1986

Data Protection Act, 1988

Prompt Payment of Accounts Act, 1997

Finance Act, 1995
Relief for donations of heritage items to the Cultural Institutions - in accordance with the provisions of Section 176 of the above Act. Tax relief is available in respect of the donation of important national heritage items to the Irish national collections. The relief consists of a tax credit equal to the value of the heritage item(s) donated, which can be credited against particular tax liabilities incurred by the donor.