



## Board of the National Museum of Ireland

Minutes of Meeting of the Board on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> July, at 10am,  
National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks

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<b>Present:</b>	Ms. Catherine Heaney (Chair) Mr. John Bowen Ms. Mary Crotty Professor Ingrid Hook Professor Kathleen James-Chakraborty Mr. Ambrose Loughlin Ms. Judith McCarthy	Mr. Declan Nelson Professor Mary O’Dowd Professor Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh Mr. Andrew Power Ms. Lynn Scarff Ms. Virginia Teehan (via conference call) Mr. Aidan Walsh
<b>Apologies:</b>	Ms. Denise Moroney	Ms. Karen Wilson
<b>In attendance:</b>	Mr Ragnall Ó Floinn (Director, NMI) Mr Rolly Read (Head of Collections NMI)	Ms Jennifer O’Mahony (Secretary to Board, NMI) Mr Seamus Lynam (Head of Operations, NMI)

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**1. Opening of meeting, apologies if any**

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the members of Board and NMI staff to the first meeting of the new Board. The Secretary conveyed apologies on behalf of Denise Moroney and Karen Wilson to the Chair.

The adoption of the agenda was proposed by A. Power and seconded by M. Crotty.

**2. General Introduction by Chair and Board Members**

Each Board Member and Staff Member briefly introduced themselves to the group.

**3. Executive report by Director and Senior Management (Head of Collections & Learning and Head of Operations)**

The Board heard presentations given by the Director, the Head of Collections and the Head of Operations which gave a top level summary of the structure of the Museum, its functions and key matters currently in progress.

The Director’s presentation placed the Museum in context with other similar institutions in terms of staffing, funding, number of sites and visitors. The Director outlined the Museum’s current staffing structure and highlighted challenges that the Museum has faced over the last five years in relation to funding.



The Director gave a summary of the key matters currently in progress: the 15-year Masterplan for the Museum; the need to develop a new Strategic Plan (the current plan covers 2014 – 2017), the Collections Resource Centre, Swords; the Natural History and Kildare Street buildings which need to be upgraded to include universal access; exhibition and documentation strategy documents; the History of Ireland Galleries project; staff restructuring costs and State Claims Agency payments. The Director emphasised that notwithstanding reduced staff numbers and budgets the Museum has enjoyed several recent successes including: publication of several books, the ‘Proclaiming a Republic’ exhibition and upcoming associated publication, the forthcoming exhibition on ‘Roger Casement’ and the partnership with the National Library on a project relating to the Frongoch Internment Camp in Wales.

The Head of Collections & Learning, Mr Rolly Read gave a brief overview of the areas under his responsibility. He emphasised the ongoing care for the collections, research on the collections and public engagement programmes.

The Head of Operations, Mr Seamus Lynam gave a brief presentation on the Museum’s operational remit. He gave details of the transfer of the HR function back to the Museum. He also stressed the need to address the ICT staff resources in the Museum to cater for the maintenance and management of a variety of systems and platforms and to keep pace with emerging technology. He highlighted that finances in the Museum had been significantly reduced since 2008 but were beginning to recover. Mr Lynam spoke of the excellent relationship between the OPW and the Museum and emphasised that the OPW is essential to the Museum for the delivery of exhibitions and preventative maintenance. Mr Lynam mentioned a strategic focus on Collins Barracks which has led to visitor numbers at the site increasing by 30% in 2016. Mr Lynam stated that the Museum has formed a number of successful corporate partnerships.

The Chair thanked the Director, Mr Read and Mr Lynam for their reports.

**It was agreed that a copy of the presentations made by the Director, Head of Collections & Learning and Head of Operations would be circulated to all Board members.**

#### **4. Discussion on operational matters, including date of meetings, formation of committees etc.**

The Board discussed the proposed dates for future meetings. It was agreed that the Board would normally meet six times a year and that each meeting should normally last two hours. It was agreed that the location of the Board meetings should rotate across the five Museum sites. It was agreed that an hour’s induction should take place at each site following the next four Board meetings to allow Board Members to visit each site, view the collections and meet with staff. **The Board agreed to invite the Minister to the meeting proposed for Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2017. It was agreed that this invitation should be issued as soon as possible.**

**The Chair proposed that Standing Orders for the Board would be approved at the next meeting in September, this was agreed.**

**It was agreed that the Board’s committees should be formed at the next meeting in September.** It was agreed that two external members should be appointed to the Audit Committee, both of these members should be qualified accountants and at least one of these should have a professional background in the Public Sector. The Audit Committee would be chaired by a member of the Board.

The Board agreed that corporate governance training should be provided for all members within the first six months of their appointment.



**The Board requested that Members be provided with a copy of the Museum’s insurance policy in relation to Directors & Officers Liability cover and Employment Practices Liability cover.**

The Chair communicated to the Board that all media queries should be dealt with in line with the Museum’s Media Policy which will be issued to Board Members by the Executive.

The Board agreed that the minutes of each Board meeting will be published online following approval by the Chair and the Board.

The Chair delivered a presentation outlining some key points that had arisen from the Board Members responses to a survey circulated by the Chair prior to the meeting.

**It was agreed that the Board Members’ responses would be discussed in detail at the next meeting in September.**

5. **Key discussion item: Request for use of Ceramics Room, Kildare Street.**

The Chair discussed with the Board the letter that she had received on 29 June 2016 from Minister Humphreys requesting that the Museum make the Ceramics Room available to Seanad Éireann while maintenance works are carried out at Leinster House. The Chair invited the Director to provide the Board with further context on the request.

The Director reported that in mid-December 2015, the Museum had received a letter from the Commissioner of Public Works which explained the need to re-locate the Seanad on a temporary basis, stating that the Ceramics Room at the Museum at Kildare Street was one of the options being considered for such re-location. In January, the Director responded to the Commissioner’s letter outlining the reasons why the Ceramics Room would not be a suitable space for the proposed re-location of the Seanad. The Director stated that the Museum had received only two official communications in relation to this matter: the letter from the Commissioner in mid-December 2015 and the letter sent to the Chair by the Minister in June 2016. The Director expressed his disappointment that he learned that the Ceramics Room had been selected as the preferred venue for the re-location of the Seanad from a newspaper report on the subject in mid-February 2016. At that time, the Director wrote to the Department and articulated his concerns and strong opposition to the proposed move. The Director stressed that the Museum has already facilitated the Department by ceding the Director’s suite of rooms at Kildare Street to the 1916 Committee for the period May 2015 to December 2016. The Director reported that there is already a significant shortage of space and resources relative to the numbers of visitors to the Kildare Street site and that the loss of the Ceramics Room would have an immediate detrimental effect on the Museum’s operations. The Director stated that there is great disquiet amongst staff regarding the proposal, at a time when staff morale is generally low. The Director reported to the Board that he had written to staff to say that the matter would be discussed at this Board meeting.

The Chair stated that she had responded to Minister Humphrey’s letter seeking further particulars of the nature of the works proposed, the nature of ancillary works that could be carried out if the OPW were on site, the OPW’s proposals for alternate facilities that could host Museum events and a timetable for works. The Chair reported that she has been in contact with Minister Humphreys by telephone regarding this issue and is given to understand that it is the wish of the Government that the Seanad be re-located to the Ceramics Room at the Museum. The Board considered legal advice that had been sought by the Museum on the issue which outlined the limits of the control the Museum had on its premises.

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John Cahill, Assistant Principal Architect at the OPW joined the meeting. Mr Cahill explained to the Board that essential maintenance works must be carried out on the Seanad Chamber at Leinster House and that there are few spaces adjacent to Leinster House that would be suitable to house the Seanad. Mr Cahill stated that a Commission of the Oireachtas was set up to identify a suitable location to house the Seanad.

The Commission had been presented with a number of options and the Ceramics Room at the National Museum Kildare Street was selected as the most suitable option. Mr Cahill outlined to the Board the nature of the works that would have to be carried out on the Ceramics Room in order to make it suitable for the Seanad. He reported to the Board that the estimated timescale for the project is two years, commencing in September 2016 and handing back to the Museum in September 2018. Mr Cahill reported that the works had been timetabled to coincide with the schedule of the Seanad and any delay in commencing works would have a knock-on effect on the rest of the project. Mr Cahill stated that works carried out during the process that could benefit the Museum might include the upgrading of the communications server to data and fibre cabling and replacement lighting in the Ceramics Room. The Board expressed thanks to Mr Cahill for his presentation and the Chair opened the floor to questions from the Board. Following questions from the Board, Mr Cahill left the meeting.

The Board expressed the concern that any building undergoing maintenance work is more at risk from fire and other hazards and that the proposed works to the Ceramics Room might constitute a risk to the building or the collections.

The Board agreed that although it is disposed to facilitate the Government's request as communicated by the Minister, the request had been made at very short notice. It was noted that the outgoing Board had received no formal notice that this process was in train.

The Board agreed on the urgency of the request but asked that further particulars from the OPW be sought as to the nature of the compensatory works to be undertaken. The Board agreed that, in addition, a major gesture from the Department would be required demonstrating a commitment to increase funding for staff commensurate with what the Museum is being requested to cede.

**The Board agreed to entrust the development of a formal response to the Minister's letter to the Chair, with advice from the Director. The response is to be circulated to the Board in draft form and sent to the Minister within ten days of this meeting. The Board requested that the Director communicate to staff that the matter had been discussed at the meeting and that the Board understands the position of staff.**

**6. Any other business**

None.

**7. Date and venue of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Board will take place on **Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2016 at 10am at the National Museum of Ireland – Archaeology, Kildare Street.**