



Board of the National Museum of Ireland

Minutes of Meeting of the Board on Thursday 15th September, at 10am,
National Museum of Ireland, Kildare Street

Present:	Ms. Catherine Heaney (Chair) Mr. John Bowen Ms. Mary Crotty Professor Ingrid Hook Professor Kathleen James-Chakraborty (via Skype) Mr. Ambrose Loughlin Ms. Judith McCarthy Ms. Denise Moroney	Mr. Declan Nelson Professor Mary O’Dowd Professor Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh Mr. Andrew Power Ms. Virginia Teehan Mr. Aidan Walsh Ms. Karen Wilson
Apologies:	Ms. Lynn Scarff	
In attendance:	Mr Ragnall Ó Floinn (Director, NMI) Mr Seamus Lynam (Head of Operations, NMI, Item 4 only)	Ms Jennifer O’Mahony (Secretary to Board, NMI)

1. **Opening of meeting, apologies if any, minutes of the meeting of 19th January 2016 and 14th July 2016 and matters arising**

The Chair opened the meeting. The Secretary conveyed apologies on behalf of Lynn Scarff to the Chair.

The Board noted with sadness the passing of former Board member Peter Barry T.D. It was agreed that a letter of sympathy should be sent to Deputy Barry’s family on behalf of the current Board.

The minutes of the meeting of the 19th January 2016 were proposed by Prof. Ó Tuathaigh and seconded by Mary Crotty as both were members of the previous Board.

The Chair and the Director expressed their gratitude to the last Board.

The minutes of the meeting of the 14th July 2016 were proposed by Andrew Power and seconded by Aidan Walsh.

Matters Arising

The Chair reported to the Board that she had met with Minister Humphreys the previous week. The Minister has been invited to the Board meeting which will take place in May 2017 at the Collections Resource Centre in Swords.



The Chair reported that she has received an invitation to address the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Regional Development, Rural Affairs, Arts and the Gaeltacht on 28 September 2016.

The Chair congratulated the Museum staff on opening of the new exhibition on Roger Casement at Kildare Street which had been launched by Tom Arnold, former CEO of Concern Worldwide on 3rd August 2016.

2. Executive report by Director

The Chair invited the Director to update the Board on executive matters.

Visitor Numbers

In early September, the Museum had received its 1 millionth visitor in 2016 - the earliest this figure has been reached. The Museum is now heading for well over 1.3 million visitors in 2016 – the highest number ever. The Director noted that in the context of the Museum’s limited resources and funding this is a very significant achievement. The Board extended its congratulations to the Director and all staff.

Update on sanction from Department on additional posts

The Director noted that sanction for ten posts agreed in 2014 is still awaited from the Department. The Director expressed frustration at the length of time that it is taking to progress this matter but is hopeful that the ten posts will finally receive sanction by 2017.

Budget Estimates for 2017

The Director reported that he has submitted budget estimates for 2017 to the Department which included a substantial increase for pay to address long-standing staffing shortages.

Collections Resource Centre, Swords

It was agreed by the Board that the Collections Resource Centre at Swords should be a point on the agenda for the next Board meeting on Thursday 17 November.

Masterplan

The Board was briefed by the executive on progress with the Masterplanning process.

The Board felt that there was insufficient notice given to allow for a representative to sit on the interview panel but acknowledged the need to proceed with the project without delay, so that the deadline for completion of the Masterplan in May 2017 could be met.

The Board expressed its desire to be involved throughout the Masterplanning process.

The Board agreed that the Development and Strategy committee would proxy for the Board in relation to this matter and following a report on the interview process from the executive would make a decision on whether to proceed or not and report back to the Board at the next meeting.

New Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies

It was agreed that at the next meeting of the Board on 17th November 2016, there would be a presentation to all Board members on corporate governance responsibilities including any changes that have issued from the new code of practice.



Partnership with the National Museum of Wales

The Museum has been negotiating a memorandum of understanding with the National Museum of Wales.

National Neighbourhood Project in association with Dublin City Council

The Director reported that the Museum is participating in the National Neighbourhood project with Dublin City Council.

Retail

The Director updated the Board on the current situation with Retail. Though sales in 2016 have been good so far, Retail is still expected to incur a small loss in 2016. It is hoped that sanction from the Department will be received soon for a Commercial Development Officer and that the retail outlet at the Natural History Museum can be re-opened in 2017.

3. Discussion on operational matters

a) Approval of the Standing Orders of the Board

The Board approved the Standing Orders subject to some amendments.

With regard to point 6.1, the Board agreed that the standing orders should be reviewed on an annual basis beginning in July 2017.

It was agreed that the minutes of each Board meeting should be published on the Museum's website after they have been approved under 3.5 and signed off accordingly by the Chair and the Secretary. The minutes may be subject to redaction and to a reasonable lapse in time.

b) Formation of Committees

Three standing committees were formed, with the additional option of workgroups which can be formed for a particular purpose.

The committees are as follows:

Audit & Risk

The committee was established according to the newly-published (August 2016) Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies- Audit and Risk Committee Guidelines (p. 4) which states that audit and risk should be combined and sets out best practice guidance. The Board appointed Mr Ambrose Loughlin as Chair (proposed Ms Mary Crotty, seconded Dr Andrew Power) and Mr John Bowen and Mr Declan Nelson as committee members (proposed by Ms Virginia Teehan, seconded by Mr Aidan Walsh). In accordance with the Code of Practice, the Board decided that two external members should be appointed to the committee. It was agreed that the external members should be qualified accountants with the necessary skill sets, including experience of working in the public sector.

It was agreed that Board members should send suitably qualified nominations for the two external committee members to the Secretary.



General Public Advisory Committee

The committee was established according to the provisions set out in the National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997 (Section 23 (1) (a)) ‘to assist and advise the Board in relation to any matters pertaining to the public exhibition of museum heritage objects in the collection of the Museum and the provision of information and the dissemination of literature relating to those objects to members of the public (including any education programmes undertaken by the Board).’

In accordance with the Act, the Board shall select a Chair from among the members and five ordinary members at least one of whom is resident in each province.

It was agreed by the Board that the committee should be given the remit of all aspects relating to collections and learning including: acquisition, collections care, documentation, exhibition, digitisation and publication. The work of the committee will include functions which fall broadly under the remit of the Head of Collections and Learning.

The committee members appointed by the Board are:

Leinster: Professor Kathleen James-Chakraborty (Chair), Professor Ingrid Hook

Munster: Ms. Virginia Teehan

Ulster: Professor Mary O’Dowd, Ms. Judith McCarthy

Connacht: Professor Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh

Development and Strategy Committee

The Board decided that this committee should be charged with all aspects of development, including capital development, masterplanning, strategic planning and fundraising. It will oversee the proposed Master Plan for the Museum as well as the next Statement of Strategy. The work of the committee will include functions which fall broadly under the remit of the Head of Operations.

Five Board members were appointed to the committee:

Ms. Lynn Scarff (Chair)

Ms. Denise Moroney

Ms. Mary Crotty

Mr. Aidan Walsh

Dr. Andrew Power

Ms. Karen Wilson

It was decided that the Committees would conduct a self-evaluation in November 2017.

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

The Chair updated the Board on the Government request. The Chair reported that she and the Director had been invited to meet the Ceann Comhairle to discuss the subject on Wednesday 21 September, a copy of the letter of invitation was circulated to the Board in advance of the meeting.



Chair asked Seamus Lynam, Head of Operations to join the meeting and update the Board on discussions that have been ongoing between the OPW and the Museum as to the nature of the works.

a) Presentation by the Head of Operations, Mr Seamus Lynam

11.45: Mr Seamus Lynam joined the meeting.

Mr Lynam reported that since the last Board meeting of the 14 July 2016, he had been engaging with John Cahill of the OPW to ascertain what works would be involved if the Seanad were to be re-located to the Ceramics Room.

Mr Lynam stated that the Ceramics Room is the largest meeting and conference space at any of the Museum's four sites (holding up to 250 people) and is a very important multi-purpose space for the Museum. It is used by the Education Department to hold public lectures and other key events, as a venue for corporate events, for staff training sessions and larger staff meetings and by the Curatorial and Conservation departments as a secure space to prepare exhibitions that are to be installed in the building. In the case of the loss of this space, there is no comparable alternative location for the activities that normally take place there, as these activities are normally linked to the Museum collections. Mr Lynam stressed that the loss of this large area in a building that is already under considerable space constraints is very significant.

In answer to a query from a member of the Board, Mr Lynam confirmed that it would not be possible for the Museum to have access to the Ceramics Room when the Seanad is not in session, as for reasons of security and fire safety.

Mr Lynam circulated plans of the OPW proposals for the Museum at Kildare Street.

Mr Lynam reported that in lieu of the space to accommodate 200 seated guests in the Ceramics Room, it is proposed that the suite of offices formerly used by the Director would be converted to an Audio Visual theatre space to seat 60 people by removing the partition walls. The 'Roger Casement' exhibition would be moved to an adjoining room.

Mr Lynam concluded that it is difficult to overstate how opposed the staff are to the loss of this space.

The Chair thanked Mr Lynam for his presentation and asked that he remain while the Board discussed the matter, to answer and questions that they might have.

The Board discussed the issue. It was noted that the space requested constitutes a very large portion of the Museum's overall footprint and the loss of this space for two years until the Centenary of the First Dáil in 2019 will doubtless have a very significant impact on the Museum's operations. The Board expressed its dissatisfaction at the way in which it and the Museum had been treated in this matter. It was felt that the works that are being presented as being to the Museum's advantage are in fact of minimal benefit to the Museum. It was expressed that the Board should not give any indication that they are happy to comply with the request either in an ethical or a business sense.

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The Board discussed their request to the Minister that a major gesture should be made to Museum to compensate for loss of the space. It was noted that no direct reference had been made to such a gesture in correspondence from the Minister.

The Board expressed disappointment at the minimalist way in which the works have been presented to the Museum by the OPW.

The Board acknowledged that there is widespread disquiet amongst staff regarding this issue and that though the Executive are communicating regularly with staff on this matter, there may be serious internal consequences should the works proceed.

The Board acknowledged that essentially the request to use the space is a moot point, as the building is under the remit of the OPW. The Board stated that the matter had been considered in great detail but ultimately opposing the request is beyond the scope of the Board. The Board expressed disappointment regarding the lack of clarity around proposals.

The Board also expressed its disappointment that the proposed works do not address the issue of universal access to the Kildare Street building as the Board are extremely concerned about this matter.

It was suggested that if the works were to go ahead that the Museum should request that quarterly reports should be provided outlining progress on the works.

It was agreed that the Chair should write to the Minister outlining the Board's views and concerns. The Chair would also write to the Department of the Taoiseach, the Secretary General of DPER and the Chair of the Budgetary Committee to outline the concerns of the Board on this matter and request that a significant gesture should be made consummate with the significant sacrifice that the Museum is being asked to make. The Budgetary Estimates for 2017 should be included in this letter.

5. a) Museum submission on Culture 2025

The Board discussed the draft version of the proposed new National Cultural Framework Policy, *Culture 2025 / Éire Ildánach*. The Director had prepared a discussion document for the Board on the policy.

The Chair invited the Board to submit any comments/amendments for inclusion in the discussion document or have any amendments to suggest by Thursday 22nd September at 5pm. The document will then be submitted to the Department.

b) Exhibition 'Portrait of a Century' by Kim Haughton

The Director briefed the Board on a new exhibition 'Portrait of a Century 1916-2016' which will be launched at Collins Barracks in January 2017.

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

The next meeting of the Board will take place on **Thursday 17th November 2016 at 10am at the National Museum of Ireland – Country Life, Castlebar, Co. Mayo.**