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**Ref: S0762 PAC33**

Dear Ms. Cremin

I refer to your letter of 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022. I note your request for further information regarding:

1. Details of the Department's policy for managing and protecting the national collection of arts and antiquities into the future
2. Whether there are plans for a permanent fixed location to provide sustainable and cost effective storage and
3. Plans for digitising and storage of records

In regards to the first request, the Department has oversight of a number of National Cultural Institutions, each of whom is responsible for managing and preserving the national collections in their care. I have, therefore, appended to this letter further information on the institutions' collection and storage policies.

The Museums Standards Programme of Ireland was initiated by the Heritage Council and deals comprehensively with standards for facilities management for museums storage. The programme includes thirty-four standards in total, covering collections care, governance and management, visitor care and access. Participants take on average five years to complete the accreditation process.

Along with various local authority museums and voluntary museums, several of the National Cultural Institutions are members of the Museums Standards Programme of Ireland. The Chester Beatty, the Crawford Art Gallery and the National Gallery of Ireland have achieved accreditation, while The National Museum of Ireland and the Irish Museum of Modern Art have joined the programme to be assessed for accreditation.



An accredited Participant will have met standards in:

- Collections care: storage, environmental monitoring, building and exhibition maintenance, condition assessment, disaster planning and training.
- Management and governance: strategic and financial planning, security of tenure, collection, disposal and loans policies.
- Visitor services: exhibition and education policies, display, education programmes, customer service, quantitative and qualitative analysis of visitors and their experience.

In regards to the second, the Department continually engages with the National Cultural Institutions regarding collections storage. Under the National Development Plan, the Department's sectoral plan – *Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018 - 2027* – provides for the investment of €460m in the capital redevelopment of the National Cultural Institutions over the period 2018 to 2027. Under this plan it is intended to upgrade and extend the institutions' buildings and facilities in line with international museum standards and to provide for enhanced collection storage facilities, along with expanded learning and exhibition spaces, visitor facilities and other needs identified by the NCIs.

These projects are being planned, implemented and evaluated in line with the Public Spending Code and best practice guidance outlined in the Capital Works Management Framework published by the Office of Government Procurement. While the majority of these capital projects are moving through preliminary stages, a number of projects are at implementation stage or are nearing implementation stage. When the capital projects are complete it is expected that this investment will fully address any deficits in relation to storage.

To name one specific example, the National Museum of Ireland currently operates the Collections Resource Centre, an 18,000 square metre site in Swords, where the majority of its collections reside. The NMI has established a project team consisting of members from the OPW, NMI and the Department to carry out a strategic assessment review of the CRC and identify a number of options for its redevelopment, which may include the construction of a purpose-built facility.

The Office of Public Works is also responsible for the secure storage of the State art collection and operates a number of facilities around the country. The Department and the OPW are engaged in regular consultation regarding the implementation of the NCI's capital projects and the possibility of shared storage arrangements is being considered as part of this process in the interests of sustainability and efficiency.

Finally, in regards to the third, digitisation is a key priority for the Department and the National Cultural Institutions within its remit. Digitisation makes it possible for people all over Ireland and indeed the world, to access the rich and varied collections held in trust for us by our NCIs.



There is a significant appetite for high quality on-line cultural material especially during Covid-19. To that end, digitisation funding of €10 million was allocated by the Department to be used by 2027 for the following projects:

- (a) Pilot "Cultural Digitisation Scheme" (2017-2022)
- (b) Beyond 2022
- (c) Digitisation of 1926 Census

Additional information on the initiatives above is appended to the end of this letter.

By digitising their collections, Ireland's cultural institutions increased their reach well beyond those who are in a position to visit their buildings in person, especially during 2020/21. Digitisation also provides a very important channel to connect with Ireland's Diaspora – which is estimated to be up to 70 million people worldwide – and in turn encourages cultural tourism. Reusing data in new applications has the potential to generate new businesses and jobs, providing greater value from material held in public collections and giving consumers engaging new ways to access and interact with it.

I hope this addresses the Committee's requests and should the members have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Katherine Licken', is positioned above the printed name.

Katherine Licken  
Secretary General



## APPENDIX I

### Collection policies at the National Cultural Institutions

#### Chester Beatty

The Chester Beatty has implemented a Collections Care and Conservation Strategy to ensure the long-term preservation of the Collection and to support the museum's key strategic priority to safeguard, manage and develop the Collections. The Strategy defines four key priorities for the next five years (2019 – 2023):

1. To manage and mitigate risks to the Collections
2. To ensure the long-term preservation of the Collections
3. To increase access to the Collections
4. To advocate best practice in collections care and conservation

Each priority generates a list of objectives and, in turn, these lead into multiple actions which are agreed annually in the strategic implementation plan for the organization.

#### *Priority 1: To manage and mitigate risks to the Collections*

A key element of risk management is safeguarding the Collections during storage and ensuring their recovery in the event of an emergency situation. All activities which involve the use of collections, such as handling, transportation and display carry a potential of risk to the longevity and overall condition of an object. The Chester Beatty aims to manage and mitigate these risks to a level which is acceptable, balanced against the need to ensure collections are accessible.

##### Objectives

- To ensure the Emergency Response Plan (ERP) is maintained and effective
- To provide stable environmental conditions for the Collections at all times
- To ensure compliance with all policies and procedures relating to the management of the Collections
- To ensure that all staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities for caring for the Collections, and provided with training and guidance in object handling

#### *Priority 2: To ensure the long-term preservation of the Collections*

The Collections are cared for and maintained in conditions intended to preserve and extend their physical integrity. All treatments are conducted by qualified conservators in accordance with international best practice and guidelines. The condition of the objects is regularly assessed and monitored to quantify the needs of the Collection and enable annual strategic planning. The activities of the conservation team are prioritised in response to research and exhibition needs, public access requirements, funding and staff resources, and urgency of care.

##### Objectives

- To maintain best practice in the care and conservation of the Collections



- To continually monitor the condition and complete the full condition survey of the Collections
- To maintain accurate and accessible records on all condition assessments and treatments carried out
- To identify targeted fundraising opportunities to ensure key conservation treatment priorities are met
- To address lack of permanent staffing in Conservation to ensure continuity of expertise

*Priority 3: To increase access to the Collections*

Research into the Collections creates fresh insights and new interpretations of the past and is a core function of the Chester Beatty. It drives our exhibition and public programmes and has the potential to extend the international reach of the museum and attract new audiences. Scientific examination and analysis are used to increase understanding of how objects were created and to maintain and improve the preservation and treatment of the Collections.

Objectives

- To increase access to the Collections through the conservation process
- To ensure that all treatments employ safe, tested materials that where possible will not compromise future conservation treatment or scientific examination or the authenticity of the object
- To undertake scientific investigation and analysis
- To further partnerships with national and international academic institutions to encourage collections-based teaching and research
- To disseminate research through publications, training and participation in professional conferences
- To promote the Chester Beatty nationally and internationally as a research centre of excellence

*Priority 4: To advocate best practice in collections care and conservation*

The Chester Beatty is the pre-eminent centre in Ireland for the understanding of world cultures, advancing knowledge and engagement through our expertise and collaborations. Despite having a relatively small staff, the Conservation Department has managed to position itself as leaders in the field of collections care and conservation, both nationally and internationally.

Objectives

- To teach best practice in collections care and conservation through the provision of internships, training of professional conservators and participation in professional conferences



- To maintain accreditation through the Heritage Council's Museums Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI)
- To promote the Chester Beatty nationally and internationally, and to enhance our reputation as one of the finest museums in the world
- To provide CPD training for all conservation staff and support of professional accreditation

#### Crawford Art Gallery

The Crawford Art Gallery's collection policy outlines the basis of and justification for the CAG's collection strategy and objectives in line with the Gallery's mission and existing collection. The policy takes into consideration best practice and ethics for international museums and galleries based on ICOM, MA, IMA and MSPI standards among others.

The collection of the CAG has grown steadily in recent years. In 1990 the collection numbered some 1500 paintings, sculptures, prints and other works of art. These works were listed in the *Illustrated Summary Catalogue*, published in 1992. Since that date, approximately 1500 new works have been added to the collection, which now contains over 3000 accessioned items, along with additional non-accessioned archival material.

The Gallery operates a busy loans-out programme. However, the safety and care of the collection is paramount and as such only institutions that can meet minimum requirements for transport, insurance and display of artworks will be agreed to.

The Gallery endeavors to keep comprehensive records on the provenance of a work including transfer of title, acquisition proposal forms, condition reports and exhibition history where available. To date the Gallery has also kept on file correspondence with owners, auction houses, researchers and curators regarding acquisitions to the collection. Each artwork in the collection has a hard file and a related artist hard file in which such material is stored. In addition, information is saved under the object record on the collection management system, Museum Plus RIA. See *Documentation Procedural Manual* for full details on acquisition procedure and documentation of the collection.

The Gallery also records, where possible, instances when images of works from the collection have been reproduced in publications. This has historically been stored in hard files for the works but can now also be stored in soft copy on MuseumPlus for ease of access.

The Director, Curators and Registrar are all responsible for reviewing, revising and adhering to the Collections Policy.

#### Irish Museum of Modern Art

IMMA is the custodian of the national collection of modern and contemporary art. The majority of these artworks are stored in an offsite warehouse and a smaller part are stored in the buildings of the Royal Hospital Kilmainham. IMMA monitors and in most cases actively controls the environment (temperature, humidity, light levels) in order to prolong the life of



the assets. IMMA also engages with conservation experts when required. The works of art are publicly exhibited in rotation in IMMA's public programme. Individual works may be viewed in storage by prior appointment.

#### Collection management procedures

Spectrum 5.0 is the UK collection management standard that is used around the world. IMMA's documentation and collections management procedures use Spectrum 5.0 as the basis for managing the collections and the IMMA Collections Management System is compliant with Spectrum 5.0.

IMMA undertakes an impairment review of its collection on an annual basis and conducts a full inventory of all artworks every five years in accordance with Spectrum 5.0 best practice. The next full inventory check will take place during 2022.

IMMA is also on a programme of accreditation with the Heritage Council's Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI). MSPI promotes professional standards in the care of collections in Irish museums and galleries.

#### National Archives

The National Archives adheres to two international standards governing the long-term storage of archive and library materials. These are BS 4971:2017, prepared by the British Standards Institution and ISO 11799:2015, prepared by the International Organization for Standardization. These standards present general rules to be considered for the purpose of newly constructed archival storage, when an older building is converted for this use or when a building already in use for this purpose is converted. The standards give recommendations for the long term conservation of archive and library collections, for managing conservation of collections, starting with organizational policy, strategy and planning, which in turn leads to the identification of prioritized actions and on-going processes that protect collections, such as environmental qualities, repository management and preventive and remedial treatment projects.

The National Archives has also instituted a protocol applicable to off-site storage as well as the "Archives Framework", a policy framework that ensures:

- a coordinated and standardised approach in the management of archives
- an ongoing commitment to the preservation of archives

The priorities for the development of archives are as follows:

- To secure sufficient resources to implement the strategic plan
- To improve visibility of archival and public services
- To develop the capacity to manage and preserve electronic records

#### National Gallery of Ireland





The National Gallery of Ireland's collection encompasses more than 16,000 works of art from around 1300 until the present day. In addition, it houses an important and extensive Art Library and Archive collection. Apart from individual masterpieces by artists such as Vermeer, Rembrandt, Goya, Caravaggio, Gainsborough, Monet and Picasso, the Gallery houses the National Portrait collection and the world's greatest collection of Irish paintings.

The collection is at the very centre of the Gallery's work, forming the basis of the Gallery's activities and programmes. The Collections and Research Division is tasked with collection care, development, research, display and, most importantly, with sharing the Gallery's artworks and knowledge with as wide an audience as possible.

The breadth and depth of the collection gives the organisation international standing and, paired with the expertise and networks of our team, has led to high-profile partnerships over the years. Fundamental to the continued relevance of the organisation is the need to extend and enhance our collection. In addition to actively sourcing artworks for acquisition, the Gallery is very fortunate to receive gifts and bequests, which are often the result of relationships nurtured and maintained over many years.

Research is core to our activities as a Gallery and crucial to our stewardship of the collection. Collection research takes place in many different areas of the organisation including conservation, curatorial and learning and interpretation. Our Study rooms, Art Library and Gallery Archives offer exceptional resources for scholars and staff, as well as for visitors.

In addition to carrying out art historical research, our role is to safeguard the collection by ensuring we achieve the highest standard of collection care. Our collection care research covers areas of gallery practice such as conservation, collections management, archive and library practice, photography.

We communicate our research to the wider public through temporary exhibitions and permanent display, publications, lectures, conferences, as well as workshops, social media and digital content. In all areas of the Collections & Research division we strive to develop strong networks, using the highest international standards as the benchmark for our work.

The National Gallery is accredited through the Heritage Council's Museums Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI).

### National Library

In response to concerns regarding collections storage, the National Library undertook a major capital development to secure and safeguard the national collections, and to create transformed public spaces at the National Library on Kildare Street. As part of this €14.7 million project, completed in 2019, the Main Library was reconfigured in order to provide safe and secure conditions to preserve the national collections of published material. In addition, the book stores were moved to the East of the Main Building to an area readily accessible to the Reading Rooms, and which had the structural capacity and the up to date building services to accommodate and support book storage to the appropriate standard. It also allowed for maximum security of the collections.





In order to ensure the most efficient use of space in the new bookstore to the NLI re-ordered the books by size, and all material held onsite is now categorised in this way. During the enabling works the opportunity was taken to rationalise the collections; remove duplicate items to offsite storage; identify early published material; gather volumes of serials and enhance their holdings information; identify many pamphlets previously hidden within the Irish book collection. The work since 2017 has involved amending and creating catalogue records to improve the accuracy of the Library's catalogue and thereby enhanced access for readers. These improvements created a state of the art, environmentally-controlled facility that ensures the safe and efficient storage of the National Library's collections for future generations.

#### National Museum of Ireland

The NMI collections are currently located across Museum sites and at two offsite collection storage and research facilities. A third smaller site is maintained in Lanesborough, Co Longford for water logged archaeological material.

- Collections in Arts and Industrial Division – Located at NMI - Collins Barracks, Collections Resource Centre, Swords and small amount material Daingean, Co Offaly.
- Collections in Irish Antiquities Division – Located in NMI - Kildare St, Collections Resource Centre, Swords and small amount material Daingean, Co Offaly.
- Collections in Natural History Division – Located in NMI – Merrion St (pending capital programme) and Collections Resource Centre Swords, fluid collection currently remain in Beggars Bush pending identification of new space.
- Collection in Folklife Division – Located in NMI – Turlough Park, Mayo; Collections Resource Centre Swords, smaller amount of material in Daingean, Co Offaly.

Prior to the C&AG report in 2008, which pointed out the then poor condition that a lot of the NMI collections were stored in – NMI had a number of collection stores located around the country. The leasing of the CRC Swords in 2008 provided an opportunity for NMI to consolidate these collections in a central location, improve the collections care and management of these collections as well as increase accessibility. This has been a significant achievement for the greater care of the collections but also has enabled greater access and research.

The improvements made in collection care have also enabled NMI to apply for full accreditation for the Museum Standard of Ireland Programme (MSPI) run by the Heritage Council. Standards in collection care and storage across cultural institutions and galleries is critical as it enables mobility of collections across museums locally and nationally. The MSPI sets out the expectations for collection storage and care to be met by participating museums across Ireland. There are currently 61 participants in the programme across Ireland. <https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/projects/museum-standards-programme-for-ireland>, including many designated Local Authority Museums.



## APPENDIX II

### Digitisation Initiatives led by the Department

#### (a) Pilot “Cultural Digitisation Scheme” (2017-2022)

An initial allocation of €2.339 million was awarded in October 2017 to support a range of digitisation projects in Ireland’s “national cultural institutions and cultural organisations” with collections of national significance. The funding was granted to applications that related to some or all of the following funding objectives:

- Ensure collections are correctly catalogued and digitally captured;
- Develop the software required to provide access on-line to their Digital Collections;
- Ensure that the on-line data is of the highest quality using international metadata standards;
- Allow for the display and discoverability on-line of more of collections;
- Enhance the Institutions outreach and education programmes through greater access to the collections held;
- Increase the potential for tourists to gain greater knowledge of the collections held in Ireland and in particular the National Cultural Institutions;
- Increase the quality and quantity of metadata that Ireland shared on the Europeana platform;
- Work in partnership with other organisations to support digitisation projects of collections of national significance; &
- Leverage philanthropic support.

**Project highlights from the digitisation projects funded are as follows (i, ii, and iii):**

#### i) National Library of Ireland – Band Aid Archives project

The Band Aid Archives have been donated to the National Library by the Band Aid Trust, and a commitment of €245,000 in digitisation funds from the Department to facilitate the development of the archive by the National Library was announced under the pilot cultural digitisation scheme. It is estimated that a significant volume of this archive will be digitised by the end of 2022.

Band Aid was a worldwide phenomenon in the mid-1980s. Band Aid’s ‘Do They Know It’s Christmas?’ is one of the most popular Christmas songs ever released, and the UK and US Live Aid concerts on 13th July 1985 were among the defining events of the decade and an unforgettable television event.

The archive includes:

- Hundreds of letters from private individuals – including many children and teenagers – mostly handwritten and on a range of personal writing paper.
- Letters, often witty and revealing, from well-known public figures.
- Publicity materials, including press cuttings and photographs.
- Donations of objects, including artwork, poetry and musical recordings.
- Reports of projects in Africa, funded by the Trust since 1985.



- Trust correspondence – between Trust members and with third parties, including donors, governments, shipping companies, other charities, broadcasters, etc.

## ii) Chester Beatty Library Project

The Chester Beatty Library (CBL) received funding of €200,000 under the pilot Cultural Digitisation Scheme to assist in purchasing digital equipment to aid its in-house digitisation programme and support the development of a new website and image portal.

This new website now has 5,000 digitised images (taken from CBL collection) and the CBL identified digitisation as a way of opening up the majority of its collection to a wider audience. Only 1-2% of its collection is on public display at any one time and CBL believe that this will allow them to open their collection to a global audience.

The targeted end result was that the project would:

- Deliver the CBL's strategic objectives to increase access, furthering its development and providing the organisation with the technological infrastructure to meet its current and future needs;
- Open the CBL's extraordinary collection to a global audience for the first time;
- Provide the CBL with a resource to use as a learning tool for outreach and adopt new methods of engaging with existing and new audiences;
- Position the CBL to exploit the benefits of the digital shift in cataloguing, caring for and researching its collections;
- Allow the CBL to capitalise on the commercial opportunities to create a new earned income stream for the museum; &
- Contribute to the CBL's reputation internationally and further its position as a pre-eminent international centre for the understanding of world cultures.

## iii) Church of Ireland Records Project

The Representative Church Body (RCB) Library in Churchtown, Dublin holds the majority of remaining Church of Ireland registers and records. A capital grant of up to €169,000 for the digitisation of Church of Ireland Parish Registers has been made available to date.

Of particular importance the RCB Library holds the Church of Ireland parish registers for baptism, marriage and burial. This includes 1,110 sets of parish records, approximately 840 of which contain varying quantities of public records which have not yet been digitised. These registers are of vital importance as they serve as a most valuable source of genealogy data for the era predating Civil Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths.

These unique records will be used to determine the nature of family relationships for a variety of legal, medical, social and research purposes. Church of Ireland Parish Registers also have a wide social and religious scope; for example, former US President Barack Obama is one of several presidents of the United States with Irish Protestant identity.

## (b) Beyond 2022

June 30th, 2022, marks the centenary of the terrible explosion and fire at the Four Courts, Dublin, which destroyed the Public Record Office of Ireland (PROI) and, with it, seven centuries



of Ireland's collective memories. While incomparable with the loss of human life, the destruction of the Record Treasury at the PROI was one of the great tragedies of the Civil War. Beyond 2022 is an all-island and international collaboration. Its aim is to launch a Virtual Record Treasury for Irish history—an open-access, virtual reconstruction of the Record Treasury destroyed in 1922.

Beyond 2022 is being provided with up to €2.5 million of funding by the Department under Project Ireland 2040 (Digitisation). This is a Trinity College Dublin project along with a number of participating Institutions in Ireland, the United Kingdom and the United States. These include:

- The National Archives (Ireland)
- The National Archives (UK)
- The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (Belfast)
- The Irish Manuscripts Commission
- The Library, Trinity College Dublin

Website Link; <https://beyond2022.ie/>

#### **(c) 1926 Census - Digitisation**

Sections 33 and 35 of the Statistics Act 1993 allow for the release of information gathered by a Census that relates either directly or indirectly to an identifiable person 100 years after the date that the census was taken. As the 1926 Census was taken on 18 April 1926, this information can be made available from 18 April 2026.

Making the details of individuals and households from the 1926 Census available digitally will require a significant volume of work that will take several years to complete. Work will be required to collate, conserve, index and digitise the original census returns.

Nevertheless, it is anticipated that the information relating to individuals taken in the 1926 Census will be ready for public release in Ireland at the end of the statutory period in 2026 and a capital allocation of €5million has been provided for that purpose by the Department. Officials from the Department, which includes the National Archives, have already carried out detailed preliminary examinations of the work required.