

DÁIL ÉIREANN

AN COMHCHOISTE UM CHULTÚR, OIHDREACHT AGUS GAELTACHT
JOINT COMMITTEE ON CULTURE, HERITAGE AND THE GAELTACHT

Dé Céadaoin, 12 Nollaig 2018

Wednesday, 12 December 2018

The Joint Committee met at 1.30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Deputy Niamh Smyth,	Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell,
	Senator Fintan Warfield.

In attendance: Deputies Seamus Healy and Mattie McGrath.

DEPUTY AENGUS Ó SNODAIGH IN THE CHAIR.

Business of Joint Committee

Chairman: I suggest that we defer correspondence until the end of the meeting because there is much work in front of us and people are waiting. I propose that we continue in public session and invite in our guests from the National Museum of Ireland, Local Authority Museum Network, Irish Museums Association and the Heritage Council. I will introduce them when they come in. We will suspend while they come in.

Sitting suspended at 1.37 p.m. and resumed at 1.39 p.m.

Network of Regional and Local Museums: Discussion

Chairman: Today's meeting is to deal with the development of a network of regional and local museums. For some time it has been the intention of the joint committee to consider the development of such a network and I am pleased we have been able to schedule today's meeting on this matter. To assist us today, I am pleased to welcome: from the National Museum of Ireland, Ms Lynn Scarff, director, and Ms Maeve Sikora; from the Local Authority Museums Network, Mr. Liam Bradley and Ms Judith McCarthy; from the Irish Museums Association, Mr. William Blair and Ms Gina O'Kelly; and from the Heritage Council, Mr. Michael Starrett and Ms Beatrice Kelly. I thank the witnesses for being here.

I draw the attention of witnesses to the fact that by virtue of section 17(2)(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to the committee. However, if they are directed by the committee to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and they continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter to only a qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and they are asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person, persons or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable. I advise witnesses that any opening statements made to the committee may be published on its website after this meeting. Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the House or an official either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.

I ask members, witnesses and visitors to switch off their mobile phones as they interfere with the broadcast equipment.

I invite the Local Authority Museums Network to make its presentation.

Mr. Liam Bradley: I thank the Chairman and the committee for the opportunity to speak here today. I am the curator of Monaghan County Museum and the chair of the Local Authority Museums Network. Ms Judith McCarthy, curator of Donegal County Museum and deputy chair of the network is with me today.

The Local Authority Museums Network, LAMN, represents the 12 local authority museums across the State which all play a vital role in the social, cultural and economic life of Ireland's regions. The LAMN's membership currently comprises of Carlow, Cavan, Clare, Cork, Louth, Donegal, Galway, Kerry, Limerick, Monaghan, Tipperary and Waterford. We are a national professional network of collections based designated cultural institutions that advocate for and

promote the diverse archaeological and historical richness of our museums for the enjoyment and engagement of the communities we serve.

Members of the LAMN strive to be at the heart of those communities. During the recent Ireland 2016 commemorative programme, the LAMN worked with its partners in local government including heritage, libraries, arts and archives, to successfully facilitate a national discussion through a diverse programme of exhibitions and events about not only what the Rising was and when it happened but most importantly, why it happened and who were the people from their own localities who were involved. In tandem with this, we also explored the story of World War One and the thousands of Irish men who fought and died in the British army as well as the many Irish women who served in the nursing corps. This work will continue throughout the remainder of the decade of commemorations and into the future.

The LAMN recently hosted a major conference, held in Louth County Museum, Dundalk, entitled “Do Borders Matter? The Role of Museums and Heritage in Crossing the Line”. This event, which was jointly supported by the Heritage Council and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade investigated the challenges that Brexit will present to the entire cultural sector. We are continually working with our partners in Northern Ireland to plan and prepare for the challenges and opportunities that a UK outside of Europe will bring. It is the strength of our respective collections that help us as local authority organisations to cross borders, both figurative and literal, and bring together communities through a common interest, their shared history and heritage.

Collectively the local authority museums serve a population of more than 2 million people, attracting more than half a million direct visitors each year with a far reaching impact in schools, communities and voluntary organisations across the country. We also play a significant role as engines of local and regional tourism, working with Fáilte Ireland to support the cultural identity and image of Ireland to overseas visitors. Through this work, the local authority museums have helped to instil a sense of local pride of place. We have been in discussions with the Department of Education and Skills as we prepare for the requirements of the new junior certificate history cycle as well as advocating for the reinstatement of history as a core subject on the curriculum.

The LAMN plays a vital role in preserving the archaeological heritage of the country as well. The members of the LAMN are designated museums under section 19 of the National Monuments Act, 1930, and section 68(2) of the National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997. Under this legislation, each museum is legally entitled to retain archaeological objects on behalf of the State, which are deemed to be of predominantly local rather than national interest. We also liaise on an ongoing basis with the National Monuments Service to ensure the ongoing preservation of archaeological sites and monuments in our regions.

The members of the LAMN strive to achieve best standards across all areas of museum work. The museum standards programme for Ireland, MSPI, operates under the auspices of the Heritage Council and sets out to raise standards of care across Irish museums and galleries. The programme aims to benchmark and promote professional standards in collections care and to recognise the achievement of those standards within the Irish museum sector. The LAMN cares for diverse collections of thousands of artefacts and all of our members are involved in the MSPI.

Creative Ireland has become one of the key drivers of creativity in Ireland and through our various local authorities we are actively involved in the committees which are managing this

national initiative at the local level.

As we look to the future, we advocate for a review in current national funding for regional museums. Rather than small directed amounts for once off projects, a larger fund which encouraged partnership with other organisations both regional and national and the further use of new technologies would benefit a much greater sector of society. Along with the National Museum of Ireland, we are also investigating the possibility of making representation to the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht to review the current fund available under the mobility of collections scheme, which provides aid for regional museums wishing to take objects on loan from one of the major national cultural institutions.

We are 12 local authority museums in the State, the first opening in 1974 and the latest in 2012. We hope in years to come to see that number grow. We will be investigating how we can progress this and a number of other objectives through 2019 as we consult with a wide range of organisations including the Heritage Council, the Irish Museums Association and the National Museum of Ireland to develop our new strategic plan.

Local authority museums also support the many smaller community run and privately owned museums in their areas. This greater network of museums, working together, helps to preserve the history and heritage which exists between the lines in history books, those unknown people, places and events, which have shaped the history, heritage and culture of our villages, towns and cities.

The key strength of regional museums is that we are a safe space where people from different economic, social, cultural and religious backgrounds can come together in their own communities and using our collections as a catalyst, investigate their own history and heritage and that of their neighbours. By doing this, we are not only looking at yesterday but today and tomorrow as well, when we help new communities to integrate into Irish society and aid them to interweave their stories and beliefs into the cultural tapestry of the country.

Chairman: I apologise to the National Museum of Ireland because it was first on my list. I have a bias that way because my father worked there for many years. I duly call on the National Museum of Ireland to make its presentation.

Ms Lynn Scarff: I thank the Chairman and the committee members for the invitation to come and speak today on this very important topic. To give some context, the National Museum of Ireland is Ireland's largest national cultural institution with four public sites – three in Dublin, the Natural History Museum, the Museum of Archaeology and the Museum of Decorative Arts and History and one in Castlebar, County Mayo, the Museum of Country Life. The National Museum of Ireland, NMI, additionally manages a 20,000 m sq. Collections Resource Centre in Swords, which houses our collection ensuring it is available for research and scholarship. NMI collects, conserves and interprets the largest holdings of portable heritage in Ireland - more than 4 million artefacts and specimens - and welcomes more than one million visitors per annum. Visitor numbers have doubled since 2004 and continue to grow despite a significant reduction of 40% in budget between 2004 and 2016. A €1.42 million increase in budget allocation over 2017 and 2018 has initiated the process of readdressing this prolonged period of deficit. We welcome the continued focus of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the Minister, Deputy Josepha Madigan, to increasing funding in arts, culture and heritage sector and, equally, the opportunity to engage with committee members today on this aspect of the museum's work, which is very important.

Under the National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2014, the National Museum of Ireland is the State's repository for archaeological objects and cares for them on behalf of the State. There are currently 168 staff employed across all of our sites. NMI has a national remit to work with the 12 local authority museums that are designated as places of deposit for archaeological objects of local importance. This is supported through an assigned designated local museum liaison, our head keeper of the Irish antiquities division, Maeve Sikora, who accompanies me today.

I will now provide some insight into the types of collaborations we have with local and regional museums. We have a rich and dynamic relationship with the network of regional and local museums, upon which we are eager to build. This is an opportune time to present to the joint Oireachtas committee as our recently published Master Vision reinforces the museum's commitment to local and regional museums stating as a key objective, "The proactive development of regional partnerships to deliver a truly national service." Collaboration is a core value of the NMI and it is supported at a strategic level by the NMI board. Collaborations with local and regional museums through collections loans, exhibitions, education and outreach programmes are a priority and crucial to achieving our ambition of a truly national service. The key areas underpinning these collaborations include a legislative role, which falls under the National Cultural Institutions Act 1997, whereby the director of the National Museum of Ireland can designate a museum as a place of deposit for archaeological objects of local importance. All archaeological objects found that have no known owner are State property and finders are obliged to report their discoveries to the National Museum or to a designated museum. The National Cultural Institutions Act 1997 additionally outlines the manner in which the NMI facilitates collection loans and enables the director of the NMI to place an object in the care of a designated museum.

Beyond the legislative role there is significant activity across collections and operations. The National Museum of Ireland facilitates loan requests to local and regional museums from the national collection, permanent and temporary. Attached to my opening statement there is an Appendix which lists some of the loans distributed across the museum network. The museum also provides advice, support and collaboration on issues of conservation, security, collection management and care, exhibition and interpretation at an individual level and, crucially, through regular network meetings with the local museums network group. We also programme events and outreach. We facilitate talks, lectures and research by key staff members across local and regional museums. There are numerous benefits to this relationship across all parties involved. The network of local and regional museums and the NMI's collaboration with same is critically important to the delivery of the vision of the NMI. Over the years, staff of the NMI have been heavily involved in the setting up of local authority museums. It is through these relationships, at institutional, network and individual levels, that the NMI can ensure the national collection reaches a wider audience, that local and regional communities are informed of the statutory role of the NMI in relation to archaeological finds, that NMI is enabled to connect more with a wider audience enabling their participation and feedback on our programme and that we grow awareness of the richness and importance of Ireland's cultural heritage.

The establishment of the museums standards programme for Ireland, MSPI, which is managed by our colleagues in the Heritage Council is a crucially important step in enabling best practice standards across museums in Ireland. While advocating for these standards across the sector and the resources required to support them, the NMI is itself in the process of MSPI accreditation. It is important to emphasise that our relationship also brings invaluable professional support to NMI and the local authority museums network, LAMN. For example, many members will be aware of the recent Tullydonnell Hoard find this summer in Donegal, which involved a rapid and close collaboration between the NMI team and Donegal County Museum.

In many ways, it is an excellent example of the importance of these trusted and professional relationships and the reason it is important to grow and cherish these networks. There will be an exhibition of the Tullydonnell Hoard in Donegal County Museum, hopefully, in autumn 2019. It is through the network and these relationships that this function is carried out.

Some examples of activity over the last 12 months include the Cloosmore medieval ring brooch on temporary loan to Músaem Chorca Dhuibhne 2018; the temporary loan of objects related to policing in Ireland to Monaghan County Museum 2017-2018; 13 Viking objects from recent excavations at Beamish & Crawford site at Cork Public Museum 2018; the collection of High Crosses on loan to St Mary's Medieval Mile Museum, Kilkenny and, by way of example of our educational programmes, the delivery of local archive and heritage projects through the iCAN project, which is a local archive project supported by the National Museum of Ireland and Galway County Council, supported by Creative Ireland. Other examples of temporary loans include the de Burgo-O'Malley Chalice to St Patrick's Church in Newport for its centenary celebrations in September 2018.

There are some challenges and we have made key learnings along the way. Timelines can present an issue. The NMI is significantly under resourced across its curatorial and conservation departments. We have six full-time members of staff in conservation and five full-time curators in our antiquities department. These staff, along with our registration department, are crucial to the process in terms of loans. We currently require a minimum notice period of 12 months for loans. This is to allow us to fulfil the significant amount of practice from a selection, condition checking, conservation, recording and mount making-design point of view and also to complete the administrative paperwork that is required for a collection loan. We understand that this timescale can present a problem for local museums who may not have clarity on budgets within the prerequisite time of a 12 month timeframe and this is something we wish to work on more.

From a resource perspective, the safeguarding of the objects in the care of the National Museum of Ireland is the key responsibility of collections staff. Low staffing levels, particularly within our conservation and curatorial departments, can create a bottleneck. However, the availability of increased budget to facilitate a collection loan from conservation costs to security costs would be a way to address this difficult problem. In regard to the types of artefacts requested, there is a public expectation that a number of the significant objects of the national collection will be on permanent display in the National Museum of Ireland. Some examples include the Tara Brooch, the Ardagh Chalice and the Broughton Hoard and our internationally renowned bog bodies. Considering the visitor numbers and the level of expectation for displays at the National Museum, it is generally the policy that objects that are on permanent exhibition are seldom placed on an outward loan. In these cases - this is the crucial element of the relationship with the local museums and special interest groups - NMI seeks to provide a talk, lecture or event on the object in local area. For example, as part of the 150 year anniversary of the Ardagh Chalice, our former director, Ragnall Ó Floinn, delivered a lecture in Ardagh to mark the occasion. We do receive ongoing requests. A notable exception of a short term loan is the Derrynaflan Hoard to Tipperary County Museum.

Having recently had a number of discussions with our colleagues in the local and regional museums we have identified some areas as potential opportunities and enablers of greater collaboration in our network. Increased communication is critical. Regular communication between the National Museum of Ireland and the Local Area Museums Network, particularly at the level of director and the management team, is critical. Mr. Bradley mentioned the joint

strategic plan. This joint thinking around strategic planning and partnership at an early stage enables us to ensure it is factored into annual business plans and, crucially, budgets. Investigation and delivery of joint initiatives and events, including co-curated exhibitions, education and event programmes, as well as early consultation on potential travelling exhibitions, means we can directly link in with national and local community interests and concerns. As mentioned by Mr. Bradley, the investigation of opportunities that may increase the mobility grant or similar grants and ensure there is a greater resource available to enable the costly process of collection loans would have a significant impact.

As outlined in the appendices provided to the committee, there is a strong collaborative relationship and significant activity between the NMI and the network of local and regional museums. We will continue to drive and support that relationship. An increase in staff and budgets across institutions would enable greater and more strategic activity. However, the strength of these relationships is primarily driven by the commitment of those here today, the dedication of the staff involved and continued open and regular communication.

Chairman: I call Mr. Blair of the Irish Museums Association.

Mr. William Blair: I thank the Chairman and members for the invitation to attend. In my capacity as chair of the Irish Museums Association, IMA, it is a pleasure and a privilege to address the committee on behalf of the sector. I am accompanied by Ms Gina O’Kelly, the IMA’s director of operations. My day job is director of collections with National Museums Northern Ireland, which incorporates the Ulster Museum, the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum and the Ulster American Folk Park.

Many present will be familiar with the work of the Irish Museums Association, but I will briefly introduce the context for this presentation. An all-island organisation, the IMA is dedicated to the development of the museum sector. We provide a platform for museum professionals on both sides of the Border to work together with the aim of gathering and sharing expertise, promoting standards of excellence, encouraging collaborative practice, identifying areas of concern and opportunities for the museum community and advocating the valuable contribution of museums to our society. Most importantly, we provide a collective voice for the museum sector through our 12-member board of directors and more than 300 members who represent the wide breadth of museums, ranging from small, community-led voluntary organisations to national cultural institutions. We also work in partnership with many collection-based organisations - many but not all from the cultural heritage sector - to provide a programme that advises on, encourages and supports long-term sustainable care and interpretation of our cultural heritage in line with the Heritage Council’s museums standards programme for Ireland and the Northern Ireland Museums Council accreditation scheme in the UK. We provide continued professional development and networking opportunities, advocate for museums on a national and international level and carry out valuable research.

Although the IMA is there to support museums, we are not about maintaining the *status quo*. We also challenge and lead conversations about how museums need to change to be more relevant and engage more people. Building stronger networks should be part of this forward momentum of change. It is about building a stronger and more coherent and sustainable sector.

Constructive partnerships are at the heart of museum practice. By pooling resources through the sharing of skills and expertise, museums have been able to deliver strategic value and provide enriched programmes and visitor experiences. This was never more evident than during this decade of commemorations, which continues to involve great pride and buy-in at a grass-

roots level and in which regional and rural museums have had a key leadership role. Not only are they critically interpreting their histories through their collections and providing further contextual understanding of the events surrounding this decade, they are also enabling access to expertise, research and education. They are enhancing opportunities for public engagement and highlighting aspects within museum practice often overlooked by the public.

Cross-Border collaborations in museums have had a major impact in terms of celebrating diversity and exploring our shared histories by providing safe spaces to discuss and explore contested narratives. The IMA's recent "Bridge over Brexit" research with Ulster University highlighted the value of an extended and diverse museum network. It facilitates diverse conversations and supports and assesses existing relationships and initiatives within the museum sector. It explores the potential implications and lines of communication to prepare for the changes ahead and advocates the role of the museum and the broader cultural sector in fostering relationships between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland through the expertise of museums, the leadership and world-leading research of which across a range of core themes will be vital to the Brexit discussion. It is in this context we wish to take this opportunity to highlight the landscape in which many of our members from regional and rural museums work.

There are approximately 178 museums in Ireland, of which 141 have a regional or rural remit. Many work in isolation and without the supports available to those in urban environments. With the loss of the museum officer role within the Heritage Council, volunteer and community-led museums increasingly look to the IMA for guidance. Cognisant of the limited capacity under which we function, we do this towards the goal of the museum sector working together as a whole. Facilitating links between our national and regional cultural institutions and grassroots museums is key to how we work, particularly in terms of supporting the increasingly divergent roles the contemporary museum is expected to play in our society.

In 2016, we published a survey of museums in Ireland carried out in collaboration with University College Dublin. The first iteration of its kind in over a decade, the findings highlighted that major strides had been taken to improve the services provided by our museums to the communities they serve, particularly in the areas of education and access. However, it also highlighted the opportunity for enhanced support of community and independent museums, including a review of funding initiatives and the development of a national strategy regarding the specific needs of regional and rural museums. This would recognise the key role they play in developing a local sense of identity and community, promoting social cohesion and inclusivity, their contribution to well-being, life-long learning and their contribution to rural development and tourism.

Museums are safe spaces to explore and discuss what really matters and where we are going. At their best, museums are a place to celebrate diversity and to explore our shared history. The value of an extended and diverse museum network is that it helps to facilitate diverse and important conversations across the island as a whole.

I wish to conclude by commending on the importance accorded to our cultural heritage in recent Government and agency strategies and plans, including Heritage 2030, Culture 2025, Creative Ireland and Project Ireland 2040. I thank the committee for inviting us to be here today. The Irish Museums Association looks forward to working with the Government to continue to enable a fluid dialogue around museum practice in the coming years.

Chairman: The final representatives to make a presentation are Mr. Starrett and Ms Kelly of the Heritage Council.

Mr. Michael Starrett: I thank the Chair for the opportunity to address the committee. Ms Kelly will deliver the bulk of our presentation. This is the third occasion in recent times that such interest has been shown by the committee in the work of the Heritage Council on behalf of the sector. I very much welcome that interest and hope it will continue in the years to come. When Ms Kelly and I previously appeared before the committee we specifically addressed natural heritage. More recently, I addressed the committee on the council's new strategic plan, Heritage at the Heart. On that occasion I was accompanied by Marie Bourke, a member of our board who is again present today. In that plan, the Heritage Council emphasises a broad view of heritage. The section entitled "Why Heritage Counts" makes very clear that heritage is the foundation of culture and the steady pulse of contemporary Ireland. It encompasses not only narrow definitions such as buildings, monuments and museum pieces, but also the distinctive landscapes, native wildlife, woodlands, literature, folklore and crafts, all elements which we touched on previously with the committee.

Tangible and intangible, personal and collective, heritage is at the heart of Irish society. Ms Kelly will make that clear in terms of the work we do in support of the museum standards programme. I ask Ms Kelly to pick up that thread.

Ms Beatrice Kelly: I thank the committee for the opportunity to speak about the museums standards programme for Ireland. As members have gathered, it is an initiative of An Chomhairle Oidhreachta and the overarching aim is to support museums, including galleries, in telling their stories and caring for their collections through a targeted training programme and an accreditation scheme.

It is a voluntary scheme and there are currently 64 sites taking part in the programme. We started with about 14 in 2007. These range from small voluntary museums in rural areas to national institutions here in Dublin. There is no regulatory basis or national policy for museums in general in Ireland. We have legislation for national institutions but not for museums. This voluntary and supportive approach taken by the MSPI is a bottom up, demand-led initiative which allows the application of international standards to museums of all types across Ireland. We have participants from Allihies Copper Mine Museum to the National Gallery of Ireland and into Northern Ireland with the Museum of Free Derry.

The standards programme has resulted in much higher standards of collection care, visitor services and more robust museum management across all participating museums and in turn this has spurred others to want to join in. These sites received more than 6.5 million visits in 2018, at a conservative estimate using published figures from Fáilte Ireland as well as the participants so it is a sizable number.

I mention what the programme actually does for the museums and collections. Joining the programme has allowed a lot of the smaller and community based museums in particular, to take part in a network of their peers, to receive mentoring and free training - the Heritage Council covers the costs - and to raise professional standards in the services they offer to their visitors and the care of their collections. As museums become accredited they in turn become mentors to their local area or to their area of interest. For example, Muckross House has been mentoring Allihies Copper Mine Museum on some of its paper based collection, Knock Folk Museum in Mayo has mentored the Michael Davitt Museum on a number of aspects and Tipperary County Museum has been mentoring Athy Heritage Centre and Museum so there is a great criss-crossing taking place.

In the past ten years, the council itself has put on more than 70 training workshops, giving

institutions access to workshops free of charge on subjects relating to collection care, education, exhibition, museum governance and management and visitor services. In addition, the council offers bursaries to museum staff and volunteers to take part by distance learning in the University of Ulster's postgraduate diploma in museum practice. This benefits those in remote areas in particular and we have had participants in this from Músaem Chorca Dhuibhne, from Allihies Copper Mine Museum and Athy Heritage Centre and Museum as well as others.

In the past two years, the Heritage Council was in the position to offer a grant scheme, totalling about €45,000 aimed at collection care within the museum standards programme institutions. These grants allowed institutions to carry out specific conservation work on specific objects or to improve display or storage facilities. Sadly, we are not certain at the time of writing or speaking whether the council will be in a position to continue this next year.

As a result of the standards programme, there are now hubs of museums expertise throughout the country. The levels of visitor service, interpretation and collection care have been raised beyond recognition. This work has been achieved by a single co-ordinator for the programme, Ms Leslie Ann Hayden who is with us today, helped by an advisory group, a panel of assessors and the oversight of the Heritage Council itself. The annual running costs are in the region of €115,000 per annum. This level of funding has been maintained by the council despite the financial crisis in 2008 and the knock on effects on our annual budget. The council has invested in the region of €1,265,000 into this programme since 2008.

There are constraints. The ability to recruit more participants is limited by the small budgetary resources of the council and the programme is at capacity. Additional funding would allow the council to cope with a higher number of participants. For example, an additional person to work alongside the programme co-ordinator would facilitate a public call for new entrants and would potentially allow the doubling of the annual intake of new institutions, which currently stands at only two per annum. The post of museums and archives officer at the council has been vacant for more than six years. This vacancy also limits our capacity to provide a public service in this area. Should sanction be given for this post to be filled, a wider range of advisory services could be provided to local and regional museums in particular, including those which are not currently in the programme.

The programme has had a significant impact in strengthening museums, particularly local and regional museums and in improving visitor experiences. The council would like to extend the MSPI to more museums across the country, while also supporting institutions which are not yet in a position to do so. We require additional resources to do so.

Chairman: I invite members to ask questions of our guests and hopefully extract a bit more information on the challenges facing those who have come before us. I call Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: I welcome the witnesses here today. It is a pleasure and a privilege to hear about their work and to listen to their belief in what they do, and I believe in what they do. I was at the European Parliament with my colleague about a month ago for the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 and it was interesting to hear about the number of countries where their wonderful heritage and religious sites are being desecrated. In one country it was mentioned that such a site had been turned into a supermarket without the knowledge of the people. When coming away I felt we had a better sense of preservation and at least we had a conversation about it. I agree with Ms Kelly and Mr. Starrett that the arts, culture and heritage play such an enormous role in who and what we are, and they are above politics. The

theatre is the one place the truth can be found out and it is also the one place within the arts, culture and heritage in which the truth can be explained and highlighted in a way that is beautiful, balanced, majestic and artistic. Sometimes people around here think there are no votes in the arts and that this is the wrong committee to be on, but it is the right committee to be on because the arts is the greatest sense of expression of the self.

I was interested in what the witnesses said about North-South in terms of the arts and culture. We should consider what people such as Seamus Heaney did for culture and language North and South. People like James Clarence Mangan, Thomas Moore or any of the great artists from North or South or Palestine and the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra never thought of who and what they were, they just thought of the arts, culture and heritage.

What does the Local Authority Museums Network think of the National Museum of Ireland? The witnesses from the Local Authority Museums Network looked awfully sad up there. Does the Local Authority Museums Network have issues it would like the National Museum of Ireland to address or get involved in? Will the witnesses from the Local Authority Museums Network mention one or two things it would like to do together with the National Museum of Ireland or that they are doing together?

Everything is now under the canopy of “culture” and that term has to be used. Can the National Museum of Ireland tell me what the Government and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht is doing or not doing to help it? I do not mean this question in an accusative way but what are gaps the National Museum of Ireland would like to see filled? In the Heritage Council, one of the gaps is the issue of a vacancy it has not been able to fill.

Will somebody tell me why the wonderful Michael Davitt Museum in Straide is not open? We talk about that every time I pass by.

Will the witnesses talk about the lack of legislation generally within the museum structures? Sometimes I feel the museums are better off without it and that they should get on with it themselves because their rapport is excellent.

Please feel free to answer me generally. It is important for us to hear about the museums’ great work and we are really a conduit to where the power is. Do not leave without telling us what is needed or where the gaps are. There were many speeches but I need to know what we can do to highlight these issues for the museums, the route we need to go down to help them get what they feel is necessary and then we might be listened to. I also refer to the co-operation and synergy between the museums even though I hate the word synergy.

Mr. Liam Bradley: I thank the Senator for her questions. If I seem a little dour, it is mainly because I am suffering from a severe case of man flu.

Senator Marie-Louise O’Donnell: Mr. Bradley will not be able to get man-sized tissues because they have hit the dust.

Mr. Liam Bradley: On the question of the view of the Local Authority Museums Network, LAMN, of the National Museum of Ireland, NMI, from a personal point of view I have always loved it having visited it many times as a child. I am involved in museums because of the many tours of the National Museum of Ireland on which I was taken. It always seemed to me that this monolith was a place to be revered and respected, and it is. As mentioned by Ms Scarff, there are strong personal connections and relationships between the national and local museums such that it is not Monaghan County Museum or Donegal County Museum contacting the National

Museum of Ireland but Liam or Judith contacting Lynn or Maeve. This is key. The museum sector in Ireland is small and we all tend to know each other well, which is a positive in helping to break down the barrier of a large national collection.

The LAMN relationship with the National Museum has grown in recent years. As a network, we were not focused enough on reaching out to other national institutions. We were doing it individually but not as a network. We have done a lot of work in recent years and more recently with Ms Scarff and Ms Sikora in developing that relationship. Where we are now is a lot more healthy. We are definitely in a stronger place strategically as well on both sides of the island. We look forward to having a much bigger relationship which does not just involve us seeking or returning loans.

On what we are doing together, we are looking at a Famine project as potential work for the next couple of years, in respect of which there is a huge story to tell nationally and regionally. We have discussed the idea but funding may be an issue. The will exists to do work in this area. We believe the national and regional story in this regard is important. The mobility grant was mentioned. It is important, if we are to progress the move of objects from the National Museum to regional museums, that the mobility project is reviewed. It is a costly process. As mentioned by Ms Scarff, planning is a challenge for local authority museums. As our resources are limited, we tend to plan on the basis of a year to a year and a half. In light of the lead-in for loan requests, it can be challenging to get in on time and to address issues around availability and conservation. The mobility grant is key. We need more to do more.

On the new strategy, the master plan for the National Museum is finished. We are coming to the end of our current strategy and we will be reviewing the next one. The strong relationship we enjoy with the National Museum and the other national cultural institutions means we look forward to a more combined approach as we go forward.

Ms Lynn Scarff: The Senator asked what the National Museum of Ireland needs from the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, particularly in terms of the topic we are here to discuss today. The Senator will note from the discussion thus far that there is a significant amount of resource involved in collections loans, delivering programmes, and developing educational events or temporary exhibitions. We need the resources and budget to increase our staff, especially at conservation and curatorial levels and to enable us to bring in expertise. From the point of view of the Local Authority Museums Network, LAMN, appendix 2, attached to the opening statement, sets out the level of engagement of NMI staff throughout the country from the point of view of archaeological digs and engagement with people. This type of interaction takes time. It is a very small team delivering on a legislative role, which is also required to deliver on the role of a national museum. I acknowledge that there has been growth in the past two years but we need more and we need it to be sustainable. Also, many of us are hampered by year-to-year budgets. The ability to plan strategically on a 12 month cycle is difficult. The commitment of Project Ireland 2040 on the capital side, in terms of the opportunities it will provide, has been a very interesting experience for the National Museum. There is great opportunity to consider what those kinds of commitments might look like if stretched beyond a year. This would allow organisations such as the Local Authority Museums Network, the National Museum of Ireland and the Heritage Council to plan at a scale that perhaps we have not been able to in the past.

Mr. Michael Starrett: I will ask Ms Kelly to pick up on the specifics of the questions. It is important to hear two directors of cultural institutions say the same thing. I agree with Ms Scarff that it has become very difficult to get a commitment to invest in people. Ms Kelly

referred earlier to the vacancy in the Heritage Council. Investment in people has been very stringent in a number of sectors, perhaps for good reasons. It has had a very detrimental effect in this sector. Often recruitment will be sanctioned but will be no funds to pay additional staff. There is a real issue for members and Departments to overcome. We need money to invest in the fabric of our society. Getting revenue funding to invest in people, educational programmes and the non-building fabric of this country remains difficult. In terms of how the committee can help, it could work with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Department of Finance to realise that investing in people is not costly in the long run. It brings benefits.

Ms Kelly mentioned that the council may not be able to run a grants programme. The board still has not finalised its budget for next year. This relates to a number of issues. From the Heritage Council's funding point of view, as referenced on the previous occasion we met the committee, since the crash and the 65% cut in its funding, the council has been dependent on receipt of money mid-year from the environment fund. Other heritage services are also dependent on that fund which is made up of the plastic bag tax. That funding has been diminishing and, as a result, we are supporting fewer meaningful programmes. This year we had anticipated a €750,000 allocation from the fund, which is approximately half what we got ten years ago, but I understand we are now to receive only €150,000. This shortfall has implications for the council in 2019 as well. This reliance on the environment fund for heritage services funding mid-year by not only the Heritage Council but the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the National Monuments Service needs to be addressed.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: I mentioned earlier to the Chairman that I would have to leave for approximately five minutes at some point. As I have to leave now, perhaps the remaining witnesses would wait until I get back to give their response to my questions.

Chairman: Okay.

Senator Fintan Warfield: I welcome all of the witnesses. My first question is to Ms Scarff. My boyfriend passed on to me an article from last weekend's *Financial Times*. It states: "As collections cannot be dissociated from the historic crime of colonialism, whether actually looted or not, there is just one appropriate course of action, the authors insist: restitution, the return of works to their rightful owners." This is very much an issue for our local networks as well. The repatriation of what can be identified as stolen treasures or loot can only begin with the national conversation and with the national display of those collections. Ms Scarff said that the National Museum of Ireland is a State repository. Should we be a repository of collections associated with colonialism and which will always be the heritage of indigenous people around the world?

Ms Lynn Scarff: The article in the *Financial Times* was very interesting. I read it myself at the weekend. In his statement of nearly two weeks ago, President Macron was speaking in particular about French collections in relation to Africa and their return. There is a great deal of conversation right now among museums. We recently had a conference in Belfast with colleagues in the Museums Association and there was conversation on this topic there. Repatriation is a constant conversation that is happening within museums and the cultural sector. It is a very current conversation. The National Museum of Ireland's ethnographical collection is comprised of 11,000 objects which were mainly acquired between 1760 and 1914. For the most part, the collection reflects Irish exploration of the world around that time. What is interesting for the museum is that we are coming to the final stages of a publication on that collection. What is particularly interesting around the question of repatriation is the extent to which the wider community is aware of what a museum holds in its collection, in particular in relation to

ethnographic material. As such, publications like this and the digitisation of the collections is crucial. While this is not a collection or area the National Museum currently collects in, it is a collection from our past and it is our responsibility to conserve and look after it.

The repatriation of those objects is an ongoing debate and discussion, and the return of that property and the response to that is usually dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Usually, that is from one cultural sector, generally museum to museum. For example, the National Museum permanently repatriated two *toi moko* tattooed Maori heads to New Zealand in 1990 and entered into conversations on the collection that remained here. I emphasise that there is a criticality in ensuring that information is out there and is accessible and that we are open to conversations and ongoing discussion around it. We also loan many items from the collection on a permanent or temporary basis. A loan of three artefacts is currently at the Royal Academy in London as part of an Oceania exhibition. We have loaned a whaler's hat and a bentwood visor to the Anchorage Museum and we have made another loan to the Vancouver Art Gallery. It is something we are very engaged in and it is an important conversation to have. The National Museum of Ireland has a role to play in that conversation.

On the way here, I met Ms Maeve Sikora, Keeper of Irish Antiquities, whose office is beside an exhibition we are holding currently on Roger Casement. The collection is the collection he assembled during his travels, in particular in Peru and around South America. It has been a wonderful opportunity for us to tell the story of this individual and his work to tell of the plight of people at that time. One has to think about the nuances of this conversation and how these objects, depending on where they are, can offer opportunities for cultural dialogue and new research projects. On the Senator's point, it is crucial that communication happens and is open. As such, publication and more resources to digitise those collections, care for them and get that message out are important.

Senator Fintan Warfield: We are uniquely positioned to have that conversation because of our place in the world. Did Ms Scarff say we could expect a publication?

Ms Lynn Scarff: Yes. It is specifically on our ethnographic collection of 11,000 objects. Perhaps I could correspond with the Senator after the meeting on the exact date of publication. It would be wonderful if the Senator wanted to come and see the collection, if he has a particular interest in it.

Senator Fintan Warfield: I thank Ms Scarff. On storage, the 2040 plan has been mentioned a lot. Is there space within the plan for a national storage site or where are we at with Swords? That question is open to anyone. Is it fit for purpose and are any of our collections at permanent risk because of Swords?

Ms Lynn Scarff: I should speak to Swords as it is the collection resource centre of the National Museum. The care of the collection is the most important element of the work of the National Museum. I reassure everyone in the room that the safeguarding of that is the most important work we do. Developments around Swords are part of ongoing conversations between the museum and our Department and the Office of Public Works, OPW. It is an important piece of our work and we will ensure we arrive at a solution for the collection which is sustainable. Crucially, the solution not only will be sustainable for the collection but also will provide an opportunity for a space and platform for local museums and other regional centres to engage with the collection. There are two elements to this. It is about safeguarding and security, but it is also about access and people having an opportunity to engage with the collection.

Senator Fintan Warfield: On site.

Ms Lynn Scarff: Yes, and visit it. Deputy Niamh Smyth visited following a previous invitation to the joint committee. It is wonderful to see the collection in that context. We will work constantly to ensure it is open to more people.

Senator Fintan Warfield: I thank Ms Scarff.

Chairman: Does any other group wish to comment on the collection space and the protection of collections, including member museum collections?

Mr. William Blair: The essence of the point the Senator made is around the importance of museum ethics. The way we think about, work with and use our collections must be underpinned by a strong ethical framework which takes into account the issues the Senator highlights. The Irish Museums Association is working with European colleagues through the Network of European Museum Organisations, NEMO, around the development of a code of ethics, which is very timely. A code is required to provide a strong reference point and framework for the consideration of some of the complex issues around the collections we have. There is also a need for an audit of our collections across Ireland to understand what we hold, establish a strong baseline of what is there, understand what issues and opportunities the objects present, and how we can strengthen and consolidate collections. There is also a need to deal with issues which may arise from a better understanding of what we hold.

Mr. Liam Bradley: I echo what both speakers have said. Senator Warfield asked a very pertinent question. We have already mentioned the museum standards programme which the entire Local Authority Museum Network has been involved in for many years. I began working in museums nearly 20 years ago and we have gone from pilot studies all the way through. A core part of that is care of collections. It has certainly benefited all of the local authority museums in going to respective councils to make the case for additional funding not only for storage but for collection care. It is that part of the story people do not see that often. We do not get the opportunity to bring them in to see that key part of the work that puts an object on display. One can never have enough storage. We are collecting institutions and collect more objects. We have collections policies in place to help us choose what we want, but collections management is key to what museums do. It is the main part. We have mentioned access to collections, which is another part. We are working on storage with a lot of museums, including our colleagues here from Carlow and Tipperary. The idea of getting access to the stores is such an integral part of whole offering of a museum. We do all the other programmes but the key part we want people to remember consciously is that museums are collections-based institutions. Museums are unique in that sense. They have collections that will be stored for this and future generations. I wanted to make that point in this context. There can never be enough funding for storage. We will always need more. There are always backlogs in the registration and management of the collections, but thanks to the museums standards programme, many museums are ensuring they bring those standards up to specification.

Senator Fintan Warfield: Can I ask one further question?

Chairman: Just one.

Senator Fintan Warfield: On the matter of museum standards, Ms Kelly alluded to the lack of legislation in the area. It is notable that Mr. Bradley mentioned there is no legislation in terms of local museums.

Mr. Liam Bradley: I am sure there is other legislation that would apply, but where the standards are in place, none of that would be covered by legislation. I would be interested in working on that.

Senator Fintan Warfield: I thank Mr. Bradley.

Ms Beatrice Kelly: I thank the Deputy for that question. I want to make it clear that I am not necessarily lobbying for legislation on this but there is a void or a lack of policy framework around museums in general. Any of us could literally set ourselves up as museums if we were to so choose. The definition of a museum takes into account the educational side, the collecting side, the care side and the research side. That is such long-term care for the public good. If there was a policy framework, it could possibly be developed through some of the initiatives the Government has introduced such as Heritage 2030 and even Culture 2025. There are areas where we could have a definition of a museum that is recognised on a State basis rather than our necessarily needing more legislation.

Senator Fintan Warfield: Yes.

Ms Beatrice Kelly: One of the representatives of the Irish Museums Association might also like to comment on that.

Ms Gina O'Kelly: I wish to take this opportunity to talk about some of the issues the museums have noted across the board. Ms Kelly mentioned research, and research for us is one of the key areas we are examining in terms of needing to know what we are dealing with. There are huge discrepancies even in simple matters such as stating the number of museums there are in the country. On the matter of the definition of a museum, we would work very closely with our colleagues from the International Council of Museums. It has a very set definition of museums, which is the one we would adopt. That would go a large part towards us being able to define what a museum is before we are even able to give a completely accurate definition of how many museums there are in the country.

Senator Fintan Warfield: Yes.

Ms Gina O'Kelly: I want to touch on some of the issues the Senator raised. We carried out a survey two years ago and collected information from the museum sector. The first key resource they were seeking was capacity. That was essentially staff, expertise and volunteers. Time was an issue that was very much raised. Most of our museums in Ireland are staffed by fewer than ten paid employees. I have the relevant figures, which are set out in one of the documents I circulated when we forwarded our presentation. More than 40% of museums are very dependent on voluntary and unpaid labour and 16.7% of museums have no paid employees, relying entirely on volunteers to run their museums. The second part of the survey examined funding and fundraising support. Unfortunately, many museums will not be able to apply for many of the initiatives, which have been of great benefit in recent years in particular, because of capacity issues and also long-term considerations. For example, when there is an initiative such as touring exhibition initiative, which realistically a museum will have to propose and present within a series of six months or less at times, such an initiative will not work for some of the smaller museums. Another major issue for the sector was storage and building space. That comes down to examining initiatives and resources that will be provided to some of the smaller museums, in particular, which can focus on research, conservation, collection care and consolidating the collections they have. That would be a very important step forward in supporting those smaller museums.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: I thank the representatives for their very interesting presentations. I must contradict Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell because I know Mr. Liam Bradley personally and he is a very charismatic curator in the Monaghan County Museum and feels passionately about the work he does in it. One only has to walk through the door of the museum to know that this work is a vocation. I compliment him on the work he does for Monaghan County Council and for the entire county in saving, protecting and ensuring our heritage is there for years to come. I also compliment Ms Savina Donohoe who does similar work as the curator of the Ballyjamesduff museum. Much work has been done on the decade of commemorations. It has been tricky work but the museums have all managed to do it in a very sensitive way that has been very inclusive. I have noted that in any of the events I attended. I compliment the representatives on their work.

I have a few questions specific to issues raised in the presentations, and all the representatives may want to comment on them. My first question relates to history as a core subject and the demise or lack of appreciation there seems to be for its importance in the curriculum. One of the representatives of the National Museum, or all the representatives, might wish to comment on that. It is a very important issue and this is the place to discuss it. There is an opportunity here today to ensure that taking history off the curriculum does not become the way forward.

Mr. Bradley referred specifically to the Creative Ireland programme and the benefits it has brought to local authorities and local authority museums. Will he specify the elements of the programme that have been particularly helpful to our local museums and perhaps how it could be improved upon?

I advise Ms Scarff of the National Museum that I have had the pleasure of visiting the centre in Swords and obviously the National Museum next door to us here in the Oireachtas. Will she give us an insight into the museum's amazing visitor numbers, which have doubled in the period since 2004, perhaps with the availability of fewer resources? Most people would think the National Museum would not have the capacity to achieve that based on the funding it has received in that period. Will Ms Scarff comment on how that has been achieved? It is certainly to be recognised and lauded.

Most of the representatives commented on the issue of funds in terms of mobility with respect to the loaning of objects or artefacts. I sense there is a great deal of work to be done to improve that. Perhaps they could inform us as to how we could do that better.

Regarding Brexit, the representatives are here on a very historic day, as mad as it may seem in terms of what is happening. We had a meeting of the Joint Committee on Rural and Community Development this morning which was focused on the impact of Brexit on the Border region. Since June 2016, people have been talking about what will happen in the event of Brexit. As a Deputy representing a Border area, I believe Brexit has already had a substantial impact since the day of the Brexit referendum. Will Mr. Blair or Ms O'Kelly comment on the challenges they have noted that Brexit has posed and those it most certainly will present in the future?

Mr. Starrett or Ms Kelly might comment on the loss of a museum officer and how we might be able to help in that respect. From the presentations of Ms Scarff and Mr. Bradley, it is obvious a museum officer is an important role and link between the Heritage Council and the museum's work. Will Mr. Starrett indicate if there is a heritage officer in every local authority at this stage? Those are specific questions to which I hope to receive specific answers.

Chairman: Who wants to reply first?

Mr. Michael Starrett: I will reply to the questions in reverse order, as that is the easiest way to proceed. There is not a heritage officer within every local authority. There are currently 28, which is fairly near the full complement. I am sure in the fullness of time those which do not have one will see the sense of having one.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: Is that in the gift of local authorities? It is not a given that local authorities must have a heritage officer but, rather, the enthusiasm for the post must be within the authority in the first place.

Mr. Michael Starrett: As Ms Kelly mentioned, it is something which the authority must want to do. The scheme started as a pilot project with three officers in 1999. Its value was very quickly recognised. The chair of the local authority heritage officer network, Ms Shirley Clerkin, made a very animated presentation to the committee approximately one month ago. One of the very supportive steps identified by the committee was moving heritage services within local authorities to the next level by trying to secure funding and encourage people to develop an assistant post to heritage officers. As members are aware, heritage services within each local authority comprise one person with responsibility for a significant amount of work. Heritage officers have great enthusiasm for their work, but if local authorities want to develop heritage services, the officers must be encouraged and supported because they are stretched, as members know. The Heritage Council continues to provide 25% funding for heritage officer posts through local authorities. In spite of our precarious financial situation, we consider it very valuable to do so as it means that we can keep the network of officers tight and working together and provide the sort of training for them to which Ms Kelly alluded in terms of the museum standards programme. There are some gaps to fill but there has been tremendous progress within the local authorities over the past 18 years and our partnership with them is central to that.

Ms Kelly may wish to address the specific vacancy to which Deputy Smyth referred. The filling of the post is complicated by employment control frameworks and getting sanction for recruitment. The post in the council has been vacant for six years. Last week, we recruited a wildlife officer to fill a post vacant for five years. We have a small number of staff and trying to operate without that level of skill and expertise to animate and share with people creates a significant amount of stress. I pay tribute to Ms Kelly who has borne much of that burden for the Heritage Council in the absence of a museums officer.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: I thank Mr. Starrett.

Ms Gina O'Kelly: The Irish Museums Association has very deliberately been working on the issue of Brexit and the museum sector over the past year and a half in particular with one of our colleagues from Ulster University. We work quite closely with third level academics to produce research. We produced a report earlier this year on the impact of Brexit on the museum sector entitled Bridge over Brexit. Its is still functioning.

We recently had the pleasure of having Mr. Bradley form part of a panel at a session in Belfast with an audience of 700 at which some of the impacts of Brexit were discussed. Obviously, it will have an impact across the board. We are considering the impact on funding. Many museums in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland apply for EU funding, and when a museum needs a partner, it is natural for it to look to a museum on the other side of the Border because of our shared history, cultural markers and identity. Brexit will cause issues in terms of storage. We have heard anecdotal information of collections or part thereof being moved to

Dublin, particularly in the corporate collections and independent museums sectors. There is no denying that it will have a huge impact, although we are unsure what that will entail. One of the aims of this project was to identify those issues and to support and acknowledge some of the cross-Border partnerships that have existed and what they have meant for our community in terms of social inclusion, peace and reconciliation. Of course, Mr. Blair has significant expertise in this area.

One of our recommendations was that museums audit themselves. That will be key. We have made guidelines available for museums to do so and see where Brexit will impact on them. It will impact on some museums more than on others but it will have a significant impact, especially in the Border counties, not only on funding but also on staff, resources and skills, which is one of the areas on which the Irish Museums Association aims to work. It supports the museum standards programme for Ireland accreditation by providing training and upskilling and facilitating the exchange of information. We work very closely with our partners in providing those services. Further training needs to be made available to some of our staff to deal with mobility of collections.

Mr. William Blair: I wish to emphasise that we deliberately organised our work around the concept of a bridge over Brexit out of a conscious desire to restate our commitment to overcome these challenges. There is a very strong network of museums within Ireland and there has been a lot of very positive and impactful collaboration between national, regional and local museums. Those bonds are very strong and the term “bridge over Brexit” reflects our determination that those bonds cannot be broken. Whatever disruption that Brexit may bring, the sector here is very coherent and clear in its commitment to maintaining our networks and very strong relationships and continuing to build on those into the future. We will seek to mitigate the adverse impact of Brexit as much as possible. The work we have done has opened that conversation. We have started thinking deeply about Brexit and how we can ensure we are in a position genuinely to mitigate possible adverse impacts and build positively into the future. That is what we have committed ourselves to do through the work we have done.

Mr. Liam Bradley: I thank Deputy Smyth for defending my character. I appreciate it, particularly in a national forum such as this.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: It is true.

Mr. Liam Bradley: I think I am quite jovial most of the time. On Creative Ireland, the first specific element where it has been of benefit is in terms of following on from the Ireland 2016 commemorative programme. As I mentioned in my opening statement, local authority regional museums recognised the significant opportunity offered by the 2016 programme for museums, archives, arts organisations and libraries to tackle the question not just of “what” but also “why” and to delve into that and engender discussion and debate. Community buy-in was the basis of that project and Deputy Smyth knows very well from her first-hand experience how well it went. People felt involved in the 2016 programme which led to Creative Ireland.

Creative Ireland was initially perceived locally and within local authorities as quite nebulous in terms of what it was, what it meant and how it could be nailed down. It was not directly focused on 2016 but had a far broader aspect in regard to what is creativity, which led to the discussion around what is culture. The significant initial benefit was funding, which was helpful in a local context. Various culture groups in each local authority benefited from the extra funding which enabled them to carry out specific projects to take each organisation out of the museum, archive, library or arts focus and to work together. In my experience, it has been of significant

local benefit, for the arts officer, librarian, myself and the heritage officer who addressed the committee last month to meet discuss what we will do collectively on a year-to-year basis. One can often become busy working in a silo and not look outside.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: The creation of the cultural teams has been of particular benefit.

Mr. Liam Bradley: Yes. The collaboration of the cultural teams and their presentations raise the profile of the cultural sector with the public, the local authority officials and elected representatives.

Like the 2016 programme, Creative Ireland is a national programme such that one can meet representatives of other councils and ascertain what they are doing similarly or differently and the outcome of that. It is a way of growing the expertise. It goes back to the point raised by the previous speaker. One can be too busy and it really forces a person to take a national view. In a way, that is what is bringing us here today, the aspect of looking at the bigger picture and, rather than doing a lot in a little area, one does much more in a much bigger sphere.

Originally, the perception of the initiative was that it was focused on the arts as opposed to focused on heritage and culture. That was a perception. It was never a written policy, but what we found from our surveys was that it was arts focused. In the few years since then, we have seen how that has changed and people actually understand there is a cultural and heritage aspect. It is up to us as culture teams to challenge the perception, and we have done that locally. That message has started to get across to people now, that creativity can be anything. It does not have to be painting a picture or something visually artistic. It can be something in heritage and it can be something in museums or in archives. One can be creative in so many different ways. The improvement needs to come from a local level. I will address the point on loaning items.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: History.

Mr. Liam Bradley: I will deal with loans and I will defer to my colleague, Ms McCarthy, who will deal with history. How can we improve the procedures for loaning items? We attended a seminar in the National Gallery of Ireland two years ago on lending objects to national institutions and national institutions lending objects to the greater community. A point that was raised time and again was personal relationships and building up such relationships. I cannot emphasise enough that one can be so busy doing work that one does not realise that another person 20, 30 or 100 miles down the road is doing the same work. We are such a small country, there is no real reason we cannot know exactly what everybody else is doing in a very general sense. Those personal relationships which can be seen today are one major step in how we can improve, and funding is another area where we can improve. I will now defer to Ms McCarthy who will answer the question on history

Ms Judith McCarthy: I wanted to answer this question because I am very passionate about history. I feel the review is so important that we very much need to look at the decision that was taken to take history off the list of core subjects in the curriculum. I am going to say something very controversial. I think it was a really daft decision. I do not know where it came from. I speak a lot to schools and to young people, and a person could go to school and not study history at all because there are schools where, because of the subject choices that students are making even at junior level, the school will not allocate resources to history. A person can go through school and not learn anything more than what he or she learned in primary school, which as we all know we forget as we get older.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: And we do not appreciate it as much.

Ms Judith McCarthy: Absolutely not. One does not appreciate history when one is younger. It is vitally important to us as individuals, communities and a nation that we understand our history. We cannot do that if we have taken it out of our schools, which we have to all intents and purposes. The number of students who are studying history to leaving certificate level is getting smaller and smaller. It seems to me sometimes that we have thrown the baby out with the bathwater. While I acknowledge that STEM subjects are very important, science, technology, maths and all of those-----

Deputy Niamh Smyth: History feeds into all of that.

Ms Judith McCarthy: Absolutely. We seem to have focused on STEM and forgotten about our history, culture and the arts. I know we are bringing arts back into it. It is, as Mr. Bradley was saying, the idea of creativity. Sometimes when we talk about creativity we focus on the arts, but it is much more than that. It is all about our culture. We need to refocus. Reviewing the fact that history is no longer a core subject is the beginning of that. It is very important. I talk to children all the time and it is one of the things that I am always saying to them. We have to understand where we are coming from. We have to understand our history. If we do not know that, then how can we move forward into the future and how can we make better decisions about where we are going? I wonder, if we had a better understanding of our history, whether Brexit would have happened at all.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: Without history, what about our local and national museums?

Ms Judith McCarthy: The museums will become irrelevant, which is a horrendous thing to think, but if people do not have that grounding in their history, they will not understand what it is we are trying to do. We are fighting the good fight at our end with trying to get that across through our museums, but we need the support from our schools and from other areas as well. It is a really important review.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: I agree with Ms McCarthy. It was a daft decision and I hope it will be reversed quickly.

Chairman: It is hoped we will come back to that issue. I thank Ms McCarthy for her comment. I totally agree with her. I am not an unbiased Chairman. We now come to the National Museum of Ireland.

Ms Lynn Scarff: I thank the Chairman. I thank Deputy Smyth for her questions. First I will address her question on visitor numbers. Visitor numbers increased at a time when resources were dropping, which is a statement to the team that existed in the National Museum of Ireland prior to my time. As many members know, I am a recent appointee in the role of director. It is the people with whom I work day to day, such as my colleague, Ms Sikora, and my colleagues in the Public Gallery who continued to deliver programming during a period of serious constraints. To address the other question around history, the increasing number of visitors tells us that there is a significant desire and interest among audiences for the kinds of experiences that we provide in our museum and it demonstrates that what is crucial for us as organisations is to think about our relevance to that.

I will answer the Deputy's history question from a personal perspective. I, too, share the view that history is a crucial subject, but I also think that as we move forward in education and people are thinking of ways that there can be a trans-disciplinary approach to learning, our

museums and cultural spaces can be the platforms by which we do that. Unfortunately, what tends to happen in these kinds of scenarios is that there is very siloed thinking where there is a delivery and a formal education subject that is delivered by the Department of Education and Skills or education experts without including a more rounded, broader, non-formal learning environment, such as museums, art spaces, cultural spaces and local museums. If we think about the kind of learning environment that many of our young children are in today, that learning ecosystem is diverse. It involves local museums, local sports clubs, community groups, art galleries and formal education. There is a real onus on us as people who are working in this sector to think about that ecosystem of learning and how we mutually support that. National initiatives can offer that opportunity. Mr. Bradley spoke very eloquently about the opportunities that were afforded by things like Creative Ireland to bring disparate groups of people together to take a unified approach to something. When we are faced with issues like this around history, it is worth thinking about that meeting of formal and non-formal learning and reflecting back the fact that visitor numbers are growing, not only in the National Museum of Ireland but across all our museum spaces. The interest is growing and it behoves us to think about how we support that more.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: I completely agree with Ms Scarff, and if the numbers of students doing history at leaving certificate level is indicative of anything, we have to say to ourselves that it is not the subject but how we are teaching it. Perhaps we do not have the cross-disciplinary curriculum between the arts, history and geography, which are intrinsically linked. It is very important for any future decision-making that might be on the subject of history. History as a subject is very interesting and we have to look at how we are teaching it.

Ms Lynn Scarff: The Deputy makes a very valid point. In terms of our education programme, we welcome 420,000 participants a year across all of our sites. That is a significant number and our visitors, who range over all ages, are people who are desperately interested in getting involved. That speaks to the idea that at primary level, one has that wonderful crossover of subjects by the nature of the classroom setting. That is difficult to employ further at second level because of the manner in which the constraints work. Museums are cultural spaces. I am not working in the Department of Education and Skills and can view the museum as a cultural space. As a museum, we have an opportunity to offer a non-formal learning space and a place of lifelong learning. Whether one had the opportunity to study history at leaving certificate level, one feels in awe when one walks into the museum in Kildare Street and sees the Prosperous Crozier, which just came into the museum. Those kinds of experiences are crucial. Funding and resourcing and reflecting on joined-up thinking is the opportunity that is there for us all.

Chairman: I have a number of questions. As a former history teacher, I will defend how we teach history. The issue is how we value it rather than the teaching. Most teachers are genuinely enthusiastic about it and often the issue is about the way the curriculum and timetable are set out. If one is teaching history first thing on a Monday morning or last thing on a Friday, it is very difficult to motivate students. Teachers sometimes do not have the resources to visit sites, which is one of the constraints and the reason sometimes students visit sites only when they are in transition year. In some cases they have not studied the subject for their junior certificate or have been in the classroom but did not take part in it and have no intention of taking it as a subject in the leaving certificate. Teachers try to motivate them but sometimes the subjects have been already decided on by the mother and father. Some subjects are not valued as much as others. That is part of the reason history is not a compulsory subject.

I have a number of questions but I will not ask all of them. One of the ideas behind bringing

the witnesses here today is to ask them to lay out the challenges for us so we can pass them on to the Department on behalf of the witnesses and the people who have elected us. We will try to be the conduit for the witnesses in overcoming the issues they have.

My father was in the National Museum for too long. He escaped. He took early retirement because of bureaucracy. He continues working to this day. At the time, things were a lot worse in the National Museum in terms of our collection and how we kept some material. He said, even at that time, material went missing from the national collection. He cannot prove it because there was not a full record. There are 4 million pieces in the collection and 17,000 will be in one production soon. It is welcome in particular for people who are students. It is true for all museums. Digitisation means people do not have to visit museums to look at items. More and more often people are using computers to view collections and then they visit and see them *in situ*. Is it a big challenge to get material on site for the National Museum and for smaller museums?

During the run-up to the centenary events of 1916, I was involved with the Richmond Barracks projects. I was on the board. One of the projects we managed to encourage Dublin City Council to do was a full-day event where the library service encouraged local people to bring their heirlooms. They scanned them if that was possible and photographed and recorded them. They did not want to add to the collection because they were not in a position to purchase or guarantee an object but at least they know what is around locally as a result. It was a very useful event and was hugely oversubscribed. Families wanted there to be a record if, God forbid, there was a fire and the object was destroyed. I encourage people to do the same when they come to me with materials such as old election posters or, in one case, every communication written on Rizla paper from a H-Block prisoner to his mother. It is still in a plastic bag in the attic despite me requesting them to scan them. I do not want to read them. I do not care what is in them but they could be there for future generations of his family. I try to encourage people but there is a fear, which we discussed with a group last week, that when a person gives material to a collection it is the last the person will see of it. I ask the witnesses consider that issue.

With regard to the point made by Senator Warfield, we have material that in this politically correct era should not be on display in Ireland and should be repatriated. It would be a huge loss to our national collections if we were to repatriate everything of dubious background. For instance, we have mummies. Logically, mummies should not be in a museum. We should not be staring at bodies of any type in a museum. To where do we send them? Who is the family? Perhaps we should look at creating faithful copies. Sometimes that is what one sees in a museum because of the dangers of light and everything else so the original is kept in a more secure place. More and more, it is possible for that to be done. Rather than sharing with or loaning to local museums, the national collection should replicate objects. I do not know how many copies of the Sam Maguire cup are floating around but I definitely do not think the real one gets traipsed around every GAA club in Dublin or Kerry when the team wins. I understand it is costly.

One of the issues that was mentioned concerned Roger Casement. The British hold a lot of material that does not belong to them. When Roger Casement was arrested, they took a big case that belonged to him and kept it. It was not used. That includes the diaries, which belong to the Casement family. They were not used in the court case. They are not legal documents. There is much material like that. Of late, the English have been very good at giving permanent loans. The former mayor of Dublin, Críona Ní Dhálaigh asked for the Fianna Éireann flag from the national collection in England and the ambassador here managed to secure it on permanent loan. It is in the museum under City Hall. That type of collaboration occurs and there should

be much more of it so material that belongs in an Irish collection is in an Irish collection.

Some of my questions are for the representatives of the smaller museums in particular. I have discouraged some groups around the country from setting up museums. Sometimes they clash with me. I discourage it on the basis that they need staff, a building, insurance and security. Rather than creating a new museum, it might be more appropriate to mark a site and encourage the local museum, local council museum or the National Museum to have a specific collection. Do the witnesses agree? There are costs associated and they are increasing as we protect material. Restoration costs are also high. I was at the museum when the decade of centenaries was being discussed before this and the last Government was in office. I am the longest serving member of the decades of commemorations committee since 2005. I have been around too long. I was there when they were discussing the Asgard and the huge costs associated. It is one of the projects on which I must congratulate the museum. As an exhibition I could not envisage it but it works.

They are probably the only questions I have for now. I do not understand why the State does not invest a lot more in our museums and cultural institutions, especially national and local ones where there is no entry charge. It is commented upon by most tourists when they are told entry to these institutions is free. In other countries, one has to pay a sometimes substantial amount to visit national collections. The State does not invest to the degree it should, given how central our museums and cultural institutions are to our tourism, apart from how important they are to us. This committee, from what I have heard since I became Chairman, has enthusiastic supporters of increasing funding for cultural institutions. If there were any questions in my ramblings, the witnesses can address them.

Ms Lynn Scarff: I will address the Chairman's question about digitisation, which is crucial work. The National Museum of Ireland is currently working on it. We are entering into the second phase of an inventory project and following on from that there will be the digitisation of the collection. I sometimes think there is not much knowledge of the extent of resources needed to digitise a collection. People often think it is merely a photograph. As the Chairman would be aware, by the time the data and metadata are recorded so an item can be accessible for all, wherever they are, significant resources are needed. Our national collection is outstanding and includes some of the best collections globally, in certain areas, and should be accessible from anywhere in the world. The areas with which we struggle most in terms of digitisation - this may sound like a broken record - is capacity, resources and having the right kind of people and expertise within the team of the National Museum on a sustainable basis. Digitisation of collections often comes to us through a capital allocation which presents difficulties relating to staffing and resources, as the committee has heard. I thank the Chairman for asking that question to bring it to the committee's notice.

The Chairman mentioned people in local communities and objects they have. One of the most successful projects on which we have been working recently, which I mentioned in my opening statement, is the Irish Community Archive Network, iCAN, project, which is supported by Creative Ireland. The website where people can upload those experiences is www.ouririshheritage.org. Our keeper, Ms Sikora, her colleagues and many of our colleagues in the National Museum of Ireland regularly answer questions from the public who say that a relative donated an item and we are able to find it. The chair of our board recently came with her family to see a duck that they donated to the Natural History Museum. It is important for people to know that when those objects are donated to our collection, we take great care of them. We will respond to those kinds of requests.

Mr. William Blair: The Chairman raised a number of important issues. Museums always have a particular set of fixed costs relating to their collections because of the associated long-term duty of care. We have to think hard about sustainability and what a coherent, strong, sustainable museum sector for Ireland is, and to build with that in mind. It is challenging for existing museums to be responsive to some of the issues that arise at a local level regarding how they work with other groups on addressing some of the issues that come forward and where local communities feel that something needs to be addressed. We should ask the community sector to help us to unlock the potential within our collections. We hold these collections for society. They are not our collections except in the broadest sense. Unlocking that potential is a great opportunity for museums. Museums are changing and it is important to recognise that and to think more carefully about their role and purpose in society, and the social and economic impact they can make. Museums, at their best, are on that agenda, in building social cohesion, supporting local economic development etc. These are all within the power of museums to contribute.

Part of the process of unlocking potential is placing access to collections front and centre, thinking carefully about our audiences, being responsive to audience needs and how our audience is changing. Museums also have to change. We have to think, act and behave differently to be fully responsive to the way in which society is changing and to make sure we are in tune with the broader social trends, and that we retain our relevance. Museums are, at their best, relevant institutions where we can explore all sorts of issues that really matter. They are very future-focused institutions. They are part of the creative industries and they are creative institutions. That is the argument we should make with regard to our importance to society as we move forward. It is not simply about looking to the past but understanding it as a touch-point to our present and to what kind of future we can create.

Chairman: The witnesses mentioned 300 museums in their presentation, or is that 300 members?

Ms Gina O’Kelly: That is 300 members.

Chairman: Does anybody have an idea of how many museums we have on the island? I presume that is recorded.

Ms Gina O’Kelly: There are approximately 178 museums in the Republic. Maybe two thirds of those are outside the national cultural institutions and local authority museums. Some join as organisations and some as individuals. Many smaller museums join the Irish Museums Association on an individual level purely because it is more cost-effective for them to do that. We are happy for them to do so. That is not to say we do not engage with more collection-based organisations around the country. The Chairman raised museums that are struggling. A significant issue when we are talking with collection-based institutions or organisations is fully explaining the remit of a museum and the difference between a permanent exhibition and a museum, with the many roles they need to take on. We are sometimes in a position where we dissuade people.

It is important that we consolidate what we have. One of our biggest collections of transport material is run entirely by volunteers in Howth. One of our biggest maritime collections is held in Dún Laoghaire and is entirely run by volunteers. Two weeks ago, I had a four-day expertise and knowledge-sharing course on museum basics with a group of 20 people from maritime collections across the country. I think only one of those was a member of the association. The rest are not necessarily members but it does not mean we are not engaging with them. There is not necessarily a need to create more museums but to consolidate what we have, recognise the role

they play and their contribution.

Mr. Liam Bradley: The Chairman made a point about the challenges of setting up new museums and convincing people to loan and donate objects. There is always a challenge working with people to get them to give their objects or images which are important to the family. It is sometimes a long-term discussion with family members. A number of years can pass before they come back and give an answer one way or the other. The answer may be “No” or it may be “Yes”. Sometimes an item is bequeathed to us after someone has passed away because we spoke to that person a decade previously and he or she considered the matter thereafter. This long process is worthwhile. The regional museums that participate in the local authority museum network are aware of the collections that are out there. We know who has certain items in attics and basements. While the costs involved can be prohibitive at times, we would like the network of local authority museums to grow so that they become county museums. Obviously, there are many museums with various focuses. County museums are unique because they tell the stories of their regions. As their remit is not confined to specific collections, they are much more open and much more able to take in everything and anything. We take in things from County Monaghan and things that have very tenuous links to the county but are part of the county’s story nonetheless. We believe there is a need for more local authority museums. It is something that we will be looking at in our own plan. We will consider how we can advocate for that with other local authorities. We have spoken to a number of local authorities that have looked into this. We will continue to support them. I believe that if we do not maintain our efforts, collections and stories will be lost.

The museum in County Monaghan has a number of replicas of objects relating to the county that are in the national museum. There are ways around the difficulties that can arise in this regard. While it can be costly to do replicas, there are benefits when children and others can come in and see them. The Tydavnet sun discs, which were discovered in County Monaghan, are the emblem of the national museum. People are very aware of them because they are the largest gold discs in the country. They want to see them. If they are unable to see them in Dublin, they can see replicas of them in Monaghan. If we cannot get an exact object, there are ways around that. I ask my colleague, Ms McCarthy, to respond to the questions that were asked about digitisation in the context of the regional museums.

Ms Judith McCarthy: I would like to echo what Mr. Bradley has been saying. Digitisation is very important for us, but it is a challenge. There is no doubt financial and human resourcing challenges arise in this context. Our museum, which has a collection of approximately 7,000 objects, has four staff who have very specific roles and responsibilities. Unfortunately, digitisation is not one of our duties. We are busy engaging with the public on exhibitions and outreach work and caring for our collections. Digitisation has resource implications. This is more often seen in the archive and library sectors. The National Archives of Ireland have done amazing work to digitise some of their collections, such as the military archives. The work that has been done to digitise materials has been particularly evident during the decade of centenaries. Funding has been provided for that. We would like to see more work being done in the smaller museums. I am speaking from my own perspective when I say we do not have the resources to do this work at the moment. We do some work on an ad hoc basis, for example when we have a temporary exhibition. At the moment, we have an exhibition looking at the emigration of women from Donegal. When people bring things like photographs and letters into us, we scan that material and retain the copies in our collection while returning the original items to their owners. It is done on an exhibition by exhibition basis. We are certainly not doing it on any sort of coherent basis.

Ms Beatrice Kelly: On the question of digitisation and preservation, the local authority museums need a national infrastructure of some form on which to stash these things. Digitisation brings with it responsibilities in the area of digital preservation, which is a significant expense and headache. It requires long-term planning. We all need to consider this issue, which extends beyond the cultural sector. That is a discussion for another day. Research from Europeana has shown that digitisation deepens existing links with objects and things, but does not widen audiences. This brings us back to the point that was made earlier about the value that people place on items. If people do not know that a collection is available online, they will not find it or look for it. Education is the key to making people curious. Denying people their right to their history is a form of denial of human rights. That is how we should be looking at this. It is clear from looking at the difficulties we have had in this country when people have been denied their pasts that we need to look at the collective basis of what we are now possibly replicating by denying.

Mr. Michael Starrett: The Chairman's question about the number of museums in Ireland took me back to the last century. One of the very first pieces of research undertaken by the Heritage Council involved looking at the state of collections in Ireland. It ran a pilot scheme in three counties. Things were so bad that the pilot scheme stopped. The museum standards programme was born out of that. The programme has made a tremendous difference over the past 20 years, particularly in the member institutions ranging from the smallest to the largest. It is worth bearing in mind that things were very bad. We have come a long way. As the need to emphasise the value of collections is more fully understood, I plead with the State to focus on private collections that are deteriorating without any care or attention. Over the next decade, if the State in its wisdom can find a way to resolve some of the issues with its existing collections, perhaps it can also find a way to encourage people to come forward with their private collections. If those people are guided appropriately, they can do much of the conservation. This will enable us to make accessible a plethora of really important information about the society in which we live. I share entirely the Chairman's view on the information on Roger Casement that is held by the British. May I suggest, somewhat mischievously, that the general data protection regulation, GDPR, could be invoked in this respect before the UK leaves the EU? All of the information in question is personal data and therefore belongs to the family. Why not invoke something under the GDPR? We would never know what we might get.

Chairman: It might be a case of the family making a request. Sometimes we forget to ask.

Ms Maeve Sikora: I work in the Irish antiquities division, which is the archaeological section of the museum. We carry out many of the statutory roles for which the national museum is responsible. When something is found in any part of the country, we go there to investigate. In my experience, our relationships with the curators who are designated under the National Cultural Institutions Act and the National Monuments Act to work on behalf of the museum to protect this heritage are critically important. The staff in the counties that have this invaluable facility, as Donegal did this summer, always find that it is a really positive experience. Speaking personally and on behalf of the museum, I would love to see local authorities investing in designating museums for every county.

Chairman: Very good. We will champion that one as well. I am not sure what Senator O'Donnell is going to ask. I will tell her if it has been asked already.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: I apologise for having to leave, but I wanted to participate in the Seanad debate on the legislation that has been introduced on foot of the repeal of the eighth amendment, which is a very profound issue. We were talking to the Minister about

some amendments we wanted to make. Regardless of whether one is pro-choice or pro-life, one will agree that this is a profound matter. I wanted to be in the Seanad when the Minister was considering certain amendments. That was the only reason I left.

I understand that the Michael Davitt Museum in Straide, which is one of the most beautiful little museums in the country, has been already mentioned. I wonder how we can get it to stay open.

Ms Gina O’Kelly: The Michael Davitt Museum is part of the standards programme. Like many small museums, it is open for short periods of time, unfortunately. Such museums sometimes open for a couple of hours in the morning or at the weekend, or open seasonally. The Michael Davitt Museum is doing some amazing work.

Senator Marie-Louise O’Donnell: I know the museum well, but every time I pass it, it is closed.

Chairman: According to the information available to me, the museum is run by volunteers.

Ms Beatrice Kelly: It is mainly staffed through a community employment scheme.

Senator Marie-Louise O’Donnell: That is right.

Ms Beatrice Kelly: Its staff are excellent people. This is an example of the creativity of the museum sector. Schemes that were designed for other types of work are being used to assist this sector. More support is needed. The heritage and museum sector has the potential to provide significant long-term employment in highly skilled positions throughout the country, including in rural areas.

Chairman: Hear, hear.

Senator Marie-Louise O’Donnell: Does Ms Kelly believe that Mayo County Council should do more to keep the museum open every morning of the week, through the winter months and in the early summer?

Ms Beatrice Kelly: It depends on the support. Mayo and those who run the museum must come to some form of agreement. I would not like to say what they must do but there has to be some form of permanent support.

Senator Marie-Louise O’Donnell: Absolutely.

Ms Beatrice Kelly: Whether it is the local authority or another organisation almost does not matter.

Senator Marie-Louise O’Donnell: The Country Life museum, a very distinctive and distinguished museum, kind of gets caught in the hedge itself then. The point really is the one all of the witnesses are making. Funding is terribly important. Having people to run things is as important as the building itself. The preservation of the building can happen only if people are there to open the door and bring in schools and art centres. Mr. Starrett made the very good point that we are great at building places and decking them out. We did it with theatres all over the country but we forgot that people have to run them. The energy and passion of the person is important. It is a small example of a larger issue.

Chairman: Cuirfimid scor leis an díospóireacht. We conclude our consideration. Gabhaim

12 DECEMBER 2018

buíochas leis na finnétithe ón Ard-Mhúsaem, the Local Authority Museum Network, the Irish Museums Association and an Chomhairle Oidhreachta. I hope we will be able to communicate with them as we develop our work as a committee. We have to discuss how exactly to move forward. We may ask the Department or the Minister to come before us to answer some of the questions the witnesses have raised and to elaborate on policy positions to ensure we end up with a better museum network which serves the needs of the future as outlined by the witnesses. I support them wholeheartedly.

The joint committee went into private session at 3.48 p.m. and adjourned at 4.07 p.m. *sine die* .