

CULTURE COMMITTEE CC 02-03 p4

Date: 22 January 2003

Time: 9.00am - 12.30pm

Venue: Committee Room 1, National Assembly for Wales



PRESENTATION BY THE COUNCIL OF MUSEUMS IN WALES

Introduction

The Council of Museums in Wales (CMW) is a sponsored body of the Welsh Assembly Government. We are a membership organisation, and represent Local Authority, Independent and Trust Museums in Wales.

We operate from offices in Cardiff and Wrexham.

Our main strategic objectives are to:

- improve standards in museum collection care,
- develop public services in museums,
- develop the museum workforce,
- increase the knowledge of museum collections in Wales, and
- provide a strategic overview for our members, the Welsh Assembly Government and others of museum provision in Wales.

We do this through advocacy, strategic planning and development, standards development, targeted grant aid, information gathering, the provision of training support, and in advisory services.


The Past and the Future

CMW was founded in 1967 and was one of 12 Area Museum Councils in the UK. Over the last 35 years it has been the prime mover in museum development in Wales. Through its support, advice and grant aid, standards have risen significantly, and many new museums opened, safeguarding significant heritage assets. For many years CMW also provided direct services to its members, notably in display and conservation, but no longer does so.

In 2004 CMW will cease to be funded by the Welsh Assembly Government, and most of its functions transferred a new unit, CyMAL (Museums, Archives and Libraries Wales). A number of significant initiatives currently being delivered through CMW will need to be further developed and sustained by this new unit. This paper highlights some of these.

Standards Development

1. CMW works with Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries to develop the Museum Registration Scheme. Museums registered under this scheme meet minimum standards of collection care, public service, and management. CMW was the only Area Museum Council in the UK to complete Phase 1 to Phase 2 registration within the timescale set by Resource. There are currently 81 Registered Local Museums in Wales (38 local authority, 43 independent). CMW is working with other museums to enable them to attain registered status. CMW is one of 3 pilot areas in the UK to trial Phase 3 Museum Registration.

- 
2. CMW has recently initiated a Serious Incident Planning Initiative (SIPI) to ensure correct standards of preparedness for any incidents that may occur in member museums.
 3. CMW supports a wide range of collection management issues such as documentation, storage and conservation through advice and grant aid.

Information

1. CMW has recently published "Museum Mapping 2002". For the first time there is quantitative and qualitative data on collections and public services in Welsh Museums (including the National Museums & Galleries of Wales) to inform the Welsh Assembly Government, Local Authorities and others. This work will need constant updating. CMW also collects a number of performance indicators annually on Welsh museums.
2. In the last two years CMW has collected detailed data on museum admission charges, the effects on museums of the Foot and Mouth disease outbreak, and on museum collections e.g. Sports Collections.

Partnerships

CMW is increasingly involved in partnerships, working to further the cause of local museums in Wales.

1. Cyfoeth Cymru Gyfan – Sharing Treasures. The Welsh Assembly Government has channelled additional funding through CMW to develop 3 pilot schemes. These will enable closer working

between NMGW and local museums. Oriel Ynys Môn, Wrexham Museum and Brecknock Museum will receive additional funding for infrastructure development. Significant loans from NMGW will result. It is confidently expected that this initiative will be rolled out to other museums throughout Wales in the future.

2. CMW is leading a Survey of Archaeological Archives with NMGW and RCAHMW to quantify the extent of material from excavations that is to be deposited in museums or archives.
3. Other partnerships in which CMW are involved are the Portable Antiquities Scheme (with NMGW and the Welsh Archaeological Trusts) and the Gathering the Jewels project.
4. MEMORIA – Helping Memory Institutions meet the future is CMW’s first EU project. Working with partners in Italy, Spain, Holland and England (and with local museums in Monmouthshire and Newport as test beds), the project will trial new museum based software to access museum collections in innovative ways.
5. We act as expert advisers to the Heritage Lottery Fund on museum and related applications.

Strategic Planning and Development


1. Surveys of collections held in museums in Wales, or in groups of particular museums, have been an important part of CMW’s work. Recently published is a survey of collections held in Welsh Universities, *Dining Amongst the Bones*, which raises serious concerns for a number of significant collections. CMW is currently giving modest support as a result but more investment will be needed in the future.
2. During the Foot and Mouth Disease Outbreak CMW commissioned a report on Agriculture and Rural Life Museums and collections in Wales. This report highlighted the difficulties these museums face in addressing contemporary rural issues. Again CMW is giving support but more will be needed in the future to enable museums to reflect the changes in farming today.
3. As part of strategic planning we have supported a number of feasibility studies both for local authorities and independent trusts to provide a firm basis for future development. Studies for Neath Port Talbot, Caerphilly, and Cardiff Councils, and at the Usk Rural Life Museum have been undertaken recently.
4. Perhaps CMW’s major achievement has been in supporting museum development through the Subsidised Post scheme. Begun in 1982, a total of 47 posts have been grant-aided and have significantly increased capacity in the Welsh museum domain. We also support shorter term posts for more specific purposes. In many cases these posts are a catalyst for community museum

development.

5. CMW was disappointed not to receive extra funding in 2003/04 to support work on Disability Audits in museums. These are of paramount importance now and in the future.

CMW's Core Services

1. Our advisory service, on a wide variety of issues, is valued by all our members especially by Independent Museums who often have no professional staff. Local Authority museum services are in the main small and also need this type of support.

2.  A minimum of 35% of core grant from the Welsh Assembly Government is allocated as grant aid to members. CMW has been pleased to receive extra funds to give as grant aid, from the Capital Modernisation Fund (CMF) for ICT, and as Challenge Funding for Innovation and Access. These have been very successful but the CMF ended in 2002 and the Innovation Fund terminates in 2003/04. Further funding is needed to maintain the momentum.

3. CMW's Training Programme is vital to workforce development especially in a country where there are comparatively few museum professionals. CMW has acted as an NVQ centre until very

recently and works very closely with training providers to ensure all sections of the profession in Wales are able to access appropriate training.

The Future

CyMAL will be operational from April 2004. CMW expects that the new unit will continue to deliver all the direct services to museums that have been provided by CMW. CMW is particularly concerned that the significant independent sector in museums in Wales (which is not present in libraries or archives) continues to have access to targeted support, advice and grant aid. In addition we look to seeing new opportunities to work both within the museum domain, but also cross-sectorally with archives and libraries. The funding and staffing levels proposed indicates that this should happen, but the tone and direction of the new unit are not yet known.