

Culture Committee CC 02-03 p5

Date : 22 January 2002

Time : 9:00am – 12-30pm

Venue: Committee Room 1, National Assembly for Wales

REPORT OF THE MINISTER FOR CULTURE, SPORT AND THE WELSH LANGUAGE

THE NATIONAL WATERFRONT MUSEUM SWANSEA (NWMS)

1. As Members know, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) awarded a grant of £11.1m towards the project for a new museum in Swansea. The award was subject to the NWMS Company, the National Museums & Galleries Wales and the City and County of Swansea entering into an agreement on HLF's standard terms relating to the payment of grant, the effect being that NMGW will be jointly and severally liable to repay grant to HLF in the event of the new museum closing within the lifetime of the HLF grant.

2. NMGW sought confirmation from the Welsh Assembly Government that financial support would be provided if they are called upon to repay the grant. Such provision would incur a contingent liability and, consequently, is a notifiable transaction. I, therefore, made a Statement, pursuant to Standing Order 19.13, on Wednesday 4 December giving notice of my intention to authorise a notifiable transaction. No Assembly Members sought a debate on the issue, and consequently, I sent a letter of comfort to the President of NMGW on 19 December.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW MUSEUM

3. I am pleased to say that a start has been made on site. Rosemary Butler, as Chair of the NWMS Board, has invited the First Minister to officially launch the new museum on 10 February.

NATIONAL MUSEUMS & GALLERIES OF WALES (NMGW)

4. I met the President of NMGW, Mr Paul Loveluck, and Acting Director, Dr Eurwyn Wiliam, on 17 December. We had constructive discussions on issues arising from free entry and the Budget Planning Round. I was interested to know about progress on the consultation exercise on the future display of art; the President made it clear that the final report will not be available until the spring. We also discussed Governance issues arising from the recent Quinquennial Review: this is an ongoing issue, on which I will report to Committee in due course. I also asked the President to invite members

of the Conservative Group and other parties to visit the National Gallery at the Cathays Park site as I promised at Plenary on 4 December 2002.

NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDEN FOR WALES (NBGW)

5. I have now had the opportunity along with other Ministers to consider the report submitted by KPMG. In a detailed report, KPMG have analysed the financial position of the Garden and set out possible funding options for the future.

6. We recognise that the NBGW is important as a landmark project and also in terms of the local tourism economy of South West Wales.

7. I expect an announcement to be made shortly.

BBC WALES : "THE TREASURE HOUSE"

8. Members will wish to know that BBC2 Wales is showing a six part documentary series called "The Treasure House" about the National Museums & Galleries of Wales. The series takes a behind-the-scenes look at the Museum's collections and the vital work of conservators and curators in preparing objects for public display.

9. The first programme on 9 January featured the Museum's outstanding art collections, focusing on Renoir's painting "La Parisienne" which is more popularly known as the *Blue Lady*. The second programme looked at the Roman sarcophagus in the Roman Legionary Museum in Caerleon, which I saw when I visited the site recently. I would urge all Members to follow the remaining four programmes of this very interesting series - it is transmitted at 19:30 on Thursdays.

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES COUNCIL, WALES (LISC(W))

10. I met the Chair of LISC(W), Mrs Linda Tomos, on 19 December.

LISC(W) is the Assembly Sponsored Public Body that advises me on library and information issues and helps to promote best practice in the field. We had constructive discussions on the excellent work undertaken and planned by LISC(W) under her chairmanship and the positive approach the Council has taken to the advent of CyMAL: Museums, Archives and Libraries, in working towards presenting the new body with a variety of ground-work projects in the library and information field.

11. LISC(W) will cease to exist on the establishment of CyMAL in April 2004 but, given the wide-ranging and innovative nature of the projects in which it is and will be involved until that time, the Committee might like to consider inviting the Chair to give a presentation on the Council's work.

NATIONAL EVENTS STRATEGY

12. Stevens and Associates, a Swansea-based consultancy firm specialising in the leisure and tourism sectors, have been appointed to assist in the development of the strategy. Work is well underway and the consultants aim to produce a draft report for consideration by the Events Strategy Group, which I chair, in early March. The final report will be produced by the end of March.

ARTS COUNCIL OF WALES: APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

13. The Assembly Government is currently running an appointments exercise for the post of Chair of the Arts Council of Wales (ACW) from 1 April 2003. The post was advertised in the press in December 2002 and the closing date for applications was 16 January. I expect to announce the outcome before the end of the financial year.

VISIT TO THE ARTS COUNCIL OF WALES

14. On 14 January, I visited the Arts Council's Main Office and South Wales Office, which are both situated in Museum Place, Cardiff. The purpose of my visit was to talk to staff and hear their views about working at the Arts Council now that the restructuring exercise is complete. I found the visit most worthwhile.

15. I also spoke with ACW about the work of the Strategic Unit and the Capital Programme, and also about the work with young people and cultural diversity.

LAUNCH OF THE VENICE BIENNALE

16. I was delighted to be at the launch of Wales at the Venice Biennale of Art on the 14th January. Welsh artists will represent the nation at the world famous Biennale for the first time this year and their names were announced by the ACW on 13 January. They are: Paul Seawright, Cerith Wyn Evans, Simon Pope and Bethan Huws. The International Exhibition of Art which first took place in 1895 has previously paved the way for artists such as John Constable and JMW Turner. This is another coup for the arts in Wales.

17. The 2003 Biennale is an important year for the festival as it marks its 50th anniversary and Wales will have its own pavilion at the festival in the former Dreher Brewery where the work of the chosen artists will be shown.

18. The Venice Biennale is probably the most established and highly respected visual arts festival in the world. The works of Welsh artists being displayed at this prestigious festival will increase Wales' international profile and highlight the artistic talent we have on offer. Welsh representation at the Biennale comes only a few months after the Artes Mundi, the World's largest visual arts prize, was launched in Cardiff. It is another opportunity for us to promote to the rest of the world the wealth and quality of our visual arts network. It also follows on from the success of Wales' presence at the Lorient Inter-Celtic Festival in August last year.

19. I am delighted that the Assembly Government has made a direct financial contribution to the festival, and that the Arts Council of Wales, Wales Trade International and the Wales Tourist Board

are working in partnership to secure the Wales presence.

SPORTS CABINET MEETING

20. I attended a Sports Cabinet meeting on 8 January in Edinburgh.

The meeting was chaired by Tessa Jowell MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and provided an opportunity for home country Ministers to discuss sport policy and a wide arrange of issues related to sport. Also present were Chairs of all the Sports Councils in the UK.

21. Amongst the issues discussed was the recent joint report prepared by the Strategy Unit and DCMS which focuses on how the delivery of sport can be made more efficient and how funding can be targeted more effectively for athletes and participants at all levels.

VISIT TO MENTER IAITH, RHONDDA CYNON TAF

22. I visited Menter Iaith Rhondda Cynon Taf on 11th January to launch a seminar workshop. The visit provided me with an opportunity to find out more about the work of this particular Menter and to outline the Assembly Government's priorities as set out in *Iaith Pawb*.

CRIMINAL RECORDS BUREAU

23. I am pleased to report that the difficulties surrounding the provision of Welsh language forms by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) are being resolved. Following representations by the Assembly Government, the Home Office has now asked the CRB to ensure that all forms associated with the disclosure process are available in Welsh. We would anticipate these forms being available within the next couple of weeks.

S4C AND BBC BOARD OF GOVERNOR APPOINTMENTS

24. Carys Howell has been appointed as a Board member for S4C with effect from 1st January. Ms Howell has worked for the National Trust for the past 13 years, following a career as a producer and reporter for BBC radio and television. She is a member of the Wales Tourist Board and of the Advisory Panel of the Museum of Welsh Life.

25. Professor Merfyn Jones, currently Professor of History at Bangor University and the Broadcasting Standards Commission's Member for Wales, has been appointed BBC Welsh Governor as from 1st January, taking over from Roger Jones.

TWF (LANGUAGE TRANSFERENCE IN THE FAMILY) MEETING

26. On 19th December, I met representatives from the TWF project along with officials from the Welsh Language Board to receive an update on the project and to find out about proposals for academic funding to conduct further research into language transference.

WELSH LANGUAGE BOARD 6 MONTHLY MEETING

27. I met the Chair and Chief Executive of the Welsh Language Board on 19th December for our 6 monthly meeting. This provided me with an opportunity to ask the Board, amongst other things, how they will contribute to the delivery of the Assembly Government's strategy as set out in *laith Pawb*, and their plans to develop a regional presence.

WELSH BOOKS COUNCIL 6 MONTHLY MEETING

28. I met the Chair and Director of the Welsh Books Council on 19th December for our 6 monthly meeting. This provided me with an opportunity to ask the Council, amongst other things, to provide an update as to how they are delivering the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group on Publishing and the development of a marketing strategy.

DRAFT REPORT ON THE ROYAL COMMISSION FOR THE ANCIENT AND HISTORICAL MONUMENTS OF WALES

29. I attach a note to Members from Martin Rolph (Financial Planning Division), who has carried out the quinquennial review of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. His note attaches his draft report and he invites Members to provide comments they may have before the end of February. Following consideration of any comments received, Martin will submit the final version of his report to Ministers for consideration at which point the Welsh Assembly Government will make its response.

30. You will see his key recommendations include one that the Commission continues, for the time being, to exist in broadly its current form, but with a transformed basis which brings control over its overall functions and existence within the Assembly which funds it.

31. The review identifies a merger with Cadw as the option whose advantages and disadvantages are most worthy of reconsideration in the longer term, but recommends that any decisions on the transfer of functions into or out of the Commission await the Welsh Assembly Government's decisions relating to the whole field of the historic environment of Wales - when it has considered the report of the consultants currently engaged on a review of this wider topic. Sue Essex, who commissioned those consultants, has indicated that she will be issuing their report for public consultation before we consider potential next steps.

32. In discussing Martin Rolph's report of the quinquennial review of Cadw, EPT Committee members asked that they be sent copies of the draft report on the Commission, given its relevance to the historic environment as well as the culture of Wales. This will be done by Sue Essex in her report to that committee on 5 February

ACTION FOR COMMITTEE

33. With reference to paragraph 11, the Committee is asked to consider inviting the Chair of LISC(W) to give a presentation on the Council's work.

34. With reference to paragraphs 29 – 32, the Committee is asked to provide comment to Martin Rolph on the draft report on *the Royal Commission for the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales* – by end February 2003.

Jenny Randerson AM

Minister for Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language

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Annex

MINISTER'S VISITS FROM 19 DECEMBER – 22 JANUARY

January

Visit and lunch Dr Russell Rhys and

Ffwrwm Arts Stryd Fawr, Caerleon

Visit to Roman Legionary Museum

at Caerleon Caerleon, Newport

Sports
Cabinet
Murrayfield
Stadium,
Edinburgh

Attend
BBC
Sports
Personality
of 2002 St
Davids
Hall, Cardiff

Launch
Venice
Biennale
NMGW,
Cathays

Visit ACW
South
Wales and
Head
Office
Museum
Place,
Cardiff

Launch
the Oriel
Davies
Gallery
Newtown,
Powys

Speak at
WMC
Laying
Slate
Ceremony
Cardiff Bay