

Culture Committee - CC-11-01(p2)

Date: 20 June 2001
Time: 9.00am - 12.30pm
Venue: Committee Room 1, National Assembly Building

Background paper on Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries

Purpose

To provide the Committee with background information on the establishment by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) of *Resource: the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries*.

Background

In December 1998 the Department for Culture, Media and Sport published a New Cultural Framework. This confirmed the commitment to replace the Museums and Galleries Commission (MGC) and the Library and Information Commission (LIC) with a new strategically focussed body which would also take on responsibility for archives. In April 2000, after an extensive consultation exercise, *Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries* was established.

The new organisation set out its aims to:

- Provide strategic leadership and promote change;
- Act as an authoritative advocate and champion for the new, combined sector;
- Advise on best practice and the delivery of specific issues such as standards, stewardship, ICT and others.

In addition, Resource undertakes or directs a number of executive functions such as the administration of the museums registration scheme; the provision of security, conservation and environmental advice; and Government Indemnity Scheme casework.

With agreement from the then Assembly Secretary for Education and Training, Alan Watkin Chief Leisure, Libraries and Culture officer at Wrexham County Borough Council was appointed as the Welsh representative on the Board of Resource by the DCMS.

Position in Wales

While the MGC had a UK remit, the Library and Information Commission covered only England and Northern Ireland but with Welsh representation on certain committees. In Wales, the organisation

representing non national museums is the Council of Museums in Wales (CMW) while that for libraries is the Library and Information Services Council (Wales) (LISC(W)). There is no representative body for archives.

On the establishment of Resource, it became clear that the Assembly would need to take stock of the current position in Wales with regard to the strategic policy direction and advocacy for the three sectors. This is particularly so because of the differing coverage of the responsibilities of Resource's predecessor organisations (ie MGC and LIC) and how these have been assimilated into the activities of the new body, as well as the need to formulate effective arrangements for the sectors in Wales.

Furthermore, consideration would need to be given as to how the Assembly's own policies and priorities should be brought to bear on activity in the museums, libraries and archives sectors. Consequently, it was decided that there should be a separate consultation exercise on arrangements for Wales.

The preparation of that document is now well underway, with assistance from Professor Hywel Roberts of the Department of Information and Library Studies at the University of Wales Aberystwyth. He has extensive knowledge of the library, archives and museum sectors and has worked under the direction of a Steering Group which comprises representatives of the three sectors, together with a representative of the Welsh Local Government Association and Alan Watkin. A considerable amount of preparatory work has been done and we are now working on the consultation document itself which will be published later this year. This consultation paper will be presented to the Culture Committee in due course.

Clearly there are a number of possible approaches that might be taken in Wales. These range from, at one extreme, seeking to become a full part of Resource to at the other, establishing an equivalent organisation in Wales. However, at this stage, there is no established view of the way forward. That will only be formulated after the consultation and consideration of the views of the sector. The Assembly will adopt the model that makes most sense for Wales, having regard to organisational efficiency, cost effectiveness, the needs of the individual sectors, and the desirability of encouraging close co-operation between them within Wales while retaining links where that is desirable with counterpart organisations in England.

In parallel with the preparation of the consultation paper, there have been discussions with Resource with a view to setting up a Concordat with the devolved administrations. The aim of this work is to confirm and record how the activities of Resource relate to the sectors in Wales and to establish clearly the scope and levels of service.

Culture, Sport and the Welsh

Language Division

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