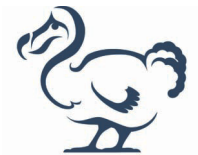


Ms Bethan Jenkins AM
Culture, Welsh Language & Communications Committee
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Dear Ms Jenkins

Proposal to merge the commercial functions of Cadw and National Museum Wales

I write to express concern on behalf of University Museums Group UK about the recent endorsement by the Welsh government of the proposals in the Randerson Report to merge the commercial functions of Cadw and Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales (AC-NMW). Museums across the UK are, of necessity, having to adapt and change their operational models in order to adapt to the current financial climate, and a variety of models have been chosen across the sector. However, the proposals for National Museums Wales have the potential to be particularly damaging to the well-being and future development of a world-class institution. The principal reasons for this are three-fold:

1. National Museum Wales has a collection and mission that extends very broadly across human culture and natural heritage. Key parts of this are the science collections of the museum and the work that it does in relation to public engagement with science. At present, there is an urgent need for leading museums to engage the broadest possible audiences with the science behind a number of important issues so that democratic decisions on policy are undertaken on an informed basis. These issues range from climate change and extreme weather events through GM technologies to discussions about fracking, nuclear energy and energy balance. Given that merger of the commercial functions of Cadw and AC-NMW has the capacity to impact on many components of the museum's work, and that Cadw is largely concerned with human heritage, the proposals have a high risk of greatly impeding the scientific mission of AC-NMW.
2. The proposed level of merger calls into question the future financial independence of AC-NMW and, in consequence, erodes the arms-length principle that applies to all other national museums across the UK. Although it might be said that the proposals only extend to a merger of the commercial services, these are core and integral to the function of any museum in the modern environment and will inevitably impact on most other areas of activity. As the Museums Association has already noted in this matter, no other government in the UK has sought to directly control its museums through an agency.

3. The proposals seem to go further than the Randerson Report, and it is not clear what the evidence base for the desirability or practicability of the proposed merger is. Allied to this there seems to have been little or no consultation with the broader museum sector in order to seek expert input in relation to the possible and probable impacts on museum functions and operations. In short, when the dust settles what is the evidence that the commercial services will run more optimally for NMW and with a higher yield?

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Professor Paul Smith
Director, Oxford University Museum of Natural History
Co-Chair, University Museums Group UK