

Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu  
Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee  
CWLC(5)-08-16 PTN9

**For the attention of Ms Bethan Jenkins AM: Chair of Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee**

Dear Ms Jenkins,

I write to express my immense concern regarding the proposal for the possible merger of Amgueddfa Cymru/National Museum Wales with the National Library and Cadw. While I appreciate that there could be some collaboration between NMW and the National Library, I feel strongly that each institution will continue to function more effectively as independent institutions. Indeed, as you will be aware, NMW's independence is already legally enshrined in its Royal Charter.

To add another layer of consultative and administrative procedures to the already fraught processes of planning ahead in a volatile economic climate, and a time when NMW is already having to lose experienced, highly skilled staff across all its disciplines and sites would be a challenge too far. Reduction in staff levels is already threatening research, conservation and curatorial work, as well as causing considerable human misery. The uncertainty is also likely to destabilise current projects, like the the National History Museum: St Fagans development. And arguably, should your proposals go ahead, our cherished National Museum on its seven sites could downgrade to no more than a series of superficial visitor attractions.

I sometimes wonder if our Welsh Government is really aware of what museums are really about, and the nature of their work. As a volunteer guide, I take visitors both individually and in groups around NMW Cardiff. The outstanding collections across the arts and sciences, as well as the remarkable building, have an enormous impact on them, as a glance at feedback forms and our Visitors Book would verify. They are frequently astounded at treasures they had not been aware of hitherto, and their enjoyment can be palpable. Perhaps Welsh Government Members could squeeze in a visit sometime? And perhaps appreciate and understand the importance of culture in enhancing people's lives, and especially for the visually and physically impaired, and the vulnerable in society?

What happened to the 2015 Expert Review of museums, whose recommendations seem to have been largely ignored? One key recommendation was that the museum sector needed support to become economically viable. Certainly, additional marketing and publicity funding, which is minute, would go a long way to help promote its excellent, imaginative and creative exhibitions to a global audience. Our splendid NMW should not be the 'hidden treasure' that it appears to be to so many of our visitors from Europe, America and the far east – and even locally.

So, persuade me. In what way does the Welsh Government see the proposed possible merger of three revered institutions leading to an improved visitor experience, or enhancing the already endangered academic excellence of NMW and the National Library of Wales? Further public and sector consultation should surely take place.

Yn ddiwyll iawn,

Ann Saer

Llandaf, Caerdydd