



DEPARTMENT FOR CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

**Government Response to the Culture,
Media and Sport Select Committee
Report on Caring for Our Collections
Session 2006-07**

*Presented to Parliament by the
Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport
by Command of Her Majesty
15 October 2007*



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Government Response to the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee Report of Caring for Our Collections Session 2006-07

The Government welcomes the Committee's report on Caring for Our Collections in the museums, galleries and archives sectors. The report is both timely and a helpful companion to the Committee's earlier inquiry into *Protecting, Preserving and Making Accessible our Nation's Heritage*.

We particularly welcome the Committee's opening remark in the report – "England is a cultural treasure house, possessing a magnificent range of collections of works of art, artefacts and archives, in thousands of museums, galleries and other cultural institutions".

The Government wholeheartedly endorses that comment. Our museums, galleries and archives are, indeed, among the best in the world. They are an integral part of the cultural offer which makes the UK both one of the most exciting countries to visit and one of the best in which to live.

The Government is proud of its record in relation to museums, galleries and archives and, in particular, our policy of providing free access to all our national museums. Visits to museums which used to charge have increased by 87% since universal free admission was introduced in 2001. That is, over 29 million additional visits have been made to national museums and galleries in the five years following the introduction of free admission. Furthermore, we are pleased to note the Committee's praise for the transformational benefits that we have managed to secure in regional museums through our *Renaissance in the Regions* programme.

We are pleased to be able to present our response to the Committee and outline how we intend to take action, where appropriate, on the recommendations made.

1. Grant-in-aid

In setting the level of grant-in-aid to directly sponsored museums and galleries Government should take more account of the need for museums and galleries to maintain their often historic buildings as well as their collections. We accept that grant-in-aid overall has risen roughly in line with inflation over the last ten years, but it must be recognised that increases which do no more than keep pace with inflation amount to no increase in real terms and may not meet real and unavoidable increases in running costs. Over the years, some sponsored museums have built up substantial backlogs in the maintenance of their fabric, which cannot be left indefinitely. The Government should either reflect this need in the levels of grant-in-aid or enter into discussions with the museums which it sponsors, to identify an alternative means of dealing with these backlogs.

The Government does not accept the premise on which this recommendation is based. The last ten years have seen a significant increase in grant-in-aid to national museums, galleries and archives. Between 1992 and 1997 funding for the national museums was maintained around the £200 million mark – meaning, as the Committee notes, in effect, a real terms reduction. Since 1997, however, our national museums have seen their grant-in-aid rise from £205m in 1997/98 to £336m in 2007/08 – a real terms increase in funding (that is, an increase on top of inflation) of 28%. Over this period the national museums have delivered considerable increases in visitor numbers, major new capital projects, and award winning exhibitions.

We are also aware of the maintenance needs of the museums. This is why we increased their capital funding by around 250% in the last spending round (from £14.7m in 2004/05 to £37.0m in 2007/08). In addition, the national museums and galleries have become increasingly effective in raising funds from other sources such as donors, corporate sponsorship and trading, as well as from funding bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

2. Theatre Museum

We regret the loss of a dedicated theatre museum based in the heart of London's "theatre land". We acknowledge that the V&A was hampered in its efforts by the lack of outside financial support and are disappointed that, despite a number of well-known celebrities from the world of theatre supporting the campaign, no significant private donations were forthcoming. We now encourage the V&A to continue to explore the options including a more suitable site which might be more attractive to potential sponsors.

We share the Committee's frustration about the lack of outside financial support that was forthcoming for the Theatre Museum. Nonetheless, the Theatre Museum collection is still the property of the V&A and will continue to be cared for by them. The V&A has assured us that, whilst the collection will no longer be kept in the West End, it will continue to be fully maintained and accessible. In due course, a dedicated Theatre Museum gallery will be created in London within the South Kensington site which will permanently display key parts of the collection.

The move back to South Kensington and the consequent savings will result in greater touring and exhibition potential for the collection both at the V&A, around the country, and internationally which will eventually allow a far greater number of people to access the collection. An exhibition of Diaghilev and the Ballet Russes is already scheduled for 2009. The core study collection and the reserve collection will continue to be accessible (as it has been for some time) in Blythe House. The V&A are also investing in greater digitisation of the Theatre Museum collection, which will improve access to the collections online. The V&A are currently considering with Blackpool Council the possibility of displaying part of the Theatre Museum collection in Blackpool.

3. National museums and non-hub museums

We are also encouraged to see the beginnings of relationships between the national museums and non-hub local and specialist museums. We believe that this will bring benefits in developing specialist skills of local curators, and in giving local people increased access to excellence in collections, exhibitions and interpretation, and would like to see this developed further.

We welcome the Committee's acknowledgement of the excellent work that is already taking place to create stronger links between the national museums and regional museums and wholeheartedly support the Committee's desire to see this developed further. The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) will be working to ensure closer partnerships between all museums, particularly national and local. The developing national strategy for English museums has already identified partnerships for ensuring sustainability in the sector as a key priority.

The National Museum Directors Conference's UK Affairs Committee have been considering this specific issue and, with MLA, is looking at future ways of working to improve and increase such partnerships.

4. Funding for Renaissance

We recommend that funding for the Renaissance in the Regions programme should, at the very least, be sustained in the next CSR, enabling museums to fulfil the promise and build on the achievements of the first phases. If this successful and inspiring innovation were to be curtailed half-way through the programme it would be a serious waste of achievement and would significantly cut access to museums for schools and other key target groups. DCMS should be in a strong position to secure a continuing budget for Renaissance which may be seen as a "perfect Treasury programme" given its demonstrable impact.

We welcome the Committee's praise for *Renaissance in the Regions* and its recognition of the programme's inspirational nature. Future levels of funding for *Renaissance* will, of course, be dependent on the outcome of the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review.

5. Renaissance

We commend both DCMS and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council for their championship of the Renaissance programme and what it has made possible for regional museums to achieve.

We welcome the Committee's support for and recognition of the benefits of Renaissance. By 2008, *Renaissance in the Regions* will have provided £149.2m of new funding to strengthen the national network of regional museums and has transformed them from "surviving" to "thriving" after years of under investment.

This success is illustrated by the following statistics:

- overall visit numbers to hub museums have increased by 14.1% since 2002/3, to almost 13.8 million visits in 2006/7;
- school visits to hub museums by school children in Years 1-11 (at school in England) have increased by 18.0% since 2002/3, to over 800,000 visits in 2006/7;
- visits to hub museums by children not on a school visit have increased by 21.4% since 2002/3, to almost 3.8 million visits in 2006/7;
- museum activities for children aged 5-16, that take place in the community or school, have increased more than ten-fold since 2002/3, to over 420,000 instances of participation in 2006/7; and
- finally, museum activities for adults, that take place in the community, have increased by 79.6% since 2003/4, to over 160,000 instances of participation in 2006/7.

6. Spreading the Benefits of Renaissance

DCMS should monitor the impact of the Renaissance programme on the museums sector as a whole, not only on those museums which are direct recipients of Renaissance funding. We are concerned that the evidence of benefits flowing out from the hubs is patchy at best and that a two tier structure is developing in some places. DCMS should ensure that the MLA addresses the needs of the whole community of museums, meeting the criticisms of those museums which see themselves as being excluded from the benefits.

The Government shares the Committee's desire to see the benefits of Renaissance spread more widely. However, Renaissance was not devised as a funding programme for all museums. The programme has been developed on the principle that investment should benefit audiences rather than institutions; hence, the focus on investment into larger museums serving major centres of population. MLA will complete a review of Renaissance by June 2008 and will consider this recommendation in more detail as a part of that review.

7. Trust status

We agree that trust status should not be regarded as a panacea for the ills of an ailing local authority museum service and that it may be wholly unsuitable for some museum services. Local authorities should not see trust status simply as a cost-saving solution for the provision of a public service. However, we have been greatly impressed at how the trust model has been effectively used to inspire leadership, raise the profile and sharpen the focus of museum services in some larger authorities. We strongly recommend that any large local authority museum service motivated to seek improvement should look at the successful models operating in Sheffield and York.

We welcome the Committee's balanced approach to the issue of trust status and agree that any move to trust status should only be undertaken after careful planning and for the right motives. To help local authorities make that decision the MLA is now working on a suite of governance documents that can support the decision to move to Trust status and ensure best practice. MLA will publish these by the end of 2007 and this work will be developed in the national strategy for museums that is being led by MLA (see Recommendation 26 for further details).

8. Sanctions on Disposal

We find it incongruous that no sanction at all should apply to local authorities which choose to close museums and disperse the collections under their care, whether the motive is to save money or to make money, or for any other reason. Museums cannot perform adequately if they exist in a climate of threat to the collections and to the staff. We believe that collections are held in trust by councils on behalf of the community and that it is right that there should be sanctions for those museums that sell parts of their collections purely to meet the financial needs of the Council; but we recognise that over time it could be beneficial for some of the smaller local authority museum services to merge, making for stronger units, provided that this safeguards the collections, sustains staffing and enhances access and the service to the public.

Museums and Galleries are a discretionary local authority service and their funding is a matter for the relevant Council, its councillors and the local community. Where a museum service is provided, some local authorities provide this service themselves; others do this through supporting independent or voluntary sector museums within their boundary. The responsibility for museum provision is rightly devolved to local communities and the Government has no plans to place a mandatory duty on all local authorities to provide or maintain a gallery or museum.

However, the Government does believe that museums are at the heart of many of our communities and we share the Committee's concern that museums performing an effective local role should be maintained.

Through the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, the Government will encourage local authorities to recognise the value of their museums. Local museums help citizens understand themselves, their family and community history and their place in the world. They are visitor attractions, centres of knowledge, powerful educators and can help to support regeneration in cities and communities. Museums can also play a part in strengthening communities and supporting families and vulnerable people to enjoy good health and well-being.

Where a local authority seeks to close a museum or otherwise disperse the collection, the community may seek the help of their councillor who can raise a *Community Call for Action* requiring the decision be scrutinised. There are a range of ways by which concerned citizens can campaign to keep their local museum open.

9. Performance indicators

We recommend that appropriate performance indicators should be drawn up to encourage and assist local authorities in supporting their museum services.

The Government announced on 11 October a national set of 198 performance indicators for local government as part of the implementation of the Local Government White Paper. The national list includes an indicator on visits to museums or galleries and performance against this indicator will be reported as part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment. MLA is also developing a voluntary framework of accountability for museums, libraries and archives so that they can demonstrate their value and contribution locally and encourage self-improvement. The framework will be available by the end of 2007.

10. University Museums

We were disturbed to hear just how precarious university museums' funding was, with the possibility that core funding for some major and much loved and valued museums might simply be discontinued in the very near future. Museums cannot be expected to fulfil their potential under such uncertain conditions, and we would urge DCMS to explore with DfES to find a way of ensuring that HEFCE funding to university museums continues and that the museums' funding base is strengthened.

The Government notes the Committee's concerns about the transfer of certain responsibilities for funding university museums from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to HEFCE. We also are aware of the apprehension felt by university museums at the change in funding structures. DCMS officials are working closely with officials at the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills to ensure that the value of university museums is properly appreciated and adequately funded by HEFCE and the institutions they fund. We will, of course, continue to work closely with the museums sector to secure optimal levels of funding beyond 2009.

11. Olympic Funding

We welcome the concept that funds diverted from the heritage good cause to pay for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games should be regarded as a "loan" and that the Lottery would have first call on the sale of land after the Olympics, so that the heritage sector may look forward to being reimbursed the funds it has foregone, out of the proceeds of the Olympic investment. We invite DCMS to confirm that this is the Government's intention. We remain deeply concerned about the impact of such a substantial diversion of funds on the ability to fund heritage projects over the next six years.

The Government is determined to ensure that the additional call of £675 million from the Lottery, announced on 15 March 2007 will be temporary. To this end we have re-written the 2003 Memorandum of Understanding between the Government and the Mayor to ensure that there is provision for the additional Lottery contribution to be re-paid from the enhanced value realised from the disposal of land acquired for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Copies of the revised Memorandum have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament.

12. Olympic Funding

We urge that no further sums be removed from the Heritage Lottery Fund or other lottery distributors if the costs of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games exceed those set out by the Secretary of State on 15 March 2007.

We have no plans to seek further funding from the Lottery. The revised funding provision is based on a thorough assessment of costs and the inclusion of substantial Programme contingency means that should the need arise, the funds are available to meet it.

13. NHMF Funding

We agree that the effective reduction of grant-in-aid to the National Heritage Memorial Fund (from £12 million in 1993) risks undermining its purpose at a time when the cost of the acquisitions it was intended to support have been rising dramatically, and we recommend that it should be increased to a level at which it will be a meaningful last resort – to at least £20 million.

We note the Committee's recommendation. The increased funding we have provided to the National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF) in 07/08 represents a 100% increase in budget and is designed to enable the NHMF, as a fund of last resort, better to respond to items identified by the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest, or otherwise at risk of loss to the nation, to be saved. Future levels of funding for the NHMF will, of course, be dependent on the outcome of the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review.

14. Philanthropy and Kelvingrove

We commend museums for their efforts and achievements in generating income in an increasingly competitive environment. We recognise that the potential for self-generated income is necessarily limited and that museums should not be asked to extend their trading activities to the point where sight of their fundamental purpose may be lost. We congratulate Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum on all that has been achieved at the museum and in particular the notable success of its fundraising strategy. We urge DCMS to examine what lessons can be learned, for other institutions from Kelvingrove's success in attracting philanthropic donations.

Income from non-government sources now amounts to around 50% of the overall income of DCMS's sponsored museums and galleries. They are free to apply such funds to their own purposes, and are not penalised in grant-in-aid terms for successfully raising additional income.

We agree that income generation should not divert the museums from their core purpose. However, we have negotiated with our sponsored museums and galleries a target on profitability, which takes into account each institution's funding plans for this spending review period and beyond and which has regard to assets and resources, opportunities and the assessment of risk. In considering the requisite balance of skills on their Boards, sponsored museums and galleries are mindful of the value of appointing trustees with experience of business, finance and fundraising.

DCMS sponsored a project which took forward the PAC's recommendation that the Department should promote greater sharing of knowledge and skill, in collaboration with the Association for Cultural Enterprises (ACE), the UK's only organisation for professionals in the field of cultural and heritage commerce. The project has delivered a fully interactive website, training opportunities for the sector, and increased membership of ACE by museums and galleries.

We also share the Committee's desire to see an increase in philanthropic contributions to our museums, libraries and archives (see Recommendation 20 for further details).

15. Impact of free entry

We recognise the achievements which the sponsored museums have been able to make through offering free entry, but more needs to be done to ensure that their success is not being achieved at the expense of museums which rely on entry charges for their continued existence. We recommend that research should be undertaken to determine exactly what effect the free entry policy has had on the sector as a whole and that a way should be found to support museums which suffer.

Free entry has been an amazing success, leading to an 87% increase in visits to the institutions that formerly charged for entry. However, the impact of free entry on other museums needs to be seen in wider perspective. Around half of the 2,500 museums in England offer free entry. The Government's free entry policy saw the restoration of free admission to 10 sponsored museums, most of which were based in central London.

We have not seen any compelling evidence that providing free admission to these institutions has unfairly skewed visitor numbers to other museums. It would be surprising if that indeed were the case, given the location of the government-sponsored museums and the importance of a range of factors in persuading people of the value of participating in cultural activities. Rather, free admission to the national museums has been recognised across the world as an innovative policy designed to promote public access to permanent public collections. Its success can be illustrated by the fact that other countries are now looking to follow suit, most recently France.

We do not propose, therefore, to conduct the research that the Committee recommends. We have no intention of abolishing the policy, which we view as extremely successful.

16. Gift Aid

We welcome the Treasury's decision to modify Gift Aid rules rather than take away the benefit altogether, and we are pleased to see that some museums have been able to continue benefiting under new rules. We encourage MLA to investigate what effect the change has had through the sector with a view to offering support and guidance to museums which have been deterred by the complexity of the new rules.

On 19 June 2007 the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the Minister for the Third Sector launched a Government consultation with the charitable sectors to examine measures to drive up charitable giving through Gift Aid. The Government is consulting with a wide range of charitable organisations through online consultation and a series of events across the UK. DCMS and MLA will work with the Treasury to review the findings of that consultation for the museums sector and take action appropriately.

17. Olympic Funding

We share the concerns expressed about the extent to which much needed resources are being diverted away from the sector to pay for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. It seems to us perverse that museums should be presented with the outstanding showcasing opportunities which only the Olympics can offer, while the diversion of essential funding will inevitably make it more difficult if not impossible for many of them to make the most of those opportunities. We also question the balance between the funding, for example, for elite athletes to gain more medals, and the damage to our museum infrastructure and ability to illustrate to the world Britain's cultural heritage.

We note the Committee's concerns about the contribution of Lottery funds towards the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. However, we explained in 2003 that, were the costs to increase, it was likely there would be a further call on the Lottery.

We have done everything possible to minimise the additional potential call on Lottery funds; the greater part of the revised funding provision of £9.325 billion announced on 15 March 2007 will be met from Exchequer funds. The additional Lottery contribution, of £675 million, to the revised funding provision, will be distributed by grant if and when it is needed. On current projections this still leaves around £5.2 billion of new Lottery income for the non-Olympic good causes over the five year period between 2008/09 to 2012/13.

In May 2007 we began a consultation with the Lottery distributors and other key stakeholders on a draft order to make the proposed transfer from the National Lottery Distribution Fund to the Olympic funding package between 2009 and 2012. In doing this, our aim was to give the Lottery distributors the maximum time possible to allow for forward planning, to enable them to honour existing commitments and to moderate, as much as we can, the impact on the non-Olympic good causes they support. The HLF will be contributing a total of £161.22m to the costs of the Olympics. They expect to absorb the impact of Olympic funding over time rather than make deeper short term cuts. This means there will be less impact on their customers and they will still be able to provide support to the full range of heritage good causes. Between now and 2019, HLF expects to distribute £1.9 billion to the heritage sector.

A substantial amount of the funding for training and facilities for elite athletes will come from new money, such as new Exchequer funding, and not from funds that have been diverted away from other sectors.

18. Museums acquisition

Whether or not the gap between museums' acquisition budgets and the cost of acquisitions is properly described as a "crisis", there is a clear decline in their power to keep collections growing and an urgent need for action to restore museums' power to develop their collections. We are, however, concerned that the very high prices now commanded by great works of art are calling into question the feasibility of public art galleries regularly continuing to compete for them against enormously wealthy individuals and institutions.

A considerable amount of money has been spent on museum collections over the last ten years. For example, between 1997/8-2005/6 the national museums together spent over £250 million on acquisitions. The Designation Challenge Fund has since 1999 awarded £24 million to museums for collections development. Since 1980 the National Heritage Memorial Fund has provided over £54 million for works of art; over £84 million for other historic objects; and over £30 million for archive and special library collections.

At the same time, substantial amounts of lottery funding through the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has been provided for the acquisition of heritage items for museums, galleries and archives. For example, since 1994 the HLF has made awards with a total value of £141 million to museums and galleries for the acquisition of works of art and other objects and has provided £37 million for the acquisition of archive material. In addition to this, the HLF has recently announced that it is providing £3m in 2007/08 for acquisitions, as well as the development of curatorial skills, research and increased activities for the public.

The Government shares the Committee's concern about the impact of the very high prices that are being obtained in the international art market on the ability of museums and galleries to purchase such art. However, we also believe it would be inappropriate for the public purse to seek to match these prices and so add to the inflationary pressure. As a result, we believe it is more important to ensure that existing tax reliefs (such as Gift Aid and Acceptance in Lieu) are used to the maximum extent possible. Indeed, the AIL scheme has been extremely successful in transferring high quality objects into public ownership. Over the last ten years an average of £25m per year of such objects have been allocated to museums throughout the UK.

In addition, the national museums and galleries have become increasingly effective in raising funds from other sources such as donors, corporate sponsorship and trading.

Finally, in order to develop collections, museums also need to work together more strategically to acquire objects, collect contemporary material, and re-assess collections already held.

19. Export deferred items

The export control system plays an invaluable role in assisting national museums and public bodies to build their collections and it is a matter of great regret that it is not backed up by the resources to achieve its prime objective. We recommend that DCMS should amend the scheme to strengthen the position of public institutions which have indicated serious intent to make matching offers for export-deferred cultural objects.

The system of export control is designed to strike a balance between the rights of owners to sell their property, the encouragement of a legitimate and thriving market in the trade in art and antiquities and ensuring that UK public institutions have the opportunity to try to keep items of national importance in this country for the benefit of the British people. It is a widely held view that the system works very well – it is well known and respected in other parts of the world and has been hugely successful in saving items for the nation.

For example, in 2005-6 over 50% of the items that came before the Reviewing Committee were retained in the United Kingdom and in the last 10 years, 136 items were saved and not exported. Since the Committee was set up in 1952, many important works of art have been saved for the nation as a result of its intervention, including Titian's *The Death of Actaeon* (1971), Raphael's *Madonna of the Pinks* (2004) and, from the British school, Gainsborough's *Sir Benjamin Truman* (1977). As well as paintings, other objects saved include: the Three Graces by Canova (1993); a 102-piece Sèvres Dinner Service presented to the Duke of Wellington (1979); a lady's secretaire by Thomas Chippendale (1998); and the *Macclesfield Psalter* (2005). This short list shows quite clearly the immense cultural and historic value of what has been achieved.

The specific proposal to strengthen the position of public institutions underlying this recommendation has been considered very carefully but we do not believe that the scheme can be amended in the way suggested by the Committee without infringing the Government's obligations under the Human Rights Act as it would prevent owners from disposing freely of their own property. The split deferral period normally recommended by the Committee and accepted by Ministers allows an institution to indicate during the first part of this period whether they wish to raise funds to offer a matching price for the object deferred and, during the second part to actually raise the funds. In addition, the second part of the deferral period can be extended where it is clear that there is a serious intention to raise funds with a view to making an offer to purchase.

20. Goodison Review

We share the disappointment of Sir Nicholas Goodison – and many others involved in the museum sector – at the lack of progress on taking forward the recommendations which he made in his Review to encourage philanthropy. We are particularly disappointed that so much time has been spent without any visible result on the question of whether the existing inducements could be used more, to the exclusion of carefully thought through modifications which the sector believes would make them more widely attractive. Opportunities to enhance

collections are being lost. It is very disappointing that, two years on, we can only reiterate the words our predecessor Committee used in 2005, “We note that the DCMS has implemented the Goodison recommendations in so far as they apply to the Department. We look to the Treasury to follow suit. Where it does not do so, justification, if any, for the corresponding decisions should be published.” Sir Nicholas undertook his review at the request of the Chief Secretary and is entitled to expect a reasoned response from the same level to the recommendations he has made.

The Government is extremely grateful to Sir Nicholas Goodison for his thoughtful and detailed review of private giving and Government support for the museums sector. The Government has implemented the large majority of Sir Nicholas’s recommendations either in full or in part. A full report on the actions taken to implement the recommendations was placed in the libraries of both Houses on 15 June 2007.

The Government shares Sir Nicholas’s objective of encouraging greater philanthropic giving to cultural institutions. In particular, we are keen to see better use made of the existing incentives for philanthropy and, to that end, as noted earlier, the Treasury is currently undertaking a consultation with the charitable sector on measures to increase the take up of Gift Aid. The Government keeps all taxes under review and will continue to try to identify ways to increase the uptake of existing forms of tax efficient giving.

21. Spoliation

We welcome the consultation which DCMS has now undertaken in relation to spoliation claims. However we regret that DCMS has taken so long to reach what can only be a preliminary stage in dealing with a problem which has been apparent for a number of years.

The results of the Government’s consultation exercise, on which 18 responses were received, have now been posted on the Department for Culture, Media and Sport’s website. Any proposals for legislation will need to be considered against the Government’s other legislative priorities and must take into account the fact that the Spoliation Advisory Panel has recommended the need to amend legislation in only two out of the seven cases referred to it.

22. Parthenon marbles

We were moved by the passion expressed by our Greek hosts and we acknowledge the special place which the Parthenon holds in the Greek national identity. We recognise the strength of feeling both for and against returning the Elgin Marbles. However, we note that it is not proposed to restore the Parthenon to its original glory, bringing together all the fragmented parts, wherever they might now be. We congratulate the British Museum on their efforts to ensure that the Marbles are accessible to both the public and researchers from around the world. We also recognise their argument that the display of the Marbles in the Museum adds to the understanding of the influence and spread of culture between civilisations. We note that the British Museum has made casts of the sculptures available to the Acropolis Museum and are disappointed that it appears that visitors to the Acropolis and its new museum will not be able to enjoy these. We note that the decision as to whether the originals should be returned remains one for the Trustees of the British Museum.

We very much welcome the Committee’s balanced view on the issue of the Parthenon Sculptures and agree that this matter is the responsibility of the Trustees of the British Museum.

23. Inappropriate disposal

We support the Museums Association in its criticism of the action of Bury Metropolitan Borough Council in selling Lowry’s “A Riverbank” from Bury Museum’s collection. We believe that there is a moral duty on councils to hold cultural collections in trust for the wider community, and we share the concern of the sector that other local authorities may be encouraged to follow Bury’s example, not least by the unexpectedly large sum raised by the sale. We believe that this would be a retrograde step.

The Government shares the Committee's concerns in this area and wholeheartedly endorses its conclusion that it would be a retrograde step for others to follow the example of Bury. The MLA has removed Bury Metropolitan Borough Council from the Museum Accreditation scheme as a result of the selling of the painting and this is likely to have an impact on the Council's access to grant funds.

24. Trading up collections

We can understand that proposals for “trading up” may be regarded with some misgiving in the sector and that there are risks involved in it but we conclude that under tightly defined criteria such as those envisaged by the Tate, trading up could be a constructive aid to improving collections.

We welcome the Committee's recognition of the benefits of appropriately managed “trading up” as a sensible component of a comprehensive collections strategy within an ethical framework.

25. Disposal code of ethics

We commend the Museums Association for its timely work on the issue of disposal. We agree that the present wording of the code is unsatisfactory and is capable of misleading the sector as well as the public as to the utility of responsible disposal. The sector needs to foster better understanding among the public that good collections management can include some pruning.

We welcome the Committee's endorsement of the Museum Association's work on the code of ethics for museum disposal.

26. Understanding the Future

The museums sector sees clear value in having a strong strategic plan which takes account of the needs as well as the potential of the whole sector. Whether or not a national strategy would fulfil the hopes of the sector, the consultation exercise has had a beneficial effect in focusing the attention of DCMS and the sector as a whole on the challenges museums now face and how these may best be addressed.

We welcome the Committee's acknowledgement that the Government's consultation exercise has had a beneficial effect in focusing attention on the challenges museums now face and how these may best be addressed.

The MLA now has lead responsibility for taking forward the ten year strategy for museums in England. The strategy will offer an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of museums, reaffirm their intrinsic value to society and ensure all are working towards shared priorities. A national strategy is an opportunity to align funding streams and ensure best value for money. The success of Renaissance to date, particularly in strengthening partnerships between museums and other agencies, will be built upon as a way of sustaining the transformation of the sector.

27. Storage facilities

We welcome the development of shared and open storage facilities, such as those which we visited at Tyneside and Glasgow. We urge the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council to ensure that high priority is given to the care of collections in their forthcoming action plan.

Proper management and documentation of collections is essential to the success of the museums sector. The national strategy (see Recommendation 26) will be looking at the needs, including collections storage needs, across the sector and the most sustainable and effective way to deliver these. Partnerships will be at the heart of this approach.

28. Archives Funding

It seems to us anomalous that archives should be excluded from the Designation Challenge Fund. The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council should work with the sector to develop an equivalent of designation challenge funding for the most significant archive holdings. It should also work with the sector to find ways of helping archives services to make more effective approaches to the potential funders. A useful starting point may be to promote best practice among archives to demonstrate tangible public and community benefits (as well as curatorial and conservation benefits) which would accrue as a result of Heritage Lottery Fund investment.

The MLA extended Designation status to include archive and library collections in 2005 and have an aspiration to extend the Designation Challenge Fund to cover library and archive collections. To date over 15 archive collections have been awarded designated status in recognition of their significance and national and international importance, with many more archive collections designated as part of an entire organisation's collections. Future funding for archives is, of course, dependent on the outcome of the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review.

The MLA will also continue to work closely with the HLF to identify and promote best practice and future priorities for archives. MLA's programme, *Action for Archives*, launched in May 2007, actively supports archive development. MLA co-funds the National Council on Archives, Lottery Adviser post to work with archives at grass roots to secure lottery funding for sustainable projects and almost £40m has been raised to date. MLA has also funded research on the impact and benefits of community archives, many of which are HLF funded.

29. Local authority archives

We believe that increased visibility of the archive services provided by local authorities would strengthen their claims for adequate funding to enable them to provide high quality services and we recommend that the National Archives' self-assessment programme for local authorities should be included as a performance indicator under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment as soon as possible.

The Government is committed to continuous improvement across the cultural sector underpinned by effective performance management. The recent Local Government White Paper emphasises local services being able to demonstrate their contribution to outcomes. MLA has developed a Single Improvement Tool, designed to support this, and help the sector deliver outcomes in line with the performance management and improvement ambitions of the White Paper. In Autumn 2007, MLA will be negotiating with The National Archive (TNA) as to how best to integrate elements of the TNA Self Assessment with this work.

30. Literary archives

We share the concern that the literary archives of some of our most important writers are being lost overseas for relatively modest sums. We recommend that the "douceur" arrangement should be extended to income tax which may be payable by creators on sales of their archives to designated public institutions in the UK and that the Acceptance in Lieu Scheme should be extended to allow living creators to offer their archives to such institutions in exchange for promised tax relief on their deaths.

The Government shares the Committee's concern at the loss of such archives and is keen to work with the literary heritage sector to ascertain how it may be possible to stem the flow of authors' personal archives.

31. Archives Task Force

It is a matter of regret that the Government, while recognising the cogency of the recommendations of the Archives Task Force for developing the sector to its full potential, decided in the short term not to provide any funding for their implementation. The Museums,

Libraries and Archives Council should press DCMS and the Government to provide financial support – which need only be relatively modest – to enable the archive sector to take forward the recommendations of Archives Task Force, and generate its own “renaissance”.

The Archives Task Force set out clear steps to make archives better used, looked after and understood; recommending an Archives Gateway to increase access, better training and support for archive staff, and measures to support local authority, business and film archives. MLA is working to take the recommendations forward with existing resources and will be working with over 80 archives in 2007/08. Future funding for archives is, of course, dependent on the outcome of the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review.

32. Gowers review

We welcome the Government’s statement that it will take forward the recommendations of the Gowers Review for which the Government is responsible. We hope that amendments to the law of copyright to allow archival copying will be brought forward in time to prevent further losses from the collections.

The Government notes the Committee’s recommendation. We will be undertaking the first of a two part public consultation this Autumn about extending the circumstances when copies can be made for archival purposes. This first consultation will allow us to gauge opinions of both rights holders and copyright users before deciding whether and what legislative amendments are required. A second consultation on the draft legislation will then be carried out. We recognise the challenges and opportunities that developments in technology present and this consultation process is part of an ongoing dialogue with many stakeholders, including representatives from the archive, library and museum sectors.

33. Film archives

We commend the lead role being played by the British Film Institute in creating a strategy for the audio-visual archive sector which should address the issues of perceived fragmentation, and provide a basis for a sustainable future for this part of our heritage. In the short term, DCMS must address the funding shortfall of the regional film archives as an urgent priority to ensure that they do not disappear before the strategy can be put in place.

The Strategy for UK Screen Heritage has been developed by the Film Heritage Group, led by the BFI with members including the UK Film Council, Regional Film Archives and the MLA. The vision informing the Strategy is that the public is entitled to access, learn about and enjoy its rich screen heritage wherever they live and wherever the materials are held.

In recognition of the immediate need to secure collections held by the *bfi* National Archive and the regional film archives, a two phase approach has been adopted for the Strategy. The first phase focuses on stabilising the regional film archives and the *bfi* National Archive, making safe their collections and ensuring widespread access to them.

The second phase aims to ensure that the vision for access to UK screen heritage is supported. This will involve working with the moving image archive and heritage sectors as a whole to understand and maximise the benefits of a joined up approach to delivery. A consultation on the proposed Strategy has already been undertaken during the summer, and we are pleased to report that the Strategy has been very well received by partners in the archive and heritage sectors. Responses to this consultation are now helping to inform the final draft of the Strategy.

34. Museums and education

There is a need for better coordination between departments both in relation to museums and – even more so – in relation to archives. DCMS should take the lead in developing a strong structural relationship with DfES in relation to museums, within the framework of the action plan for Understanding the Future: Priorities for England’s Museums, where learning is the first of the five specified priorities.

We strongly support this recommendation for coherence regarding leadership on museums and archives. The Government recognises the importance of giving children and young people the creative skills they will need not just to succeed in the 21st century economy but to lead a fulfilling life. That's why the DCMS and the Department for Children, Families and Schools (DCFS) have a long term joint commitment to a universal cultural offer for all young people of school age. We believe that the learning offer of museums and galleries should be at the heart of their delivery. Both Departments have worked and will continue to work very closely in partnership towards realising that joint ambition.

Since 2003 DCMS and DCFS have jointly funded a programme of strategic commissioning for museums education which has fostered greater partnerships between national and regional museums and between museums and schools. This has enhanced delivery of the national curriculum, strengthened educational provision in museums across the country and supported a national scheme of professional development for teachers by offering them the opportunity to undertake an in-depth placement in a museum or gallery. Archives have also benefited from the Strategic Commissioning Programme that has improved archive education skills and contacts between schools and archives. The Strategic Commissioning programme is funded to March 2008, by which time £19m will have been invested in it.

It is with our encouragement that education has been at the forefront of the Renaissance Programme. By 2008 we will have invested around £150 million in partnerships across the country, modernising museum collections, broadening access to new audiences and providing a comprehensive service to schools. *Renaissance in the Regions* has increased the capacity of regional museums to support learning. A national museum survey carried out in 2006 found that 77% of museums have facilities used solely or primarily for educational purposes and 53% have an education room. This compares to 36% with an education room in 1994. Renaissance funding has supported the creation of 167 new learning posts in museums and a further 69 museum outreach officers who take collections out of museums into schools.

35. Responsibility for archives

The fact that responsibility for the archives sector is spread across several government departments, leading parts of that sector to feel that no one is responsible for it has undoubtedly increased the difficulties faced by the sector in raising its profile. We are encouraged by the Minister's recent references to the importance of archives to hope that the archive sector has found its champion.

The Government is committed to ensuring that the interests of the archives sector are championed appropriately at ministerial level and within the various Departments with responsibility for archives. To this end, TNA and MLA are working collaboratively on a new Government policy statement on archives, which provides an excellent opportunity to consolidate the progress already made within Departments and to cement collaborative working as the strategy is implemented. This is due to be published in spring 2008.

36. MLA restructuring

We commend the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council for all its achievements in connection with Renaissance in the Regions. We hope that the recent restructuring and formation of the MLA Partnership will strengthen its capacity to provide leadership within the sector and to speak for the sector. The sector has been sympathetic to the unsettling effect of relentless restructuring but MLA now deserves a period of stability to enable it to provide vital support and strategic leadership to the museums, galleries and archives communities. We believe that the archives sector in particular stands in need of a strong champion, a role which MLA has not yet succeeded in playing. MLA needs to build on its success with the Renaissance in the Regions programme and ensure that it champions the cause and addresses the needs of all the constituencies within the sector including those museums in the regions which are not in the hub of the programme and the archive sector.

We welcome the Committee's endorsement of the MLA and of the changes that MLA has recently instituted in order to improve its effectiveness and its efficiency. The MLA's new Board, refocused staff and coherent and joined-up business planning across its ten organisations, should deliver real and successful change at MLA. The recent appointment of Roy Clare, the MLA's new Chief Executive, also strengthens its leadership role within the sector.

We do not, however, accept the Committee's conclusion in relation to the MLA's championing of archives. The MLA has a proud record of work undertaken to champion archives. The MLA conducted the Archives Task Force, the biggest consultation and investigation into archives for 50 years; it created a delivery network of regional agencies working for and with archives at grass roots; it has embedded archives in learning programmes across England; it helped deliver almost £40 million lottery funding into the sector and has launched a programme for archives with dedicated funding. It is working closely with TNA to set out clear messages to government and the public about the demand for archives and how archives are supporting the delivery of Government policies on learning, culture, social justice and information management. It is actively contributing to and shaping national debates about identity, history and community engagement.

37. The National Archives

We also commend the National Archives for its general support of the archives sector.

We are grateful to the Committee for its acknowledgement of TNA's work. TNA recognises that there is a great deal more to do and that the sector's success in the future will depend on addressing effectively many of the issues highlighted in the Committee's Report.



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