

## **Investment in Cultural Heritage could give major economic boost to Ireland**

**Digital technologies could enable our cultural resources to achieve global reach, instead of being confined to glass cases, book shelves and dusty files.**

### **Seven Irish Museums receive recognition for high standards under the 'Heritage Council Museum Standards Programme for Ireland'**

"Digital technologies and the internet could enable our museums, galleries, archives and libraries to reach a global audience and contribute an important cultural heritage dimension to Brand Ireland internationally. The fusion of the latest digital technology with a strong sense of historical values confers competitive edge in generic global markets, but a lack of funding means these immense cultural resources remain largely untapped and invisible".

This was stated today (**Wednesday, July 2<sup>nd</sup>**) by the **Chairman of the Heritage Council, Mr. Conor Newman**, who contrasted the fact that, last year, the Dutch government spent €5m with Google to store a digital version of their national library, whereas in Ireland the budget for our entire National Library operations was €5.9 m.

He was speaking in Dublin at the Council's ***Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI)*** awards ceremony to recognise high standards in the management of the museum, care of collections and visitor services.

Pointing out that some of the world's leading IT companies having major operations in Ireland, Mr. Newman said we "we are missing out on the potential for our cultural assets to inspire and drive new ideas and creativity because we are not investing enough in digitisation and digital dissemination. Just consider the contribution of the Game of Thrones series to Northern Ireland's economy which draws on digital expertise, historical narratives and heritage resources for its locations. Ireland was, until recently, leading the field in digital technologies for archaeology but we are now falling behind. In this field, falling behind means being left behind".

And, the lack of long-term investment in our cultural resources means we cannot access EU funds to the extent that we should. “We need to invest in managing our collections better and this investment will be repaid many times over through supporting business, education, international funding for research and, most importantly, the fostering of inventive, responsive and culturally-savvy citizens. We should have as much pride in our national institutions as the American’s do in the Smithsonian or the French do in the Louvre. Instead, we seem to be stuck in the view that museums, libraries and archives are merely glass cases, book shelves and dusty files. This is out-dated and short-sighted. We should trust and empower these institutions to be engine rooms of cultural creativity.”

Mr. Newman also referenced the benefits of the Bilbao Guggenheim Museum (1997), constructed as part of an urban regeneration programme, which drew four million visitors in its first three years, and generated €500 million in revenues. “Our cultural resources are fantastic and of great interest to the people of Ireland. We saw that, for example, when the 1911 Census information was made available online”.

While other EU countries such as Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia were driving a new agenda for Europe that puts greater emphasis on the role of cultural heritage and creative industries, here in Ireland “a lack of staff, resources and funding is severely limiting our capacity to do more than keep the doors open”.

At today’s awards ceremony, seven museums received recognition for high standards in the management of the museum, care of collections and visitor services. The Foynes Flying Boat and Maritime Museum was awarded Full Accreditation; the Chester Beatty Library, Hunt Museum and the Waterford Treasures: Bishop’s Palace and Medieval Museum were awarded both Full and Interim Accreditation; while Fota House, the Irish Jewish Museum and Musaem Chorca Dhuibhne were awarded Interim Accreditation.

These now join 56 other museums nationwide that have been recognised for high standards under the MSPI programme, which aims to benchmark and raise professional minimum standards in the museum sector.

**Ends.**

## **Media Queries:**

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*The Heritage Council is the statutory body charged with identifying, protecting, preserving and enhancing Ireland's national heritage. National heritage includes Monuments, Archaeological objects, Heritage objects, Architectural heritage, Flora, Fauna, Wildlife habitats, Landscapes, Seascapes, Wrecks, Geology, Heritage gardens and parks, and Inland waterways.*

*Established under the Heritage Act 1995, and operating under the aegis of the Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht, the Heritage Council provides advice to the Minister, and partners and networks with Local Authorities and a wide range of other organisations and individuals to promote Ireland's heritage.*

*A pilot study of the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI) took place from 1999- 2004. A review of the Programme was completed in 2006 and it was launched in 2007. There are 54 museums participating in the Programme.*

### **Accredited Museums**

**24 sites have achieved Full Accreditation:** *Butler Gallery; Monaghan County Museum; National Print Museum; Donegal County Museum; Knock Museum; Muckross House; Muckross Traditional Farms; Muckross Research Library; National Gallery of Ireland; Cavan County Museum; The GAA Museum; South Tipperary County Museum; Lewis Glucksman Gallery; Farmleigh, OPW; Kerry County Museum; Drogheda Museum Millmount; Castletown House, OPW; Old Library, TCD; The Pearse Museum, OPW; Chester Beatty Library; Foynes Flying Boat & Maritime Museum; The Hunt Museum; Waterford Treasures: Medieval Museum; Waterford Treasures: Bishop's Palace.*

**11 sites have achieved Interim Accreditation:** *Músaem Chorca Dhuibhne; Donaghmore Workhouse and Famine Museum; Limerick City Gallery of Art; County Museum, Dundalk; Rothe House: Kilkenny*

*Archaeological Society; Museum of Free Derry; Allihies Copper Mine Museum; Athy Heritage Centre-Museum; The Zoological Museum, TCD; Fota House, Irish Heritage Trust; Irish Jewish Museum.*

*Further information about the Programme, the Accreditation Process, the 24 Interim Standards and 9 Full Standards, is available from [www.museumsireland.ie](http://www.museumsireland.ie)*