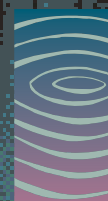


# A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR THE IRISH MUSEUM SECTOR



THE HERITAGE COUNCIL  
AN CHOMHAIRLE OIDHREACHTA

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Proposing Policies and Priorities  
for the National Heritage

A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR  
THE IRISH MUSEUM SECTOR

JUNE 2003

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“

Museums... function publicly  
as places where people  
learn from and find inspiration  
and enjoyment...

”

## FOREWORD

The material culture of this country has contributed enormously to our image abroad and our own self-image as a nation. That image, in terms of our social, cultural and economic activity and the relationship of this activity with the natural and cultural landscape, is represented by millions of objects in the national collections housed in the growing number of museums and galleries across the country.

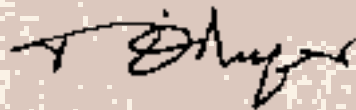
The protection of these objects is a core function of their custodians. What is equally important is the educational role museums play in informing us about the layers of our past and helping us to shape, through understanding, the heritage of the future.

The policy framework outlined in this document proposes the implementation of a national quality assurance scheme for museums and a supporting training strategy.

The principles of the framework focus on the raising of standards across all institutions; increasing professionalism; providing value for money; boosting the confidence and profile of the sector and building on some of the exemplary work being carried out within our cultural institutions.

Local authorities play a pivotal role in the management of the majority of the institutions which will derive benefits from this proposal. It is anticipated that this framework will provide them with a useful tool in the development and sustainability of museums.

The Heritage Council looks forward to the implementation of this framework in partnership with the Irish Museums Sector.



Dr Tom O'Dwyer,  
Chairperson



Mr. Michael Starrett  
Chief Executive

June 2003

## SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Heritage Council is currently developing a Standards and Accreditation Scheme for the Irish museum sector. The aim of this scheme is to assess quality assurance in our collecting institutions. Run by the Museums and Archives Committee of the Heritage Council, in collaboration with the museum community, this initiative has been devised and refined over the past four years. The model is now in Phase II of a pilot study, testing agreed standards in thirteen museums and galleries. The institutions selected for the pilot study represent the entire museum sector, from volunteer-run museums to national cultural institutions.

The impetus for this initiative came from the museum sector, which recognised the need for a standards and accreditation scheme that would increase professionalism and boost confidence in its members. During a period of increased growth in the establishment of museums in the 1990s it was also acknowledged that a scheme such as this would encourage the application of best practice principles in the agencies responsible for museum development.

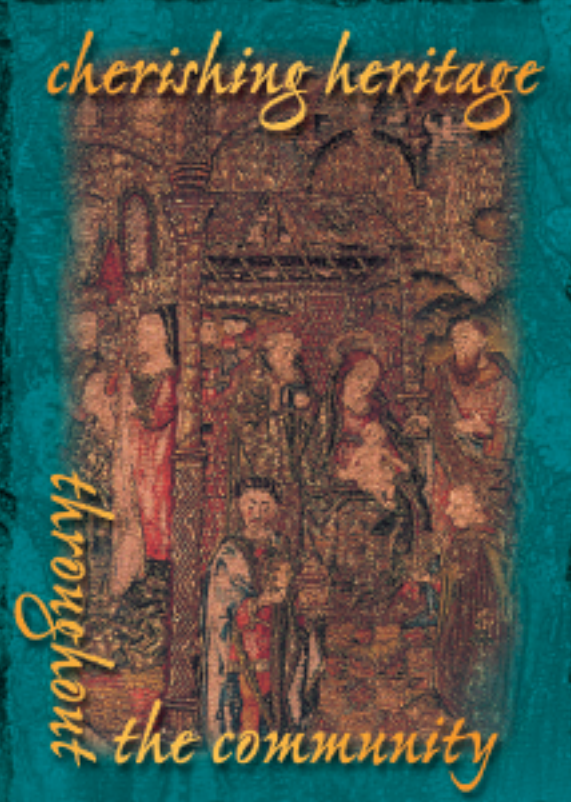
Allied to the Standards and Accreditation Scheme, a Training Strategy has been devised for the Irish museum sector. This strategy aims to address the needs of the individual, the institution and the sector.

### 1.2 THE ROLE OF THE HERITAGE COUNCIL

To date, the Museums and Archives Committee of the Heritage Council has played a pivotal role in developing policy for the museum sector, and in establishing strategies to implement this policy. This has been achieved through continuous consultation with the museum sector itself, and with all the agencies with responsibility for museum development. The Heritage Council will continue to play a key strategic planning role by identifying ways of:

- Supporting the growth of the sector
- Building on the foundation established through the Standards and Accreditation Scheme and the Training Strategy initiatives.

Forward planning is required to ensure that the Standards and Accreditation Scheme and the Training Strategy initiatives will be supported and adopted at central government level, at local authority level, and by other key agencies with responsibility for cultural development in this country. The implementation of these two policy initiatives will involve both resource issues and management issues.





### 1.3 A PROPOSED MUSEUM AGENCY

It is envisaged that a Museum Agency will be established to administer the Standards and Accreditation Scheme and the Training Strategy. The consultation partners have discussed the establishment of such an agency at all stages of the development of these proposed initiatives. The National Heritage Plan, April 2002, recently published by the former Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands states under Action 59 the intention to 'Examine the feasibility of establishing an independent Museum Council to provide support for museums not centrally funded by the state'.

The relationship between the Heritage Council and the proposed Museum Agency can be regarded as being entirely complementary. Put simply, it is anticipated that the Heritage Council will retain the policy function, while the museum agency will carry out the operational functions required to support and fund an accreditation scheme and a training programme for the sector.

### 1.4 THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

This document presents a policy framework to facilitate the development of the museum sector in Ireland, based on the parallel development of the Standards and Accreditation Scheme and the Training Strategy. It outlines the supporting methodology, and the mechanisms that have been put in place to test the scope of the policy framework. In so doing it hopes to garner the widespread support, endorsement, and adoption of the framework. This will ensure the implementation of the Standards and Accreditation Scheme and the delivery of a Training Strategy.

The objectives of this paper are:

- To explain the need for a policy framework in the context of the Irish museum sector
- To describe the processes involved in the development of a policy framework
- To seek support from key strategic partners for the implementation of a Standards and Accreditation Scheme and a Training Strategy for the Irish museum sector
- To seek support for the establishment of a Museum Agency.

This framework was initially formed by two policy initiatives and informed by a number of studies commissioned by the Heritage Council.<sup>1</sup> Detailed consultation with the museum sector has always been, and continues to be a feature of this process.

<sup>1</sup> Canavan, T. *A Study of Museum Collections in Three Counties*, 1998  
Ryan, L. *Introduction of a Standards and Accreditation Scheme for Irish Museums*, 1999  
Farrell Grant Sparks, *Audit of Training Needs in the Museum Sector*, 1999  
Ryan, L. *A Future for Irish Museums: A Report on the Pilot Study for a National Accreditation Scheme*, 2000  
CHL Consulting Company Ltd, *A Training Strategy for the Irish Museum Sector*, 2000



### 1.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of strategic recommendations can be made on the basis of the policy framework.

- (i) That the policy framework comprising the Standards and Accreditation Scheme and the Training Strategy should be implemented on a national basis once Phase II of the pilot study has been completed and evaluated.
- (ii) That endorsement for the Standards and Accreditation Scheme and the Training Strategy, and the adoption of the aims and objectives of both initiatives, should be secured from the Department of the Environment and Local Government. Other relevant government departments, including the Department of Finance and the Department of Arts, Sport, and Tourism, will also be consulted.
- (iii) That all local authorities endorse the Standards and Accreditation Scheme, adopt its aims and objectives, and support its implementation in the collecting institutions within their constituencies. Furthermore, that they commit to and provide support for the implementation of a training programme for the museum community within their constituencies.
- (iv) That a Museum Agency is established to administer the implementation of a Standards and Accreditation Scheme and a Training Strategy.
- (v) That funding is committed for the implementation of the Standards and Accreditation Scheme and the Training Strategy by the relevant government departments.

## SECTION 2: BACKGROUND - THE IRISH MUSEUM SECTOR

### 2.1 CONTEXT

Under the provisions of the Heritage Act, 1995, the functions of the Heritage Council are defined as proposing policies ‘for the identification, protection, preservation and enhancement of the national heritage, including heritage objects’. Museums and other collection based institutions act as repositories for these heritage objects and as such, have a responsibility to preserve, conserve, document, display, interpret, and communicate the collections held in trust. The Heritage Council, through the Museums and Archives Committee, identified a need within the Irish museum sector to raise standards in museum management, collection care and services to the public, and to accredit existing standards. It also recognised that a comprehensive training policy must be developed to raise standards within our museums.

Two policy proposals emerged to address the needs of the sector:

- The development of a Standards and Accreditation Scheme for Irish museums
- The development of a Training Strategy for people working in the museum sector.

### 2.2 BENEFITS

The introduction of a Standards and Accreditation Scheme and a supporting Training Strategy in Ireland would bring a number of significant benefits to museums and their collections, to museum staff and museum visitors, and to government and funding agencies. These benefits can be summarised as follows:

- Raised standards in collection care and services to the public
- Increased professionalism in all areas of museum practice
- The creation of a sense of cohesion, co-operation and common purpose among Irish museums
- Quality assurance to members of the public, government and sponsors
- Increased opportunities for funding and a focused approach to resource management
- Increased professionalism and confidence of museum staff through the creation of targeted training opportunities.

There are additional benefits to the wider cultural infrastructure. Through creating partnerships with agencies such as The Arts Council, the Northern Ireland Museums Council, and the Council of National Cultural Institutions, many performance related measures can have a wider and therefore, more cohesive application. This policy framework can be used to make



connections in the area of cultural management, both from an intellectual and operational point of view.

### 2.3 THE MUSEUM LANDSCAPE

Irish museums can be divided into ten broad categories: national institutions, county museums, local authority assisted museums, semi-state, co-operative or community based, voluntary, educational, independent, and private museums. The museum sector in Ireland is diverse, with museums ranging in size from a collection housed in a single room run by one volunteer, to the National Museum of Ireland with a staff of 150. In recent years, major developments in the Irish museum world have seen the national sector expand rapidly:

- The Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) was established in 1991
- The National Museum at Collins Barracks was opened in 1998
- The National Museum of Country Life in Castlebar was opened in 2001
- The National Gallery was extended 2001
- The Chester Beatty Library was relocated to Dublin Castle in 2001.

The regional sector has also undergone recent rapid development:

- The Hunt Museum in Limerick was opened in 1997
- The Waterford Treasures Museum was opened in 1999





- Cork Public Museum was extended in 2000
- A new County Museum in County Clare was established in 2000
- A new premises for the County Museum in Tipperary South Riding was purpose built in 2000

In 1984 the Irish National Committee of ICOM and the Irish Museums Association produced a Directory of Irish Museums, which listed 120 institutions. It was estimated that 90% of these came into existence in the previous 20 years. A further study carried out by the IMA in 1993 estimated that there were at least 190 museums in the Republic of Ireland<sup>2</sup>. The Heritage Council commissioned an inventory of museums and collecting institutions in 1998, and again in 2001. This most recent list includes 221 institutions<sup>3</sup>. These figures indicate the rapid expansion of the sector. In a period of 17 years, the number of museums and collecting institutions has almost doubled.

**2.4 THE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

There are currently ten City and County Museums in existence - Cork, Limerick, Monaghan, Tipperary South Riding, Donegal, Kerry, Louth, Cavan, Waterford, and Clare. Feasibility studies aimed at assessing the need for the development of museums and museum services have been carried out in a further six counties, with an additional three studies in the pipeline. These studies are being carried out by the local authorities in partnership with the Heritage Council. In addition to the county museums, there are numerous other museums and collecting institutions administered by local authorities. These include a small number of major collections such as the Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery in Dublin.

Local authorities are under increasing pressure to provide support for existing museums and collections within their constituencies, or to collaborate on the development of new museum initiatives. These initiatives involve a significant commitment of capital and revenue funding, sources for which are not always readily identifiable. Within the current climate, where funding sources at local authority level face cutbacks, a methodology that provides a system of quality assurance, linked to a training programme that concentrates on training museum practitioners, would provide a useful tool to the local authority management teams when it comes to museum development and sustainability. It would also provide an opportunity for capacity building at local level if the structuring of a museum service were developed in tandem with the implementation of the policy framework.

Three county museums are participating on the Heritage Council’s Museum Standards and Accreditation Scheme pilot study. Each museum has, to date, carried out a comprehensive

<sup>2</sup> Helen Lanigan Wood and Karin Stierle, A Survey of Museums in Ireland, The Irish Museums Association 1994.  
<sup>3</sup> Karin Stierle, The Heritage Council List of Museums in Ireland, (unpublished) March 1998.

internal audit on existing standards, and drafted a plan to reach all of the standards agreed under the scheme. This process has been facilitated and informed by specific training targeted at both the individual museum and the collective pilot group.

**2.5 CONSULTING THE SECTOR**

Extensive consultation with key partners is a hallmark of the Heritage Council’s work in developing policy for the national heritage. The development of an accreditation policy has involved a high level of consultation with, and participation by, members of the Irish museum community.

The consultation process for the development of a Standards and Accreditation Scheme and a Training Strategy began with a Policy Day in April 1998. At this, representative members of the museum sector agreed that two working groups should be established to advance both the proposed accreditation scheme and the training strategy. The terms of reference for both groups are outlined below:

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR WORKING GROUP ON STANDARDS AND ACCREDITATION**

*To establish criteria for a Standards and Accreditation Scheme and to prepare a draft plan for presentation to government, following the presentation of an interim report to the members of the profession.*

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR WORKING GROUP ON TRAINING**

*To conduct an audit of existing training resources and experience; to identify the training needs within museums, at all levels and to make recommendations for the provision of training to meet the needs of museums in Ireland.*

The working groups were established in May 1984. As part of the work programme, museum professionals in the UK, the US, New Zealand and Australia amongst others, were consulted. A consultant was appointed by the Heritage Council to develop the briefs of the working groups and to document the process.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Michael Ryan chaired the working groups: Pat Cooke convened the working group on Standards and Accreditation Scheme and Prof. Peter Woodman convened the working group on Training.

SECTION 3:  
A STANDARDS AND ACCREDITATION  
SCHEME FOR THE IRISH  
MUSEUMS SECTOR -  
A FRAMEWORK FOR POLICY

3.1 THE MODEL

The process involved in the development of the accreditation model included research into comparative international models, consultative meetings with members of the Irish museum sector and with experts from abroad, and detailed contributions from the members of the working group.

The agreed model has resulted from:

- Consideration of the particular make-up of the museum constituency in Ireland
- Consultation with representative members of the Irish museum community and associated bodies
- Research, analysis and consultation with leading experts in museum accreditation from the UK, the US, and New Zealand
- Detailed discussions with members of the working group on the elements of the scheme
- Five drafts of the accreditation model incorporating revisions at every stage
- Circulation of the proposed model among the wider museum representative group.

The scheme proposed does not mirror any of the systems in operation in the countries studied, but does contain elements of all of them.



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3.2 MUSEUM DEFINITION

An agreed definition of a museum is essential for the operation of an accreditation scheme for museums. The term 'museum' includes galleries, historic houses, and heritage sites with collections. The members of both working groups and the participants at the conference agreed the following definition for the purposes of this policy initiative.

*Museums are not for profit institutions that collect, safeguard, hold in trust, research, develop and interpret collections of original objects and original objects on loan, for the public benefit.  
They function publicly as places where people learn from and find inspiration and enjoyment through the display and research of original objects.*

3.3 AIMS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ACCREDITATION SCHEME

The **aims** of the proposed museum accreditation scheme are:

- (i) **To raise standards** for collection care, services to the public, museum management and staff both professional and voluntary.
- (ii) **To facilitate a process of good management and strategic planning** in all institutions which participate in the scheme.
- (iii) **To act as a motivator for museum staff** who would have a clear set of work objectives defined by the strategic plan.
- (iv) **To provide a high level of public services and facilities to museum users**, both visitors and researchers.
- (v) **To act as a guide for central government, local authorities and funding agencies in the disbursement of funds to museums** - this would result in greater public accountability and more focused resource management.
- (vi) **To provide training** in the accreditation process thereby encouraging professionalism among staff in all areas of museum activity.
- (vii) **To provide a policy framework** within which museums would have an increased opportunity to work co-operatively towards a common sense of purpose.



The **characteristics** of the proposed scheme are:

- (i) The scheme is **inclusive**. It is designed to facilitate the maximum amount of participation from all sectors of the museum community.
- (ii) The scheme is **voluntary**. Accreditation is an elective process although the objective is to include the majority of institutions in the scheme.
- (iii) The scheme is **incremental**. The staged approach towards gaining accreditation is designed to maximise the level of participation in the scheme. An interim assessment stage is included to facilitate those institutions that may take longer to reach all of the standards required for accreditation.
- (iv) The scheme has an **aspirational structure**. There is an inbuilt mechanism to encourage museums to progress through all the stages to full accreditation.
- (v) The scheme is **flexible**, with standards set to reflect the different levels of resources and staff in participating institutions.
- (vi) The scheme provides for **monitoring**. On-site visits will be a feature of the three main stages of the accreditation process: preparation for accreditation, interim assessment, and accreditation.

**3.4 CATEGORIES FOR ASSESSMENT**

It was agreed that the categories for assessment should reflect a balance between the importance of public access and good public services, and the importance of a high level of care and protection of museum collections. Seven categories were agreed and they are as follows:

**THE SEVEN CATEGORIES FOR ASSESSMENT**

1	Constitution
2	Museum Management
3	Caring For The Collection
4	Documenting The Collection
5	Exhibition
6	Education
7	Visitor Care & Access

**3.5 ACHIEVING ACCREDITATION**

There are five steps in the model for the accreditation scheme.

- (i) **Pre-accreditation assessment** - this is the initial application procedure. Institutions must meet the criteria set down in the agreed museum definition in order to be eligible to participate in the Standards and Accreditation Scheme.
- (ii) **Preparation for accreditation** - this stage involves a self-assessment process that will identify:
  - The existing standards in all of the categories
  - The standards that have to be attained.The self-assessment process will be followed by the preparation of an accreditation plan. This will detail a strategy, work schedule and timescale for reaching the required standards in each category.
- (iii) **Interim assessment** - this stage indicates the achievement of certain minimum standards in all seven categories.
- (iv) **Accreditation** - when this point is reached the participating institution will have implemented the prescribed standards in all seven categories.
- (v) **Post accreditation** - Once accreditation has been achieved, a range of benefits will be available to the institution, not least of which is recognition of successful participation in the scheme. (See **2.2 Benefits** above.)

**3.6 THE METHODOLOGY**

The timeframe for the entire accreditation process is five years from start to finish. Each stage in the process has been allocated a specific length of time. Some museums can apply for interim and full accreditation within a shorter timescale. This will be dependant on the number of standards they have in place before joining the scheme, and the successful accreditation of these standards.

Once eligibility has been agreed, an Orientation Programme will begin the accreditation process for all participating institutions. The Orientation Programme will provide a thorough introduction to the Standards and Accreditation Scheme, and facilitate discussion on the achievement of minimum standards in the seven categories of assessment.

Progress through the scheme will be assessed at three points.

- (i) The **first assessment** will be on completion of the accreditation plan at the end of Step II (See **3.5** above).
- (ii) The **second assessment** will be made once the institutions reach interim accreditation at the end of Step III.
- (iii) The **final assessment** will take place when all of the prescribed standards have been implemented at the end of Step IV.

The assessments will be based on the provision of all the required documentary evidence and a site visit. A team of independent assessors will carry out the second and third assessment.

A number of mechanisms have been factored in to support and assist participating institutions in achieving accreditation status. These include the following measures:

- Access to training based specifically on the standards in each category
- Access to a panel of advisors who can act as mentors to the individual participating institutions
- Regular group meetings to monitor progress
- Access to supporting reference material
- Consistent support and advice from the Standards and Accreditation Scheme management team.

There are provisions for periodic monitoring, re-assessment, and the removal of accreditation status as part of the scheme.

### 3.7 LOSING ACCREDITATION STATUS

The working group on the Standards and Accreditation Scheme considered the issue of standards declining in a museum, or changes in circumstances which would affect staffing, resources or governance. It was concluded that the scheme must include provision for the removal of accredited status.

It was agreed that the following factors would result in a museum losing its accredited status:

- Failure to comply with accreditation procedures - failure to comply with specified standards will involve sanctions
- Significant debt or bankruptcy

- Absence of management
- Decline in standards of care
- Breach of security
- Inappropriate professional conduct.

Loss of accreditation status is reversible and re-application to the scheme is possible once remedial action is taken and approved.





SECTION 4:  
IMPLEMENTING THE STANDARDS AND  
ACCREDITATION SCHEME

4.1 THE PILOT STUDY PHASE I - NOVEMBER 1999 TO AUGUST 2000

In April 1999 the Heritage Council’s report entitled The Introduction of a Standards and Accreditation Scheme for Irish Museums, included the model discussed above. In this report, two main short-term recommendations were proposed. These were to establish:

- A pilot study, administered and funded by the Heritage Council, to establish and agree standards and to test the accreditation model
- An orientation programme, funded by the Heritage Council, to launch the pilot scheme and provide participating institutions with a thorough introduction to the Standards and Accreditation Scheme.

In May 1999 the Heritage Council approved funding for the pilot study, and the employment of a consultant to co-ordinate and document all aspects of the process.

4.2 OBJECTIVES

The agreed objectives for the Pilot Study Phase I were as follows:

- (i) To test the second, six-month, stage of the Accreditation Scheme. This includes the preparation of a plan by each of the six participating museums, identifying their existing standards and the standards that need to be attained for accreditation. The plan must include a realistic strategy, work schedule and timescale for reaching the required standards in all categories.
- (ii) To identify the training needs, advice and support structures required to attain the required standards.
- (iii) To identify in general terms the financial cost of the process.
- (iv) To identify the supporting documentation and other elements necessary to enable museums to deliver on certain standards.
- (v) To check the standards across the spectrum of museums represented on the pilot scheme to see if the agreed minimum standards are realistically attainable.

Fourteen museums, which met the museum definition, were invited to participate in the pilot study. Nine replied positively and six were selected to participate. The selected institutions represent a cross section of the museum sector, showing a significant geographical spread with a mixture of small, medium and large collections, diverse governing structures, and a range of resources. The participating institutions are:

Abbeyleix Heritage Centre, Co. Laois

Donegal County Museum, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal

Knock Folk Museum, Co. Mayo

The National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin

The National Transport Museum, Howth, Co. Dublin

Waterford Treasures, Waterford City

The participants in the pilot study summarised the benefits of being part of the project as follows:

- A forum for teamwork
- A focus for planning
- Access to shared knowledge and experience
- Advice and training workshops
- Individual professional advice
- A framework for action
- A resource for the future.

A major challenge for the pilot group was to reach agreement on minimum standards among a diverse group of institutions. As the six museums in the study had been deliberately chosen to represent the various strands within the museum sector, a consensus must accommodate standards in a range of museums extending from a national cultural institution to a voluntary run museum. It is important to note that though minimum standards were agreed, it was understood that they would be developed to a degree appropriate to the scale and nature of the individual institutions. For instance, a national cultural institution with its own education department would be expected to provide a more developed visitor education programme than a small independent museum with a full-time staff of two.

4.3 ASSESSMENT

A panel of four independent assessors, drawn from the museums and archives sector, was put in place to assess the accreditation plans produced by the six participating institutions.<sup>5</sup> Their brief also included an evaluation of the results and process of the study itself. They worked in teams of two and visited and assessed three museums each.

<sup>5</sup> The Panel included the following members:  
Brian Lacey, Chief Executive, The Discovery Programme  
Aidan Walsh, Director, Northern Ireland Museums Council  
Emmeline Leary, Museums Officer, Resource  
Virginia Teehan, Director, Heritage Office, University College Cork

The assessors played a significant role in the pilot study. Their expert evaluation of the process and results of the study acted as a critical quality control on the project, and points raised in their reports brought several key concerns into focus.

**4.4 CONCLUSIONS**

The pilot study concluded that:

- (i)** The introduction of a national Standards and Accreditation Scheme for Irish museums would be a positive development for the sector and would act as a catalyst for change and higher standards.
- (ii)** The establishment of a Museum Agency is a central tenet of the implementation of the scheme.
- (iii)** Training must play a significant role in the accreditation scheme. The pilot study demonstrated that staff need access to a focused modular training programme to enable them to attain all the standards.
- (iv)** An accreditation process will result in greater public accountability and quality assurance. Openly measurable standards guarantee a more visible return on investment of public money and will contribute to the long-term viability of Irish museums.
- (v)** Good management leads to high standards. This scheme has been designed to encourage museum staff, both paid and voluntary, to think holistically about the museums in which they work. The inclusion of qualitative standards is designed to promote a better museum culture - one that is cognisant of a museum’s responsibility towards its collections and its visitors.
- (vi)** Inclusion of a visitor survey as one of the minimum standards will give museum staff real, rather than anecdotal, information about their visitors. This empowers the planning ability of museums, enabling them to make plans based on their actual visitor profile.
- (vii)** The introduction of a Standards and Accreditation Scheme will enable museums in all parts of Ireland to work towards and achieve recognised standards. This will facilitate the return of important heritage objects to the communities in which they were found and promote greater access to heritage collections.

The pilot study highlighted certain administrative challenges. A major difficulty in the study was the amount of staff time required for the accreditation process. Participating museums will have to prioritise the accreditation process within the management of the institution. The implications for a national scheme are significant and proper time management is essential. While extenuating circumstances will be allowed for, the agency administering the scheme will have to ensure that deadlines are met and timescales adhered to.

**4.5 PILOT STUDY PHASE II - SEPTEMBER 2001 ONGOING**

Following the completion of the Phase I of the pilot study, a report was prepared by the pilot study co-ordinator, Louise Ryan entitled *A Future for Irish Museums: A report on the pilot study for a National Accreditation Scheme*. The findings and conclusions of the report were considered by the Museums and Archives Committee of the Heritage Council and it was agreed that a further pilot study should be instigated which would test the accreditation scheme up to the interim accreditation phase. Council agreed this recommendation in November 2000 and funding allocated in the estimates for 2001.

In early 2001 the pilot scheme was expanded to include 13 institutions. Seven new museums were selected based again on both their institutional and geographical diversity.

The seven institutions are:

- The Butler Gallery, Kilkenny
- The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin
- The Hunt Museum, Limerick.
- Monaghan County Museum, Monaghan
- Muckross House, Killarney, Co. Kerry
- Musaem Corcha Dhuibhne, Ballyferriter, Co. Kerry
- The National Print Museum, Dublin

Phase II of the pilot study will ascertain:

- The practical application of the accreditation plan - timeframe and work schedule
- The reality of implementing agreed standards across thirteen diverse institutions
- The resources required to achieve interim accreditation - staff time and institutional/external resources
- The cost to the Heritage Council of the participants reaching interim accreditation
- The establishment of an accreditation training programme
- The cost of implementing an accreditation training programme.



## SECTION 5: A TRAINING STRATEGY FOR THE IRISH MUSEUM SECTOR

### 5.1 BACKGROUND

Museum professionals from other countries have commented on the link between the introduction of an accreditation scheme and the provision of training in the proposed Irish scheme. They observed that this combination is both innovative and significant. Given the nature of the Irish museum sector, it is imperative that a targeted training programme supports the introduction of a national accreditation scheme. The two elements are interdependent. If the training element were absent the Standards and Accreditation Scheme would not work.

International colleagues have also noted the lack of a dedicated training course or courses for museum workers, to date. This gap makes the provision of training to support the accreditation process all the more essential.

Of equal importance is the need to address the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training needs of the sector. Early on the Heritage Council's Working Group on Training saw that a two-stranded approach was needed to address both the needs of the accreditation scheme and the professional development of the sector. Both ultimately would provide very necessary confidence building measures, an increase in standards and a higher degree of professionalism. It was agreed that a strategy was needed to develop a practical training programme that could be implemented with the support of the museum community.

Within this context, The Heritage Council appointed consultants in February 2000 to draw up a training strategy for the museum sector.<sup>6</sup> The study took into account the findings of extensive research on the subject previously commissioned by The Heritage Council and others, the results of Pilot Study Phase I of the Standards and Accreditation Scheme completed in July 2000, and the fruits of experience in other countries.

The following is a summary of the main conclusions.

### 5.2 PRESENT POSITION

The report's detailed analysis of the present position regarding training in the museum sector highlights a number of points to be considered in developing a structured framework for training:

**Small population size:** there is a relatively small population of employees in the sector, totalling fewer than 1,100 in 1998 with an average of five per museum (excluding volunteers). There is a correspondingly low level of annual recruitment, especially to managerial and skilled professional positions.

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<sup>6</sup> CHL Consulting Company

**Diversity of institutions:** the population of museums in Ireland comprises a very diverse group of institutions, ranging from small voluntary museums with no paid staff to national cultural institutions with substantial full-time establishments.

**Diversity of personnel:** the diversity of institutions is matched by the diversity of personnel working in the sector. There are considerable variations in qualifications, experience and training to date. Moreover, their employment status varies more widely than in most other sectors with a large proportion of people active in the sector working on part-time, seasonal, temporary and voluntary bases.





**Small training budgets:** although the larger museums tend to allocate budgets for training - in some cases as much as 3% of their wages and salaries budget, which is above the EU guideline of 2% - the vast majority have no budget but may make an ad hoc provision on an annual basis. In most cases, this reflects financial constraints as much as the lack of commitment to training.

**Lack of training policies and plans:** very few museums appear to have strategic plans in place for their own development. As a result, there is no context or longer-term vision within which staff training policies and plans can be drawn up. Even in cases where there is a training budget, an ad hoc approach is frequently taken to identifying and meeting training needs.

**Reliance on FÁS training and employment schemes:** a significant proportion of paid staff within the sector is working on FÁS schemes. Apart from the fact that there is no guarantee that such schemes will continue indefinitely, there appears to be a poor relationship between the schemes and long-term staff development.

**Wide geographic spread of museums:** although there is a concentration in Dublin, over 80% of museums and 47% of paid museum staff are located outside the capital and are spread widely throughout the country. As the respective proportions imply, the museums outside Dublin are typically small with few staff and tight budgets.

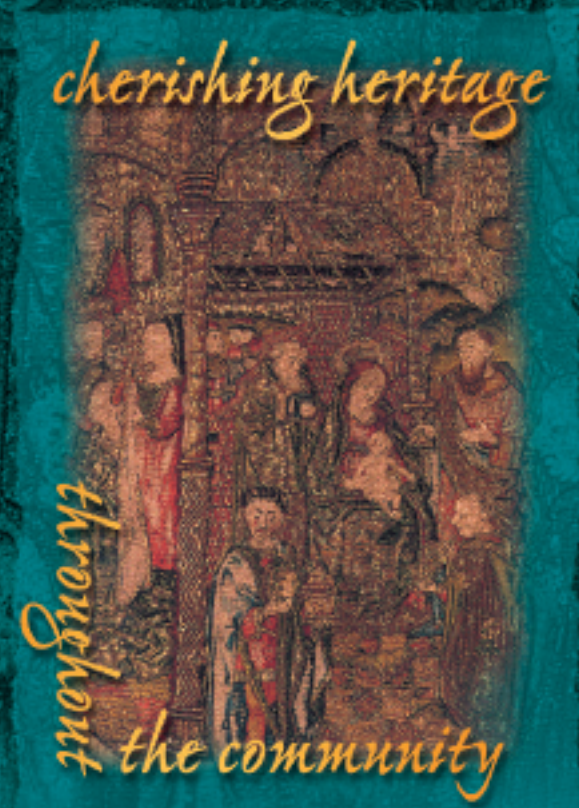
**The need for appropriate delivery of training:** the timing and structure of training programmes for museums need to be formatted in a way that makes it easy for staff to attend.

**The growing need for co-ordination within the museum sector:** at present, the training supply side is fragmented with numerous independent providers offering a diverse range of programmes. There is no co-ordination among providers, or between the various activities taking place, and no clearly established policy or set of objectives.

In the face of these problems, it is clearly essential to establish a long-term policy with explicit objectives for training in the sector. Under this umbrella, the disparate elements of the present approach can be pulled together into a coherent strategy.

### 5.3 CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

In April 2001 the Heritage Council hosted a policy day to which representatives of the museum sector, who had been involved in the consultation process, were invited. The recommendations of the Heritage Council report, *A Training Strategy for the Irish Museum Sector* (2000), were debated, a number of proposals were agreed and the following recommendations were made:



- That a working group on training should be re-established to implement the agreed recommendations of the Training Strategy

- That the establishment of a Museums Agency should be made a priority.

In August 2001 a co-ordinator was appointed to advance the implementation of a Training Strategy and a working group was convened.

Since then the Training Strategy has progressed to implementation stage. The key objectives of this period were:

- To develop the courses proposed in the report and investigate other course options
- To consider the accreditation and validation options
- To recommend an administrative structure
- To outline an implementation plan
- To estimate costs.

All of these objectives were met and the following recommendations were proposed.

- (i) To develop and deliver:
  - A Foundation Course in Museum Practice
  - A Diploma in Museum and Cultural Management
  - A Programme of Short Courses
  - A Database of Providers
- (ii) To seek partnership with an academic institution to develop, accredit and deliver the Diploma.
- (iii) To establish a Museum Agency to administer the Training Strategy and programme.

It is important to note that each of the elements of the training programme outlined above have been thoroughly researched and developed, to the point where the next logical step is to begin making them available to the museum sector. This next step is however, contingent to a great extent, on the establishment of a Museum Agency.



SECTION 6:  
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF  
A MUSEUM AGENCY

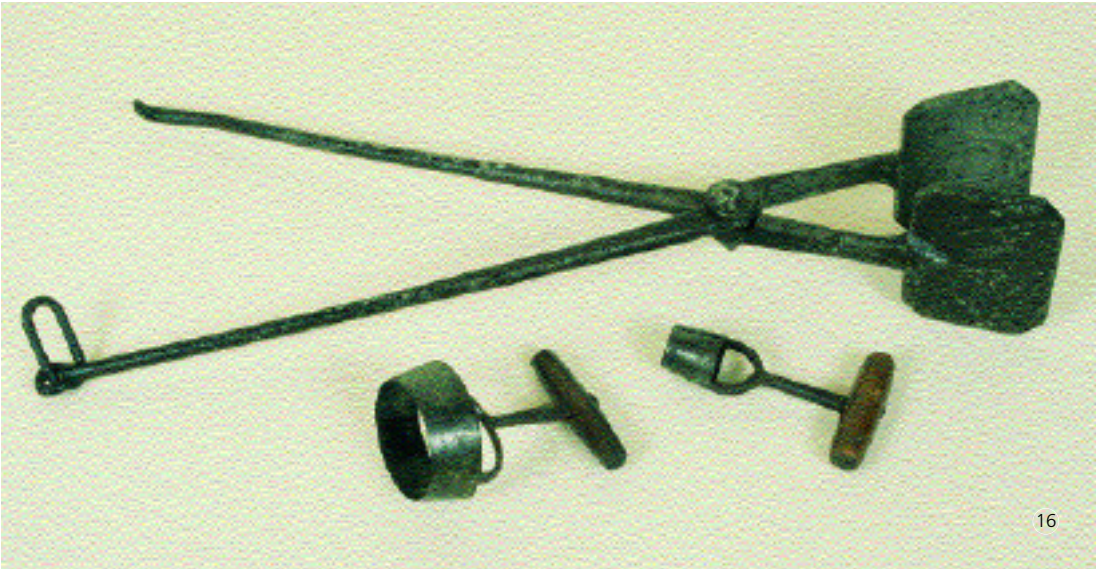
The Heritage Council’s Museums & Archives Comittee is currently managing the development of both the Training Strategy and the Standards and Accreditation Scheme. However, once both initiatives are ready for implementation this will no longer be feasible. All partners have recognised that the establishment of a national Museum Agency will become a necessity at this point. The costs for this are outlined in Table 1 below.

It is envisaged that the proposed agency will have a broad strategic remit, managing not only the proposed Standards and Accreditation Scheme and the Training Strategy, but also a comprehensive development strategy for the sector. A grant fund administered by the agency, could provide an important source of additional income for approved initiatives within the sector.

The proposed agency may be established and run under the aegis of the Heritage Council, somewhat along the lines of the relationship the Heritage Council enjoys with the Discovery Programme and the Irish Landmark Trust.

In the *National Heritage Plan*, published by the former Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, April 2002, the establishment of a study to ascertain the feasibility of an ‘independent museum council’ was mooted under Action 59. The Heritage Council intends to proceed with this study as soon as possible.

The table below represents an indication of costs based on figures from existing analogous agencies.



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Table 1 Estimated Costs: Proposed Museum Agency

		DETAILED COSTS	TOTAL COSTS
Staff	Director	63,000	
	Accreditation Officer	35,000	
	Training Officer	35,000	
	Finance/IT Officer	35,000	
	Clerical Officer	18,000	
	Clerical Officer	18,000	
		204,000	
	PRSI scale 12%	24,480	
Sub-total			€228,480
OPERATIONAL Costs	Rent, Rates & Services	61,300 <sup>9</sup>	
	IT & Office Equipment <sup>7</sup>	50,000	
	Administration& Utilities <sup>8</sup>	57,000	
	Library	3,000	
	Insurance	10,000	
	Expenses	20,000	
Sub-total			€201,300 <sup>13</sup>
Accreditation*	Publications & Printing	30,000	
	TRAINING <sup>11</sup>		
	Orientation Programmes	21,000	
	Advisory Consultations	40,000	
Sub-total			€91,000
TRAINING	Training Courses:		
	5 short courses@ 3,000 <sup>12</sup>	15,000	
	1x 5-day course	20,000	
	10 x 2 day w/shops @1,250 per day	25,000	
	Training Bursaries	5,000	
	Training Equipment	5,000	
			€70,000
GRANTS	Grant Scheme	150,000	
			€150,000
TOTAL			€740,780 (£564,510)

\*An initial take-up figure of c. 30 - 40 museums is anticipated in the above costings.

<sup>7</sup> Initial start-up costs – depreciation figures for subsequent years.

<sup>8</sup> This includes light, heat, telephone, postage, stationery, cleaning and maintenance.

<sup>9</sup> Figure based on rental and charges on 100 sq. metres (1,000 sq. ft.). Rent: €40.60 per sq. ft.; Rates €4.82 per sq. ft.; Services: €6.35 per sq. ft.; 3 car park spaces @ €3,174 each.

<sup>10</sup> If the Agency was based outside Dublin, the total costs for Rent, Rates and Service Charges would be €25,400 thus reducing the total operational costs to €141,400.

<sup>11</sup> It is assumed that the provision of the Certificate/Diploma Course would provide a complete training programme for accreditation. In the absence of this, a cost would have to be factored in for the provision of courses targeted at accreditation.

<sup>12</sup> Including accreditation fees, promotion, evaluation, design and delivery costs.

## SECTION 7: RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of strategic recommendations can be made as a result of the construction of the policy framework.

- (i) That the policy framework comprising the Standards and Accreditation Scheme and the Training Strategy should be implemented on a national basis once the Pilot Study Phase II has been completed and evaluated.
- (ii) That endorsement for the Standards and Accreditation Scheme and the Training Strategy, and the adoption of the aims and objectives of both initiatives, should be secured from the Department of the Environment and Local Government. Other relevant government departments, including the Department of Finance and the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, will also be consulted.
- (iii) That all local authorities endorse the Standards and Accreditation Scheme and adopt the aims and objectives of the scheme, with a view to supporting implementation in the collecting institutions within their constituencies. Furthermore, that they commit to and provide support for the implementation of a training programme for the museum community within their constituencies.
- (iv) That a Museum Agency is established to administer the implementation of a Standards and Accreditation Scheme and a Training Strategy.
- (v) That funding is committed for the implementation of the Standards and Accreditation Scheme and the Training Strategy by the relevant government departments.

