

## **PRESS RELEASE**

Tuesday, 27<sup>th</sup> July 2021

### **10 Irish museums receive 'excellence' award in post-COVID tourism boost**

*The GAA Museum maintains accreditation, while Crawford Art Gallery; Kilkenny Castle; Museum of Free Derry and Thomas MacDonagh Museum achieve full accreditation*

Ten museums have received accreditation today (27.07.21) under the prestigious Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI), coordinated by The Heritage Council.

It comes as the sector prepares a fightback against the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic. The certificates were presented at a special online ceremony.

Established by the Council to benchmark and promote professional standards, selection under the MSPI is seen as a major accolade in the sector.

It sets the benchmark for 'excellence' across a range of areas.

Factors taken into account include how museums care for their collections and visitors, as well as governance and management standards, and their education and exhibition programmes.

The programme is now in its 16<sup>th</sup> year. Since its inception, a total of 47 museums have gone through a rigorous process to achieve full accreditation. In total, 128 certificates have been awarded.

The accreditation process requires each museum to reach 34 minimum standards across seven areas, including management and governance, collections management, and public or visitor services.

The GAA Museum - the national custodian of archives and artefacts of the Gaelic Athletic Association – today received 'maintenance of full accreditation'.

The museum's collections and exhibits illustrate the rich history of our national games, from ancient times to the present day.

"The benefits of this award, and participation in MSPI, cannot be overstated," said Niamh McCoy, Director of the GAA Museum.

"Since joining the programme in 2007, the GAA Museum has developed into one of the most popular visitor attractions in Dublin. This development has been underpinned by the support

the programme provides, from training events and funding opportunities, to expert advice and the support of colleagues in the wider museum community.

“As we welcome visitors back to the museum and Croke Park Stadium, this award is a timely reminder of the importance of the Museum in telling the story of Ireland’s sporting, social and cultural heritage.”

Other award-winners include the Crawford Art Gallery in Cork, as well as museums run by local authorities, national organisations, and small volunteer groups.

Chairman of the Heritage Council, Michael Parsons said: “This programme is the gold standard for Irish museums. Taking approximately five years to achieve full accreditation (interim accreditation usually after three years), it is a huge commitment on behalf of the participants.”

Chief Executive of The Heritage Council, Virginia Teehan, said: “I’d like to compliment those involved in all the hard work they have done by way of raising standards to a new level. “The range of activities carried out by the various recipients in testament to the vibrancy in this sector and augurs well for the future.”

Gina O’Kelly, Director of Operations of the Irish Museums Association, said: “Receiving this ‘stamp of excellence’ today is a huge accolade for each museum and represents many years of engagement with the process of accreditation – a commitment that has proven to be extremely rewarding for both the museums and their audiences.”

The museums receiving accreditation today are:

- Crawford Art Gallery, Cork – Full accreditation.
- Kilkenny Castle, OPW – Full accreditation.
- Museum of Free Derry – Full accreditation.
- The Thomas MacDonagh Museum, Tipperary - Full accreditation.
- Dublin Castle State Apartments, OPW – Maintenance of accreditation.
- Farmleigh, Dublin OPW – Maintenance of accreditation.
- The GAA Museum, Dublin – Maintenance of accreditation.
- Galway City Museum – Maintenance of accreditation.
- Highlanes Gallery, Drogheda, Co Louth - Maintenance of accreditation.
- Rathfarnham Castle, Dublin OPW - Maintenance of accreditation.

There are 200 museums across Ireland, attracting more than 8 million visitors in a normal year. In addition, the sector directly employs more than 1,500 staff, and has 1,000 long-term volunteers.

For further details on the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland, visit the [Heritage Council website](#).

**Contact: Mark O'Regan, Heritage Council, Tel: 085-8590378 / Joanne Ahern, DHR Communications, Tel: 087-9881837.**

**Notes for editors:**

- Virginia Teehan and Lesley-Ann Hayden, MSPI Coordinator, are available for interview.
- The accreditation process takes approximately five years. Participants usually submit an application for Interim Accreditation (25 standards) towards the end Year 3 in the Programme and applications for Full Accreditation (9 Full Standards and 25 Interim Standards) towards the end of Year 5. Three years after receiving a Full Accreditation certificate, participants are required to submit an application to confirm Maintenance of Full Accreditation.

**About the Heritage Council:** The Heritage Council was established under the Heritage Act 1995 with responsibility to propose policies and priorities for the national heritage. It works in co-operation with a range of agencies, communities, and individuals to promote education, enjoyment and understanding of our national heritage. For further information, visit: [www.heritagecouncil.ie](http://www.heritagecouncil.ie).