

## **CONFIDENTIAL DRAFT**

### **PRESS RELEASE**

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#### **Accreditation awarded to 11 Irish museums seen as boost to post Covid-19 recovery**

Eleven museums have received accreditation under the prestigious Museum Standards Programme for Ireland from 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 today (03.02.21).

Selection under the MSPI is seen as a major accolade in the sector. The programme was established by the Council to benchmark and promote professional standards.

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 13<sup>th</sup> year, and since its inception a total of 43 museums have received full accreditation. In total, 118 Certificates have been awarded.

Award-winners range from well-known National Cultural Institutions such as the Chester Beatty Library, as well as museums run by local authorities, national organisations, universities and small volunteer groups. Museums from Dublin, Cork, Donegal, Limerick, Kildare, Waterford and Carlow are among those who received an accolade.

"As we face the immediate and long-term impact of Covid-19, it is crucial that museums strengthen their ability to support Ireland's future recovery. These awards will no doubt bolster their capacity to do so," said Gina O'Kelly, Director of Operations of the Irish Museums Association.

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. Ms O'Kelly said museums have had to work behind closed doors to find alternative ways to deliver their message.

"The Heritage Council's investment in this scheme is vital for the sector," she added.

Chief Executive of The Heritage Council, Virginia Teehan, said: "I would like to acknowledge what a very challenging year it has been for the heritage sector.

“Many of the sites that both bring us joy - and inspire us in equal measure – were closed for much of 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions.

“Some of the accredited museums have had to change how they do business, thinking up new ways in which to bring heritage to the people through technology. I applaud that ingenuity.”

Chairman of the Heritage Council, Michael Parsons said: “When we began this programme in 2007, we had 12 participants and 14 sites – we now have 59 participants in 65 sites which is really great to see.

“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 commitment on behalf of the participants.”

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

The accreditation certificates were awarded in 2020 but last year’s ceremony was delayed due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The museums receiving accreditation today are:

- The Glebe House and Gallery, OPW, Co Donegal – Full accreditation.
- The IFI Irish Film Archive, Dublin – Full accreditation.
- Kilmainham Gaol Museum, OPW, Dublin – Full accreditation.
- The Little Museum of Dublin - Full accreditation.
- Fota House, The Irish Heritage Trust, Co Cork – Maintenance of full accreditation.
- The Hunt Museum, Limerick city – Maintenance of full accreditation.
- Shackleton Museum, Co Kildare – Maintenance of full accreditation.
- Waterford Treasures: Bishop’s Palace and Medieval Museum – Maintenance of full accreditation.
- Carlow County Museum – Interim accreditation.
- Cork Public Museum – Interim accreditation.

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

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**Notes for editors:**

- Virginia Teehan and Heritage Council Head of Policy and Research, Beatrice Kelly 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).