

## **Four museums awarded highest standard for museums in Ireland**

### **Dublin Castle State Apartments, Galway City Museum, Highlanes Gallery, and Rathfarnham Castle awarded full accreditation with Museum Standards Programme for Ireland**

**Tuesday, 11 July 2017:** Four museums have today been awarded full accreditation with the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland. Dublin Castle State Apartments, Galway City Museum, Highlanes Gallery in Drogheda, and Rathfarnham Castle achieved the highest standard in recognition of their work in collection care, governance, and visitor care and access.

Eight museums – Cavan County Museum, Drogheda Museum Millmount, The Glucksman in Cork, Kerry County Museum, Muckross House, Muckross Traditional Farms, Muckross House Research Library and Tipperary County Museum, retained the Full Accreditation they had previously been awarded.

A further four museums – Glasnevin Cemetery Museum, Seanchaí – Kerry Writers' Museum, The Heritage Centre (Royal College of Physicians of Ireland) and The Little Museum of Dublin – were awarded Interim Accreditation.

The Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI), which started in 2006 with just 12 participants, now has 57 museums across the island of Ireland, participating in it. The programme recognises excellence in caring for collections, museum management, education, exhibition and visitor services.

Speaking at today's awards ceremony, Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Heather Humphreys TD, said

"I am delighted to present these awards in this tenth anniversary year for the Museum Standards Programme Initiative.

Maintaining and cherishing our museums is of great importance to me and I was very pleased recently to be able to announce funding of almost €135,000 for twenty-three projects around the country under the Local and Regional Museums Funding Scheme 2017.

At a local level there has been great work done to raise the standards of care across Irish museums, and I would like to congratulate and thank all those involved, especially those who are receiving awards here today."

The Chairman of the Heritage Council, Mr. Michael Parsons, said, "What we see through this programme is that Ireland's museums are exciting and vibrant places where the staff are working hard, often with very limited budgets and resources, to ensure that the collections in their care are protected and made available to the public. Not only is this important work from a cultural point of view, it also supports tourism in a locality and helps people feel proud of the place where they live".

Mr. Parsons said that taking part in a museum standards programme is a public promise by each museum to care for the heritage of its community. Achieving accreditation in the MSPI demonstrates that a museum is meeting its promise.

“Through MPSI, the Heritage Council is working to improve all aspects of Ireland’s museum practice and, in particular, to raise the standards of care for collections across Irish museums and galleries. A voluntary programme, it has attracted involvement across the cultural spectrum, from national institutions to small, volunteer-led organisations”, concluded Mr. Parsons.

**ENDS**

**For further information:** Paula Curtin, MKC Communications, 01 703 8600/ 087 410 9910

**Note to editors**

The Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI) was established by the Heritage Council to benchmark and promote professional standards in the care of collections and to recognise through accreditation the achievement of those standards within the Irish museum sector.

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.

**Additional Information:**

**DUBLIN CASTLE STATE APARTMENTS, OPW: Awarded Full Accreditation in the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI)**

Dublin Castle has an iconic place in Ireland’s history, and it continues to perform a number of key roles for the State. The significance of the building and its historic content mean that, though the collection is small in scale, meeting the minimum standards embodied by MSPI represents a key indicator of the State’s commitment to this special part of Ireland’s national inheritance. Meeting the Full Accreditation standard is therefore an especially important milestone for this OPW site.

One of the most significant achievements since the previous assessment is the evidence of commitment from all sections of the Museum’s staff to meeting the MSPI standard. It feels like there has been a step-change in the level of understanding across the organisation of the value of the scheme and its requirements. The Museum has now successfully developed all the elements required at Full Accreditation. Of particular note, for their thoroughness and value as both policy and planning documents, are the Education Policy; the Disaster Plan; and the Care of Collections Policy.

The range and quality of the education and exhibition programmes remain a strength for this Museum. The impressive recent temporary exhibitions, loan exhibitions and re-presentation of the Gothic Room,

Wedgewood Room and the Portrait Gallery, all add to the visitor understanding and enjoyment of the building and the collection.

### **GALWAY CITY MUSEUM: Awarded Full Accreditation in the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI)**

Galway City Museum was originally founded in the 1970s and occupied Comerford House, which had been the home to the artist Clare Sheridan. The collection began with a residual collection of medieval stones, which she had acquired from the city. This museum closed in 2004 and was replaced by a new purpose-built museum close to Comerford House, which opened in April 2007 with an initial display using a loaned art collection. Since then the museum team have developed a range of informative and topical exhibitions covering the history of Galway and currently the city's involvement in the revolutionary events between 1913 and 1923.

The assessors said, 'The Director has a very impressive staff team to support her and exciting plans for the future, and we are pleased to recommend that Galway City Museum is awarded Interim and Full Accreditation under the Museums Standards Programme for Ireland'.

### **HIGHLANES GALLERY, Drogheda: Awarded Full Accreditation in the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI)**

Highlanes Gallery is located in the former Drogheda Franciscan Church and part of the Friary; known locally as the 'High Lane Church'. The Franciscans gifted the property to the people of Drogheda when they ended their 760 year association with the town in 2000. The building consists of permanent and temporary gallery spaces, a small object storage area, and office space and meeting room. The building also houses a café and shop.

The collection, known as the Drogheda Municipal Art Collection, is strong on eminent Irish artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was founded by the late Bea Orpen and her husband Terry Trench and consists of over 70 pieces assembled between 1946 and 1981.

The assessors said, 'The team at the Highlanes Gallery has acted on the findings of the previous assessment visits, and has submitted a very detailed and comprehensive application, which addresses issues raised, and as a result the team has achieved Full Accreditation'.

### **RATHFARNHAM CASTLE, OPW: Awarded Full Accreditation in the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI)**

The original Rathfarnham Castle, built for Archbishop Adam Loftus, dates back to the Elizabethan period. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was remodelled employing some of the finest architects of the day including Sir William Chambers and James 'Athenian' Stuart. The collection includes works by the artists Angelica Kauffman, Sir Peter Lely and Hugh Douglas Hamilton.

Since its first assessment site-visit in 2012 Rathfarnham Castle staff have worked diligently to progress improvement in standards across the museum. The application for Interim and Full Accreditation was well presented and assessors would like to commend the museum for the high quality of its

presentation. Key planning statements and documents such as a Mission Statement, Strategic Plan, Collections Policy and Care of Collections Strategy have been adopted which will help shape the management and direction of the museum going forward.

#### **CAVAN COUNTY MUSEUM: Awarded Maintenance of Full Accreditation in the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI)**

Cavan County Museum has made both small and major changes since it received Full Accreditation in 2013. Its Assessor said, ' I have witnessed this museum grow in professionalism over the years and I think it is fair to say that it was their determination to achieve accreditation and to remain in the scheme has helped them to do this'. Its Curator/Manager provides the leadership this museum needs to ensure that it meets accreditation standards and she and her team understand what the scheme is about and why it is needed to look after their collections properly within the resources they have.

The biggest change is one that is not a requirement of accreditation but one its Assessor thought the museum would say, their accredited status helped them to achieve: This is the new outdoor displays of the trenches of the First World War and the large scale GPO display made up of 5 shipping containers. These two additions and the interpretation around them is a wonderful addition to the museum.

#### **DROGHEDA MUSEUM MILLMOUNT: Awarded Maintenance of Full Accreditation in the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI)**

Drogheda Museum Millmount was the first volunteer run museum to achieve Full Accreditation in the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland.

Its Assessor commented the Museum's impressive education and community engagement activities continue to be central to the ethos of the Museum and a real strength of the organisation. The range of formal and informal activities provide levels of access to the Museum's collections and to the history of the town, that many other museums aspire to. The challenge now is to raise the care and documentation of the Museum's collection to this same level. Whilst collections management is still an area for further improvement - the Museum is to be congratulated on the commitment shown this year with the development of the new log-books to improve rigor in areas requiring systematic checking; the work started on the condition audit; and on the recent significant levels of work on the accessioning of the artefact collection.

#### **THE GLUCKSMAN, University College Cork: Awarded Maintenance of Full Accreditation in the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI)**

The Glucksman, University College Cork, is a not-for-profit cultural and educational gallery that promotes the research, creation and exploration of the visual arts. Its mission is to enhance the cultural and intellectual life of the university community and the wider community through the exhibition and interpretation of art. It is located on the University College Cork (UCC) campus, in an award-winning building which includes three floors of public galleries, temporary exhibition spaces, lecture facilities, restaurant and shop.

With a relatively small staff, The Glucksman delivers an impressive temporary exhibition programme, while displaying the majority of the permanent collection within public buildings around the UCC campus. This latter activity involves balancing security and conservation needs, and the Gallery has well-planned monitoring systems in place to ensure good public access while minimising any risks to the collection.

The Assessor said, 'Since achieving Full Accreditation in May 2013, The Glucksman, University College Cork has continued to maintain the Standards required by the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland and therefore it is recommended that a certificate confirming Maintenance of Full Accreditation be awarded. The Glucksman staff are to be congratulated on their achievement'.

**KERRY COUNTY MUSEUM: Awarded Maintenance of Full Accreditation in the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI)**

In its journey through the accreditation process Kerry County Museum has consistently demonstrated the highest professional standards across every area of its work and this is in no small way reflected in its commitment to achieving and maintaining the requirements of MSPI accreditation.

During the first assessment visits the museum staff expressed clearly how the museum should develop to be a museum for the whole county and be recognised as a centre of excellence. The reorganisation of local government has helped to cement that vision and the museum is now, beyond doubt, The Kerry County Museum in name and nature.

Its Assessor commented, 'Every time I visit the museum I am impressed by some new innovation or exhibition. The term 'blockbuster' is not inappropriate for some of the major temporary exhibitions which the museum has staged in recent years, and the current offer: "Casement in Kerry: A Revolutionary Journey" maintains that first class track record. Designed and produced by the museum staff, at relatively low cost, the exhibition is evidence of the museum's ability to stage well-researched, topical exhibitions of international as well as local interest. It also illustrates well the efforts of the small but dedicated team in locating and borrowing rare and important items from individuals and major international institutions'.

The Assessor said, 'I have no hesitation in recommending that this excellent museum be awarded recognition for maintaining all interim and full standards of the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland'.

**MUCKROSS HOUSE: Awarded Maintenance of Full Accreditation in the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI)**

**MUCKROSS TRADITIONAL FARMS: Awarded Maintenance of Full Accreditation in the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI)**

**MUCKROSS HOUSE RESEARCH LIBRARY: Awarded Maintenance of Full Accreditation in the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI)**

Muckross House, Muckross Traditional Farms and Muckross House Research Library have participated in the Programme since the pilot study and its three sites were among the first to be awarded Full Accreditation in the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI) in 2007. This is the second time it has submitted applications to confirm maintenance of the thirty-four MSPI Standards. By doing so, the Trustees of Muckross House continue to demonstrate their commitment to first class care of its collections and to the Programme.

The commitment of staff to retaining accreditation was clear in the standard of the information provided in the applications and during the assessment visit.

Following a difficult period, because of the financial collapse, visit numbers are now improving year on year, which is increasing the income generated. The State, the Trustees and all the staff should be congratulated for maintaining a high quality service throughout a difficult period. In addition, they have managed to improve the services they offer to visitors and continue to plan future developments.

#### **TIPPERARY COUNTY MUSEUM: Awarded Maintenance of Full Accreditation in the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI)**

Since it was awarded Full Accreditation in 2013 as South Tipperary County Museum the museum's responsibilities have grown, with the amalgamation of the Tipperary local authorities, to include north as well as south Tipperary and it has been renamed Tipperary County Museum accordingly.

The museum's educational work continues to maintain the high standards that led to its winning of the **Best Education and Community Engagement Award in the 2009 Museum of the Year Awards**. The current Education Policy and Plan assesses its education programme as one of the museum's strengths but the difficulty of sustaining such a high standard without additional funding is also noted as is the challenge of providing an educational service for schools in North Tipperary, situated so far from the museum in Clonmel.

Its Assessor recommended Tipperary County Museum is to be congratulated on a thorough application for Maintenance of the thirty-four Interim and Full Accreditation standards. She said, 'The museum has met all the required standards and I have pleasure in recommending to the Heritage Council that it be awarded a certificate confirming Maintenance of Full Accreditation'.

#### **GLASNEVIN MUSEUM: Awarded Interim Accreditation in the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI)**

In the short period since its establishment the Museum has won public and professional accolades for its building and displays, and is now, through engagement with the MSPI scheme, consolidating its position with regard to the care and scope of its collections. The Glasnevin Trust are to be congratulated on the exceptional improvements that have been made to the collections store. The Trust are also to be congratulated on the thoroughness of the systems they have developed for collections documentation, condition monitoring and care. At first assessment these areas were very basic, but are now well developed and supported by a useful Documentation Procedural Manual, a range of monitoring systems, and an experienced Care of Collections Museums Assistant.

It is a credit to all involved at the Glasnevin Cemetery Museum that such a clear and compliant application has been made. It shows a substantial engagement with the MSPI standards at policy and procedural levels; and has been achieved by a very small professional team with the support of the Board. The assessors were very impressed by the highly professional approach adopted and made particular reference to the work completed to determine the future development of the Museum's collections.

### **Seanchaí - KERRY WRITERS' MUSEUM: Awarded Interim Accreditation in the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI)**

This excellent museum is a relative rarity in Ireland as it is devoted to the literary heritage whereas most of our museums are devoted to historic heritage or the visual arts. Kerry Writers' Museum concentrates in particular on five key writers of local origin but national reputation. These are John B Keane, Brendan Kennelly, Maurice Walsh, George Fitzmaurice and Bryan Mac Mahon. The collections relate largely to these five writers but also include artefacts from associated activities, such as to Listowel Writer's week, Listowel Drama Group and Listowel Fleadhanna Cheoil.

Kerry Writer's Museum applied for the 1st (Consultative) Assessment in 2013 and was assessed in September that year. A well prepared application openly acknowledged deficiencies at that date. It is evident that the Museum worked hard to prepare its application in the intervening years and the results are clear to see. It is an excellent, vibrant small museum which now manages its collections to a high standard; it has effectively used MSPI to point up its deficiencies and it has complied with advice offered and now meets all the standards.

### **LITTLE MUSEUM OF DUBLIN: Awarded Interim Accreditation in the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI)**

The Little Museum of Dublin interprets the history of Dublin in a way which is exciting and innovative. It delivers its services to a very high standard. Since its inception in 2011 The Little Museum has established itself as a popular and exciting part of the cultural life of Dublin; it is already an established venue on the tourism circuit with large and growing visitor numbers, and it is also an important part of the cultural life of Dublin and its communities.

The Little Museum has been hugely successful in marketing and driving up visitor numbers and use of their collections. Its MSPI Assessors said the team at the museum have a skill set and experience which speaks to both the tourism and museum worlds, and that it would be beneficial to other museums in the sector if Little Museum staff were to contribute to MSPI learning and training programmes in the future.

In particular the assessors commended the museum for its Strategic Plan "which is ambitious, people focused and visionary, placing equal emphasis on audience, governance, staff and collection. In particular we note that the ambition to make the museum 'the best place to work in Dublin' is to be applauded, encouraging a high level of skill and commitment in museum staff and volunteers which was evident at our assessment visit."

**The HERITAGE CENTRE – ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS OF IRELAND: Awarded Interim Accreditation in the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI)**

The Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI) is a venerable institution within Ireland and is one of a very few medical colleges worldwide that can trace its origins to the mid-17<sup>th</sup> Century. The College has been acquiring collections since its early foundation, confirmed in a Royal charter of William & Mary, dating from 1692.

All of the College archives and collections were brought together as a single collection in 2010 and a Keeper of Collections was appointed. The professionalism displayed is evident and the keeper and the College are to be congratulated on the tremendous pace of development since that decision and the initial assessment in 2014.

At the first Assessor site-visit, it was noted that the Museum had made great progress in improving the care and management of the collections since the appointment of a Keeper of Collections, following the decision to establish a Heritage Centre in 2010. That work has clearly continued apace and both assessors were very impressed by the level of engagement with the Museum Standards Programme of Ireland by the Keeper and by members of the College Council. The mission of the College is deeply ingrained in all and the passion for the role of the College and the part its collections can play in public wellbeing and also its interrelationship with the history of Ireland since its foundation, which was eloquently espoused by the President and lies at the core of the institution.

The Heritage Centre has made exemplary progress and has demonstrated a sound understanding of the Standards across the board and this has been particularly evident, especially in policy formulation and Collections care.

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