



# newsletter

Issue Twenty-Eight

November 2003

Welcome to the November issue of the NMDC Newsletter. It's been another busy month for NMDC with the publication of *Too Much Stuff?* a discussion of disposals from museums. This newsletter also includes a report on the benchmarking work undertaken by the HR Forum, as well as news from the sector and beyond. It is also available on our website at:

[www.nationalmuseums.org.uk](http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk)

## NMDC News

### Too Much Stuff?

NMDC published *Too Much Stuff?: Disposal from Museums*, at the end of last month. The document is intended as a contribution to the important, but often muted, debate on disposals from museum collections.

The paper was written by an NMDC sub-committee chaired by Mark Jones, Director of the Victoria & Albert Museum and approved by NMDC directors as a whole. It asks difficult questions such as: how do museums justify retaining collections which are not well used or even well cared for? Is it really always wrong, as the current Museum Association Code of Ethics suggests, "to undertake disposal principally for financial reasons"? Is it always the case that the public interest is best served by retaining every object that has ever entered a museum within the public domain? Might not some objects provide more enjoyment to more people out of a store and in a collector's hands?

Members of NMDC recognise that the questions of acquisition and disposal of their collections go to the heart of what museums seek to, and are able to, provide. They also understand the importance of entering the debate on these issues while acknowledging both its complexities and current legal restraints. This document is intended as a contribution to this debate.

An extract from *Too Much Stuff?* appears in this month's Museums Journal. The full report can be found on our website at:

[www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/de-accessioning.html](http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/de-accessioning.html)

### Executive Committee

The Executive Committee met on 30 October and discussed the latest drafts of NMDC's three forthcoming reports: Valuing Museums, National Dimensions and the report into the role of museums inspiring creativity and innovation. The final drafts of all three documents will be sent to Directors in advance of the NMDC meeting on 28 November. We plan to publish the reports in January 2004.

### NMDC Research Network

NMDC held a meeting last month to consider the scope for co-ordinating and sharing visitor research information between the national museums. The group will also consider ways in which information can best be shared with Statistical Analytical Unit at DCMS and the Creative Research Network. A further meeting is being arranged for the beginning of December and all NMDC members will be invited to send a representative.

### Electronic Records Management

Archivists and IT Managers from across the national museums, libraries and archives, met at the Imperial War Museum on 2 October to discuss Electronic Records Management. Stuart Orr from the Department of Trade and Industry gave an interesting presentation about their implementation of an extensive ERM system. The group will meet again on 20 November to discuss ERM policies and file plans.

## Employee Development Measures in National Museums

The NMDC HR Forum has undertaken a benchmarking survey within the national museums, libraries and archives. The findings of this survey will feed into NMDC's work on leadership support and development within the sector. The key findings of the research into employee development measures are set out below:

- Average training spend per head among NMDC members is £277. This is ahead of the Public sector norm for 2002 (£204), but well below the UK industry figure of £474.
- The average percentage of pay bill dedicated to training and development is 1.25%, the average number of training days per head per annum is 2 and the average percentage of the training budget dedicated to Leadership/Management development is 26%.
- In development framework terms, only 25% of organisations have achieved Investors in People, although some 58% cite that they hold other standards such as TQM, ISO 9000 etc.
- The national museum sector is very strong on conducting induction programmes (100%), offering support for professional education/qualification (100%) and vocational qualification (92%). The sector also appears to be strong in offering management development (69%). This is less the case for secondment/exchange (54%) programmes and executive (board level) development (46%) and leadership development programmes (46%).
- 67% of national museums have HR representation at board level, which compares favourably with the UK standard of 55%. Average number of employees in HR teams is 12, in training teams 2. In 77% of organisations, HR includes the training and development function, but on average only 39% of HR employees are professionally qualified.

The research has been undertaken by Andy Bodle and colleagues at the National Maritime Museum. The full report will be issued later this month.

For more news about NMDC activities, visit our website at: [www.nationalmuseums.org.uk](http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk)

## Members News

### SeaBritain 2005

The SeaBritain 2005, a whole programme of events celebrating Britain's relationship with the sea, was launched on 21 October. SeaBritain 2005 is a collaboration between the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, and VisitBritain, together with the Official Nelson Commemorations Committee (ONCC), the National Trust, SeaVision UK, Trinity House and a large number of other national and local organisations, with the support of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. At the heart of the celebrations will be the *Trafalgar Festival*, a series of events to mark the bicentenary of Admiral Lord Nelson's death and the Battle of Trafalgar, culminating in the *Trafalgar Weekend 12-23 October 2005*.

SeaBritain 2005 will encourage towns, cities, ports and national, local and regional organisations, with an interest in the sea to plan their own activities under the overall branding. For details visit [www.seabritain2005.com](http://www.seabritain2005.com)

### Record Visitors for NGS Exhibition

The National Gallery of Scotland's exhibition *Monet: The Seine and the Sea* exceeded all predictions breaking Gallery records with 173,000 visitors during its 3 month run. The National Galleries had predicted the exhibition would attract 100,000 visitors but actually welcomed their 100,000<sup>th</sup> visitor on 26 September, a month before the exhibition closed. The National Gallery of Scotland's most successful show to date was previously Degas 1879 in 1979, which attracted 95,000 visitors.

### MAGNI Scoops Top Awards

MAGNI, the National Museums & Galleries of Northern Ireland, has scooped two top tourism prizes at the Northern Ireland Travel Awards 2003. The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum at Cultra won the prestigious Best Visitor Attraction category, while The Ulster American Folk Park near Omagh won the Best Northern Ireland Event/Marketing Initiative for the Appalachian & Bluegrass Music Festival held in September.

## Science Learning Centres

The Science Museum will be one of the organisations involved in running the first Science Learning Centres. DfES and the Wellcome Trust have announced the seven consortiums that will run the first centres. The £51m initiative aims to create a national network to deliver high-quality continuing professional development to science teachers and technicians. The Science Learning Centres network will consist of up to nine regional centres which will open in 2004 and one national centre based in York. The Science Museum will work in partnership with The Institute of Education, Birkbeck University and University College London to run the Science Learning Centre London.

## Phase Two of Tate Multimedia Tour

Tate Modern has launched the second phase of the free public trials of its BAFTA award-winning Multimedia Tour of the Collection displays. Phase Two trials three new types of tour on the handheld computer or PDA (Personal Digital Assistant): a *Multimedia Highlights Tour* specifically designed to appeal to the 16-25 age group, a *British Sign Language Tour* designed for the deaf and hard of hearing people, and a *Collections Tour* that provides in-depth digital information about all artworks in the Collections displays. The latest innovations include 'Tate Txt' - a text-messaging function which allows visitors to send their views on artworks to other people taking the tour. For more information visit: <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/multimediatour/>

## Royal Marines Museum Acquires Elton John Painting

The Royal Marines Museum has purchased a portrait by James Northcote RA of Lieutenant George Dyer, that was previously owned to Sir Elton John. The museum bought the portrait at a Sotheby's sale of the contents of Sir Elton's house in Holland Park. The Museum received grants totalling £50,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund and National Art Collection Fund to meet the £55,000 purchase price.

## Record Attendance at RAF Museum Cosford

The Royal Air Force Museum Cosford had a 16% increase in visitors in August 2003 compared to August 2002. Overall the five-month attendance from April to August 2003 was up 9.3% on the same period the previous year.

## NMS Acquires Concorde

British Airways has announced that it has decided to locate one of the Concorde aircraft at Scotand's National Museum of Flight, part of National Museums of Scotland. NMS fought off stiff competition form over 60 bidders around the world to secure one of the aircraft that were taken out of service last month. The announcement follows a collective effort by a number of individuals and organisation, including strong support from the First Minister, the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport. Scottish Executive has agreed to provide funding for the transport, housing and display of the aircraft.

The aircraft G-BOAA played a central role in the development of Concorde. It the first flight aircraft to be delivered to BA, the first in commercial service, flying the first scheduled flight, and the first aircraft to make the monumental journey to New York, touching down only minutes before an Air France plane. It will be transported to the museum next spring and will be available to the public by Summer 2004.

## British Museum Wins Art Prize

The British Museum has won The Art Newspaper/AXA Art Prize for the catalogue for its exhibition *Albrecht Dürer and his Legacy*. The £5,000 prize was set up last year to draw attention to excellence in exhibition catalogues, to encourage good practice and to encourage to the literary editors of newspapers and magazines to take them more seriously. The judges sifted through 150 entries from the UK and Republic of Ireland. and chose a short list of 26. *The Art Newspaper* reports that the judges were unanimous in admiring the Dürer catalogue for its superb presentation of current scholarship and the intelligence of its editing.

## Lyric Rappers at National Archives

Actors in a new rap and street dance performance called *Slave/Teacher*, created by the Lyric Step Up Company, have carried out key research in the National Archives, in order for them to be able to get into character. The performance deals with the issue of "blackness" and mixes historical text with rap, street dance and new harmonies. Belinda Earle, coordinator of the *Slave/Teacher* said: "the National Archives has been an unexpected and exciting partner in this project. Looking at the documents relating to the slave trade, we have been able to gain direct access to the lives of people at that time."

# Current Issues

## Extra £2m for Improvement Fund

The Arts Minister, Estelle Morris, has announced that the Department for Culture is to double its annual contribution to the Wolfson Museum and Gallery Improvement Fund to £2 million from April 2004. The increase will be matched by £2m from the Wolfson Foundation, making total funds available each year £4m. Speaking at the MA Conference, the Minister said doubling the money in the Fund would enable coverage of the scheme to be extended.

The DCMS Wolfson Museum and Gallery Improvement Fund was established in 2002. So far there have been two annual rounds. The award is currently open to bids from the museums and galleries sponsored by DCMS and designated university-based collections. Bids are assessed by an expert panel, against criteria to do with access, social inclusion, quality of display, care of collections, delivery of flexible visitor programmes, and improvements to buildings and galleries.

The Minister made the announcement during her keynote speech at this year's Museums Association Conference in Brighton. She also said: "Museums are central to networks of knowledge, engaging with people locally, nationally and internationally. They support learning and skills, community identity and cohesion and the economy and open up worlds of creativity and new experience for all." She emphasised the importance of working in partnership and being clever about keying into other peoples' agendas, such as health and education. The Minister concluded by saying that "we must continue to ensure that sufficient attention is paid to the core business, the care, research and preservation of the collections, which underpins other aspects of the work of museums and galleries."

## EU Directive on Public Sector Information

The EU Directive on Public Sector Information has been adopted by the EU with the exemption for educational and cultural institutions maintained. The Directive enables commercial exploitation by private companies of information held by public sector organisations. Educational and cultural institutions were exempted from the drafts of the Directive following intensive lobbying earlier this year led by UK institutions, including NMDC.

## Estelle Morris Speech at Cheltenham Literary Festival

Press coverage about what Estelle Morris was likely to say at the Cheltenham Literary Festival caused some concern among national museums but at the actual event, the Minister spoke enthusiastically about the need to build up the case for art and culture. She emphasised the unique contribution the cultural sector could make to other areas and other sectors, as creativity is becoming acknowledged as a key driver for economic growth and public service improvement. She argued that nurturing creativity will be vital in the knowledge economy. She said, "Creativity, innovation, risk taking are at a premium, and other sector are working at this to develop them. Yet they've always been at the centre of the Arts and Creativity sector. Other sectors strive for what this sector has at its core."

The full speech can be found at:

[www.culture.gov.uk/global/press\\_notices/archive\\_2003/Estelle\\_Morris\\_speech\\_16Oct\\_2003.htm](http://www.culture.gov.uk/global/press_notices/archive_2003/Estelle_Morris_speech_16Oct_2003.htm)

## Culture Online Projects Unveiled

Details of the first seven projects to be commissioned under Culture Online were set out last month. Culture Online has a £13 million budget to sponsor between 20 and 30 projects over the next year. The first seven projects are:

- *Every Object Tells a Story* - a website that allows people from every walk of life to make connections between objects and their own lives, led by the Victoria and Albert Museum, and involving a network of regional museums, including Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, Ultralab (the learning technology research centre at Anglia Polytechnic University) and Channel 4.
- *Plant Culture* - a project using the plants of South Asia as an entry point to many aspects of culture - food, superstition, religion, fashion, cosmetics, art as well as enhancing the public understanding of science. The project will be led by Kew Gardens, in partnership with the Museum of London, Leicester City Museums and National Museums Liverpool.
- *Backstage* - A partnership between The National Theatre, leading regional theatres and the technology-focused production company Illumina Digital,
- *The Dark* - an original touring installation created by Braunarts and commissioned specially for Culture Online, with an innovative website which will be navigated solely using sound to convey information and location.

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Culture Online continued...

- *WebPlay* - an internet-based project that will enable primary school children from rural and urban areas to collaborate with each other and to work with a professional theatre company to create, produce and perform short plays.
- *Scoop* - a series of virtual newspapers from specific periods in history, from the Roman Gazette to the Victorian Times, to match areas of the National Curriculum, produced by Northcliffe Electronic Publishing.
- *ArtisanCam* - a series of virtual artists' residencies, linking artists and craftspeople in their studios with groups of school students, taking advantage of recent developments in videoconferencing technology and the interconnection of the UK's educational broadband networks

For further details visit [www.cultureonline.gov.uk](http://www.cultureonline.gov.uk)

## Creative Partnerships

The last two areas for the Creative Partnerships programme expansion were announced last month: in London it will be Brent, Ealing Hammersmith and Fulham and in the South West it will be the Forest of Dean. In June the Education Secretary and the Culture Secretary announced a £70 million plan to extend the Creative Partnerships scheme to a further 20 areas throughout the country. More details can be found on the Creative Partnerships website at [www.creative-partnerships.com/about.html](http://www.creative-partnerships.com/about.html) and at [www.culture.gov.uk/arts/arts\\_education/creative\\_partnerships.htm](http://www.culture.gov.uk/arts/arts_education/creative_partnerships.htm)

## Leadership Development for Scottish Museums

Frank McAveety, Scottish Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport has announced funding of £129,552 for a pilot project creating a leadership development network for Scottish museums. The programme will bring together staff from across twelve local councils and the University of Glasgow who will develop a programme in association with the Scottish Leadership Foundation. Two members of staff from each organisation will take part, and each will be matched with mentors from different sectors.

The Leadership Initiative, along with a project to improve access to the Distributed National Burns Collection project, is the last of twelve projects to have been awarded funding from the Strategic Change Fund that was launched in May 2002. The Strategic Change Fund is funded by the Scottish Executive and managed by the Scottish Museums Council.

For details visit: [www.scottishmuseums.org.uk](http://www.scottishmuseums.org.uk)

## Treasures for Our Futures

A Panel has been established to assist with the retention and public display of important cultural items that might otherwise be sold outside the UK. The Panel believes that most owners would prefer to see the UK's cultural heritage remain in this country and intends to work towards security such items for British public collections. It will provide private owners with information and impartial suggestions when, for whatever reason, they need to sell their treasures.

The Panel was launched at a reception at 11 Downing Street, hosted by Paul Boateng, Chief Secretary to the Treasury. It is chaired by Sir Martin Jacomb, a former Trustee of the NHMF, and former Chair of the British Council, and Panel members include: David Barrie, Sir Matthew Farrer, Loyd Grossman; Neil MacGregor, Lord Sainsbury of Preston Candover KG; Jonathan Scott, Sue Underwood and Giles Waterfield.

The Panel has been asked to consider its first case, a set of paintings by the Spanish 17thc artist Francisco de Zurbarán. The owners the Church Commissioners, have approached the Panel in the hope that these paintings can remain within the UK and specifically within the North-East where they have hung for almost three centuries.

## Holding Up the Mirror

The London Museums Agency has published *Holding up the Mirror*, a report into how London's museums are responding to cultural diversity. The report, launched by Estelle Morris on 27 October, shows that although some museums are doing excellent work, the sector as a whole still has a long way to go before it reflects the rich diversity of London's communities. The London Museums Agency responded to the report by announcing three new projects:

- London-wide research into why black and minority ethnic people do not use museums and their views on how museums can break down the barriers.
- A cultural change programme to help museums develop equalities action plans and develop skills to work with black and minority ethnic communities.
- Work with black historians to research the ethnic connections of collections in a targeted group of museums which, in turn, will help them re-interpret those collections

The report can be downloaded at:

[www.londonmuseums.org.uk/news/pdfs/Holding\\_up\\_the\\_mirror.pdf](http://www.londonmuseums.org.uk/news/pdfs/Holding_up_the_mirror.pdf) (533KB)

## **Verulamium Saved from Destruction by Plough**

English Heritage has announced that it has reached an agreement with the landowner to safeguard the Roman town of Verulamium from destruction by the plough. The agreement between English Heritage and Gorhambury Estates, will ensure that fields covering part of one of the country's most important archaeological sites are taken permanently out of cultivation and converted to permanent pasture.

The remains at Verulamium, founded about AD49, have been ploughed almost continuously since the 1940s. Earlier this year, English Heritage launched their Ripping Up History campaign, to draw attention to the fact that many sites, including 3000 nationally important scheduled monument, are being put at risk by intensive ploughing. English Heritage is campaigning for changes in heritage legislation to protect more sites at risk from agriculture.

## **Kids in Museums Award**

*The Guardian* is running the Kids in Museums Award as part of a campaign to encourage museums and galleries to be more family-friendly and asked readers to nominate their favourite family-friendly museums. The paper was so overwhelmed with responses that columnist Dea Birkett concluded: "Britain's museums are changing, and the astounding response to the Kids in Museums Award for the Best Family Friendly Museum proves families no longer consider museums boring and irrelevant, but fun." Five museums have been short-listed for the award: Falmouth Art Gallery, Royal Albert Museum and Art Gallery, Victoria and Albert Museum, Museum of Farnham and the North of England Lead Mining Museum in Co Durham. The short-listed entries will each be visited by a different family who will measure their visit against *The Guardian's* Kids in Museums Manifesto. A report of each visit will be published in the paper over the coming months before the overall winner is announced.

## **Culture Adviser Appointed**

Bryan Beattie has been appointed as expert adviser on cultural issues to Frank McAveety, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport in Scotland. Mr Beattie will be on secondment from his company, Creative Services, for up to 18 months. He will be appointed on Civil Service terms and conditions and will be a non-political appointment.

## **Regional Development Challenge Fund Consultation**

In August, the Scottish Executive announced its intention to set up a new Regional Development Challenge Fund, using funds diverted from the Strategic Challenge Fund. A draft of the proposed RDCF scheme has been published for consultation. The paper sets out the objectives of the scheme and asks specific questions, particularly about the most appropriate regional groupings. Comments should be sent to Beverley Davies at the Scottish Museums Council by 28 November. The consultation paper can be found at: [www.scottishmuseums.org.uk/pdfs/RCDF\\_consultation\\_paper.pdf](http://www.scottishmuseums.org.uk/pdfs/RCDF_consultation_paper.pdf)

## **DCMS Changes**

Phil Clapp has been appointed Head of Arts Division at DCMS. He replaces Alan Davey who became Director of Arts and Culture in September. Emma Cockell has been appointed as Head of Creative Industries Division. She replaces Michael Seeney who is now Head of the Architecture and Historic Environment Division.

## **Latest Tourism Figures**

VisitBritain reports that the latest inbound tourism figures for the three months to August 2003 confirm that the industry is on the way to recovery with overseas visits from many countries during the summer up on the previous year. However, North American visits are still low (-7% during June – August 2003 compared with the same period in 2002). Visitors from Western Europe in the three months to August were up 4% on last year, bringing visits for the year to date from Europe level with figures for the first eight months of 2000, the last 'normal' year for inbound tourism.

VisitBritain has predicted that the British tourism industry has the potential to grow from £76bn to £100bn by 2010. This would require both building the value of the inbound market and growing the domestic market. Britain has recently slipped from fifth to seventh place in the world tourism-earning league. VisitBritain made the announcement at the launch of their 2002-3 Annual Report. Full details can be found at: [www.visitbritain.org](http://www.visitbritain.org)

If you have any comments on the NMDC Newsletter or would like to contribute to a future edition, please contact Emily Adams ([eadams@iwm.org.uk](mailto:eadams@iwm.org.uk)).

## Corporate Governance Report

A new report from the Audit Commission stresses the importance of good corporate governance in the public sector. *Corporate Governance: improvement and Trust in Local Public Services*, uses negative examples from local government, health and the criminal justice system to demonstrate how weak corporate governance in public services can lead directly to service failure. The report makes numerous recommendations for public bodies, central government regulators, auditors and inspectors. Further information can be found at: [www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk) The full report (1149kb) can be found at: [www2.audit-commission.gov.uk/static/pdf/CorporateGovernance.pdf](http://www2.audit-commission.gov.uk/static/pdf/CorporateGovernance.pdf)

## Efficiency Review

The Government has published a consultation document seeking views on the best opportunities for efficiency improvements within public services to release further resources to the frontline. The Review is being independently led by Peter Gershon, Head of the Office of Government Commerce, and is intended to take a radical look at the way government does its business. The Consultation seeks views by 21st November 2003. A copy of the consultation document is available at [www.civilservice.gov.uk/reform/efficiency.asp](http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/reform/efficiency.asp).

[www.nationalmuseums.org.uk](http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk)

## International Issues

### Online Collections Exchange Center

The American Association of Museums (AAM) has launched the Collections Exchange Center, a secure online forum through which its nearly 3,000 institutional member museums can buy, sell, trade, or donate deaccessioned objects with one another. AAM created this new benefit in response to suggestions from member museums. Staff of AAM institutional member museums can log on to the members-only section of the Web site to access the Collections Exchange Center. The Center also has links to resources on the legal and ethical issues related to deaccessioning.

Edward H. Able, Jr., AAM President and CEO, said the Center "creates a unique opportunity for our members both to keep donated objects in the public domain, as donors intended, and to develop mutually advantageous exchanges and collaborations with their fellow institutions."

### New Picasso Museum

The new Museo Picasso in Malaga was opened by the King and Queen of Spain at the end of last month. The Museum is housed in a former palace, in the historic centre of the city. Picasso, who was born in Malaga, planned to open a gallery there himself but died in exile in France in 1973. The Museum has been founded in collaboration with Picasso's family. His daughter-in-law and grandson have donated more than 150 works to the museum. Another 49 works are on loan from family members for 10 years.

### USA Rejoins UNESCO

The United States has rejoined UNESCO on 1 October 2003, after two decade outside. The US has been granted a seat on the executive Council for its ambassador. *The Art Newspaper* reports that the US Senate Appropriations Committee has not yet approved the \$71.4m required to cover US contributions to UNESCO until 2004. This represents roughly one fifth of UNESCO's \$610m budget.

## Forthcoming Meetings

### Valuing Museums Working Group

10.00am, Fri 7 Nov, Natural History Museum

### Creativity Working Group

2.30pm, Mon 17 Nov, Science Museum

### Restitution Committee

4.00pm, Mon 17 Nov, Tate Britain

### Electronic Records Management

11.00am, 20 November, Imperial War Museum

### National Museum Directors' Conference

11.00am, Fri 28 Nov, Imperial War Museum

### National Museum Managers' Consortium

10.30 for 11am, Fri 5 Dec, Royal Air Force Museum

### Human Resources Forum

1.00pm, Thu 11 Dec, Victoria & Albert Museum

### Spoilation Advisory Committee

3.30pm, Mon 15 Dec, Tate Britain

### Board Secretaries

This meeting has been postponed until January

# Parliamentary Report

## New Legal Deposit Law

The Bill on Legal Deposit Libraries has passed all its Parliamentary stages last month, receiving Royal Assent and becoming law on 31 October. The Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003 extends previous legal deposit legislation passed in 1911, which requires publishers to deposit with the British Library a copy of all published items produced in the UK and Ireland within one month of publication (and gives the five other legal deposit libraries have the right to claim copies of the same material with 12 months of publication). Previously, the only published works covered by legal deposit were books, pamphlets, maps, printed music, journals and newspapers. With the new law, works published in non-print format will be collected including works published on CD-ROM; on the Internet; or on microfilm

The new Act, follows a successful campaign led by the British Library to bring the law up-to-date with the current world of publishing. Lynne Brindley, Chief Executive of the British Library said: 'This is an historic piece of legislation and puts the UK among the first countries which will be collecting, by law, their electronic published output.'

## Return of Cultural Artefacts in National Collections

Andrew Dismore MP secured an adjournment debate on the return of cultural artefacts in national collections on 29 October. Andrew Dismore and Edward O'Hara MP argued the case for the return of the Parthenon Sculptures. Responding on behalf of the Government, Estelle Morris said the Parthenon Sculptures are a matter for the Trustees of the British Museum. She said, "I entirely understand the passions of those in Greece who want the sculptures taken back to Greece, and who think that is a proper place for them to be shown, and I understand what that means to people who live there. However, I entirely understand the feelings of the trustees of the British Museum. At the British Museum, they are trying to show not just British history but world history, and they have 10,000 artefacts there from all the continents of the planet. It is not a case of the Parthenon sculptures looking out of place among what are essentially British exhibits. It is a British Museum that gives a perspective on world development and world history for all visitors to the museum to see."

## Illicit Trade in Cultural Objects

The House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee is holding an inquiry into the Government's current policy, as well as performance and plans, in relation to the illicit trade in cultural objects. The overall focus of the Committee is on specific developments since the Committee's report on the subject in 2000. Last month, the Committee heard evidence from Sir Neil Chalmers, Director of the Natural History Museum, Maurice Davies from the Museums Association and from several organisations operating databases of stolen goods. Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture, and Home Office Minister, Caroline Flint MP, will give evidence on 11 November.

## Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act

The Dealing in Cultural Objects Bill passed all stages in the House of Lords and received Royal Assent on 30 October. The Act provides for an offence of acquiring, disposing of, importing or exporting tainted cultural objects, or agreeing or arranging to do so; and for connected purposes. It comes in to effect at the end of December.

The Act can be found at: [www.legislation.hms.gov.uk/acts/acts2003/20030027.htm](http://www.legislation.hms.gov.uk/acts/acts2003/20030027.htm)

## Opposition Spokesperson

Charles Kennedy, Liberal Democrat leader has announced changes to his frontbench team. Don Foster becomes the Liberal Democrat's new Shadow Secretary for Culture, Media and Sport.

**A full report of this month's Parliamentary discussion of museum issues is available from the NMDC Secretariat.**

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