

Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu
Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
CWLC(5)-05-16 PTN6

Dear Bethan Jenkins

I write as Director of National Museums Liverpool (NML) to express to you our deep concern at the reported proposal to bring together the commercial functions of Amgueddfa Cymru, National Museum Wales and CADW, and I urge you to do what you can to ensure there is a full reconsideration of this proposal.

As you will know, NML welcomes very many visitors from North Wales. For this and for many other reasons we have a particular affinity with our colleagues in Wales. Not least of these is a shared approach to the role of museums in addressing issues such as child poverty.

The international reputation of Amgueddfa Cymru is formidable, and as a national museum it is very highly-respected for its innovative work and its impact. Any action that threatens the arms-length principle of governance of a national museum service will send out all the wrong messages about Welsh attitudes to democracy; these proposals have, indeed, already led to doubts about the intentions of the Welsh government with regard to the future of Amgueddfa Cymru, and the worry is that the present proposals are a precursor to a merger that would mean the loss of independence of Amgueddfa Cymru. I cannot stress enough the pivotal role that Wales's national museum service plays in the demonstration of Welsh nationality, and the damage that could result from any diminution of that role.

Of course I understand the financial pressures that we are all enduring at the moment. My own organisation has lost 140 posts over the past two years, and we are feeling a great deal of pain. But we are doing all we can to deliver an unimpaired service to the public that is the primary concern of national museums, wherever they are. This includes developing our commercial activities.

As I understand it, there has been no public consultation on these proposals, and there is no evidence that the proposals will lead to the improvement of national services. Indeed, it looks to me as though it will be very difficult to run an impactful national museum service if its commercial activities were to be taken away.

I do hope you will regard this letter as a statement of support for Amgueddfa Cymru, and that the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee considers the full implications of this proposal as a matter of urgency.

With best wishes

David Fleming