

Government response: Government response to The Mendoza Review: an independent review of museums in England

I am delighted to welcome the The Mendoza Review: an independent review of museums in England, and pleased to respond on behalf of Government.

In September 2016, the 'Mendoza Review' was launched with a public consultation. This met an earlier Government commitment, made in the Culture White Paper published by DCMS in March 2016, to a wide-ranging review, the first in ten years, of national, local, and regional museums. As the Culture White Paper said: Museums are jewels in our national crown and we want to ensure that they remain so and are as best-placed as they can be to continue supporting our aspirations for access, place-making and soft power.

The consultation was a great success, with over 1500 responses. The Government is grateful to those members of the public and museums and heritage sector staff who came forward to explain what museums mean to them. We would also like to thank the dozens of museums that warmly welcomed Neil and his team for visits and discussions, and the hundreds of people within the museums world who spoke to him, attended roundtable events, and provided views and information. We must particularly recognise Arts Council England and the Heritage Lottery Fund, which have worked closely with Neil, commissioned data and research to inform the Review, and will be responsible for taking forward many of the recommendations.

I am pleased to say that the Government accepts the report's recommendations and will begin work to prioritise and make them a reality. They are a sensible set of ideas, particularly within the current financial circumstances and in light of Britain's exit from the European Union, designed to streamline and improve how Government and its Arm's-Length Bodies operates with, for, and towards the museums sector – helping them to remain 'jewels in our national crown'.

Since becoming the Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism in June 2017, it has been a pleasure to visit museums and galleries around the country and meet with their leaders, volunteers, and visitors. I have been impressed with the breadth of work, from the major global stars like the British Museum and Tate directly sponsored by my Department, to museums like the Great North Museum: Hancock in Newcastle, the Geffrye Museum in East London, and the Museum of the Jewellery Quarter in Birmingham. I have heard about their challenges, and equally their successes.

We can be proud that we have world-leading museums in England. But, there is no room for complacency. There are changing audience expectations, a greater need for museums as spaces of personal and community reflection and

exploration, and opportunities in digital technology that need to be seized. We want to see museums that are strong and valued parts of people's lives, whose staff and visitors are diverse, and that protect, research, and share their collections. And we want to support museums to be at the centre of civic and economic development, helping our towns and cities succeed and individuals to live healthy and happy lives.

I am keen to recognise and celebrate the great work already underway, and to make sure that Government is doing all it can to support museums and enable them to succeed in today's world. Amongst the many important issues the Mendoza Review highlights, we have noted three particularly key points:

The Review found a very diverse and successful sector. It is undeniable that there are challenges, but museums are adapting with excellent examples of innovation and resilience all over the country. The Review sets out key priorities for the sector to enable it to take advantage of opportunities from collections, digital, diversifying workforces, and other areas. I look forward to working with ACE and HLF on ensuring work on these priorities is encouraged.

It is very interesting to see for the first time the money the taxpayer puts into museums shown together and, for the most part, quantified. As budgets continue to be tight, we need to make this money work as hard as possible for museums and the public. My role, which for the first time brings together culture and heritage, and sponsorship of ACE and HLF, offers us an opportunity to improve central Government's service to and funding of museums and ensure, as much as is possible, that public investment is effective, streamlined across the different awarding bodies, and directed towards agreed priorities.

A Government priority for museums, and all of arts and culture, is making sure that our outstanding heritage can be enjoyed by everyone, all over the country. The national museums my Department sponsors already do great work with many museums across England, the UK and internationally, but they can do even more. They need to align their work so there is a fair spread of national collections objects, exhibitions, and expertise being offered to other museums. So I am pleased to see recommended a partnership framework for how the nationals, ACE and HLF support the rest of the sector, especially outside London. Combined with the recommendations in the Strategic Review of DCMS-sponsored Museums, which Neil Mendoza has simultaneously led and which the Government also publishes today, this should ensure that national museum activity is joined-up, forward-looking, and supportive of our collective priorities.

The recommendations in the Mendoza Review create a solid foundation for how Government will do a better job at putting in place the conditions museums need to serve their audiences, care for their collections, and have sustainable futures as a key part of their local communities and economies.

I will take a close interest in the implementation of the Review within my Department and with our ALBs, and look forward to helping all our museums continue to prosper, flourish, and provide immense enjoyment and knowledge to

researchers and the public.