



Cymru/Wales

Undeb Y Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus a Masnachol	Public and Commercial Services Union
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16 April 2013

William Powell AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

Dear Mr Powell

e-Petition: Restructuring in National Museum Wales

On 30th April, the Committee will be considering the above petition, submitted by the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) which represents National Museum staff.

The text of the petition sets out clearly our concerns about the proposed restructuring and our reasons for putting this issue before the Committee.

I just want to add a few supportive comments in two specific areas. The first is the importance of the services provided by the National Museum, which we feel are placed in jeopardy by the restructuring plans.

Earlier this month, as you may recall, it was announced that the seven sites of National Museum Wales received 1.69 million visits in 2011-12, continuing the year-on-year increase that has taken place since the policy of free entry was introduced in April 2001. It was noted, in particular, that the number of visitors from less affluent groups has grown significantly. This represents a key contribution to one of the Welsh Government's key policy objectives. In March, Huw Lewis AM, then Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage, wrote about museums' potential to 'nurture in many young people a desire to learn and broaden their horizons' and the positive impact they can make in reducing inequalities in educational outcomes, thereby contributing to the Welsh Government's Child Poverty Strategy. Given the present context of austerity, this role must surely be regarded as more important than ever.

The contribution made by the National Museum to the Welsh economy is also particularly important at the present time. The tourism sector is worth £5 billion to the Welsh economy and employs more than 8% of the workforce. As a major attraction for international visitors, our museums play an important role in this regard. The Wales Office minister, Baroness Randerson, recently stated, after visiting the National History Museum at St Fagans: 'The tourism sector makes a vital contribution to

the social and economic wellbeing of Wales, and it is crucial that we do all we can to attract visits from home and overseas to experience our rich culture and deep history.'

We would not want to see National Museum management pursuing a course of action, as a result of financial pressures, that might undermine this important economic contribution.

The second area I want to highlight relates to the way the restructuring process has been dealt with by management. The trade unions would normally seek to raise our concerns about issues of this kind through the established industrial relations machinery of consultation and negotiation. We have on this occasion, however, encountered a frustrating unwillingness to engage with us on the part of management. The National Museum's Board of Trustees have refused even to meet with union representatives, presumably under pressure from management. Management have also refused to provide us with specific financial information despite frequent and repeated requests. There has also been a lack of consultation on their part with the Museum's stakeholders about the implications of the restructuring plans.

It is in the context of these difficulties that we have felt obliged to follow the petitions route in order to draw attention to our concerns. I hope that your Committee will give due regard to these concerns and will actively consider the means by which they might be addressed.

Yours sincerely

SHAVANAH TAJ
PCS Wales Secretary