



Dame Liz Forgan
Arts Council England
14 Great Peter Street
London
SW1P 3NQ

28 June 2011

Dear Liz,

When we exchanged letters on the MLA / Arts Council transition, I said that I would share our views on the further development of the Renaissance programme and the future funding of museums. These are set out below and in more detail in the attached paper. I would be interested in your thoughts.

My primary concern when considering this, and that of the senior councillors and officials I have spoken to, is how we ensure that the maximum amount of the money that is available to support museums following the spending review makes its way to the front line to keep museums operating for the public. Our proposal also reflects "*Taking the Lead*", local government's framework for sector-led improvement and self-regulation, which the government also supports.

We understand that the total amount of funding in the programme will reduce, but we must remember that previous Renaissance funding acted as core revenue funding in nearly all cases. Having accounted for an overall reduction, our job then becomes to get this money as quickly and simply as possible into the hands of people running museums.

We believe groups of local councils should be invited to form new local museum partnerships, together with key local stakeholders from all sectors, building upon places that already have such arrangements. We recognise that not all councils directly run museums and that there is a rich and varied network of providers across the country, but local councils have the democratic mandate and the strategic overview to facilitate partnerships at least in their initial stages, and beyond, if that is what local partners want.

As with the Futures Libraries programme, these local partnerships must be visionary, radical and transparent, acting in response to the needs of their

community, supporting digital innovation and acting as a cornerstone of the Big Society.

Local partnerships must of course be encouraged to work collectively to benchmark success and to acquire advice and research in a way that maximises economies of scale and mitigates information asymmetries. But this will be procured most efficiently where it is commissioned directly from the local partnerships themselves, acting as the principles rather than the agents of the programme.

Our proposed model has at its heart a strong group of national peer organisations, drawing on the expertise and influence of national museums, the professional bodies, government agencies and local government leaders and experts from the Local Government Group.

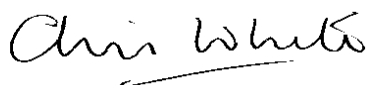
These bodies will together create a framework within which support can be commissioned from the front line, they will stimulate and share best practice and be a national voice for museums. This will add value to Arts Council's investment in museums.

Finally, I am sure that you will share with me a commitment to working with The National Archives to ensure that local connectivity between museums, archives and libraries is not lost nationally as we enter the post-MLA world.

We have an opportunity to create a programme that builds on the success of the past, and responds to the challenges with the Renaissance Programme, but this can only be done if we unlock front line innovation.

I look forward to discussing this with you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris White". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Cllr Chris White
Chair, LG Group Culture, Tourism and Sport Programme Board