Written evidence submitted by National Museum Directors' Council About the National Museum Directors' Council

The National Museum Directors' Council (NMDC) represents the leaders of the UK's national collections and major regional museums. Our members are the national and major regional museums in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland, the British Library, the National Library of Scotland, the National Archives and Royal Botanic Gardens Kew. In 2018/2019, NMDC's member institutions received over 85 million visitors.

NMDC acts as an advocate on behalf of members and their collective priorities and provides them with a valuable forum for discussion and debate and an opportunity to share information and work collaboratively. While our members are funded by government, the NMDC is an independent, non-governmental organisation.

Evidence

Benefit

As of September 2020, NMDC provides the secretariat to the newly formed All-Party Parliamentary Group for Museums. The purpose of the APPG is to highlight and promote the interests of museums across the UK. The APPG focuses on understanding and promoting the importance and value of museums. NMDC supports the group though administrative tasks, giving sector specific advice and enabling parliamentarians to easily connect with the wider museum sector. As NMDC is a key sector body, providing the secretariat means that the group is established within the wider ecology of the museum sector.

There are over 2500 museums in the UK. These museums are of great importance to the communities around them whether that is as an employer, an educator, a community space or a provider of an essential service. Not only are they a key part of the cultural infrastructure of the UK, museums also deliver across key policy areas including health, education and research. There is a huge public benefit to improving the channels of communication between museums and parliamentarians and the APPG is a simple means of achieving this.

Members of the group have an opportunity to explore issues related to museums in detail and as NMDC provides the secretariat, the group can investigate issues with insight from the sector. In turn, this will benefit the House as parliamentarians will have the opportunity to research in detail issues affecting museums and their staff within their constituencies through the group prior to contributing to the policy making process.

Transparency and funding

NMDC recognises the importance of transparency regarding funding and secretarial support of APPGs. NMDC would be open to reviewing where there is a need for greater transparency relating to our activities supporting the APPG for Museums.

As the APPG for Museums was established during pandemic, meetings on the Parliamentary Estate have not been permitted so NMDC staff have not had any need for Parliamentary passes. NMDC cannot foresee a reason why the secretariat would require passes and need to access the Parliamentary Estate when not accompanied by a member.

NMDC acknowledges that it is important for the group not to be confused with the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee. For this reason, the website, social media platforms and all

communications are clearly stated to be from the APPG for Museums and use the group's branding and logo.

<u>Compliance</u>

The Chair and officers of a group should be accountable for ensuring compliance with the rules with the responsibility ultimately laying with the Chair. However, NMDC understands that as an external organisation supporting an APPG, there is an obligation to take reasonable measures to ensure they are acting within the guidelines.

The Guide to the Rules on All-Party Parliamentary Groups provided by Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards enable the group to be set up in compliance with the rules. However, the document does not include clear guidance on the role of external organisations. There is scope for further definition of their role to ensure parity across external organisations.

8 December 2020