

MLA North West Briefing:

Registration and the Launch of the Museums Accreditation Scheme



For further information, please call Claire McDade on 01925 625064

November 2004

1. Launch of the Museum Accreditation Scheme

The Museums Libraries and Archives Council is launching the new minimum standards Scheme for museums on 17th November 2004. The new Scheme is to be called the Museum Accreditation Scheme, to be rolled out across the country over 5 years. Until invited to apply under the new Scheme, all Registered or Provisionally Registered museums will remain within Phase Two of the Registration Scheme.

2. Timetable for Five Year Roll Out of the new Scheme

- 17 November 2004 Museum Accreditation Scheme launched nationally.
- All museums in the North West (currently Phase 2 Registered, Provisionally Registered and new applications) will be processed over a 5 year period

Museums will have 6 months to apply once invitations have been sent out

How applications to the new scheme will be processed

MLA North West will invite all museums within the current Registration Scheme to re-apply under the new Scheme over a 5 year period. In Year 1, (2005) we will invite Hub partners, Designated Collections, Lancashire County Council museums and associated museums via service level agreements. The remaining museums will be invited to apply chronologically in the following order:

- Year 2 Greater Manchester museums
- Year 3 Lancashire and Cheshire museums
- Year 4 Merseyside and Cumbria museums
- Year 5 English Heritage/National Trust/Manx museums

Likely first invitations to apply for Accreditation in the North West to be sent in January 2005 at the earliest.

New Applications

New museums must approach MLA North West in the first instance to ascertain if their application is appropriate. New museum applications will be slotted into the 5 year roll out as and when they arise.

3. What's new about the Museum Accreditation Scheme? (taken from MLA draft September 2004)

Section 1: Governance and Museum Management

- An **Emergency Plan** will be mandatory and must be reviewed every 5 years.
- Museums must have **staff employment and management procedures**, induction training for new staff and members of the museum's governing body

and offer continuous training and staff development. The level of training should be appropriate to the scale and size of the museum. These requirements cover paid as well as unpaid staff.

Section 2: User Services

- Museums' **published information** must cover location, opening arrangements and any services provided
- Museums' services and facilities are required to **support access by a broad range of users**. This will be assessed in the application by museums describing how they know who their visitors are, how they describe access issues and what their plans are for addressing them.
- Museums are also required to carry out **consultation with their users in relation to services provided**. This could be done through assessing comments cards, complaints mechanisms and/or carrying out visitor surveys, and interviews.

Section 3: Visitor Facilities

- Museums are required to have a **range of accessible public facilities, or information on the location of the nearest facilities where these are not available on site**
- Museums must have **internal and external orientation and signage arrangements**.
- Museums must state their formal arrangements for ensuring that visitors are treated with **courtesy and care**
- Museums must state their formal arrangements for the maintenance of areas used by visitors to ensure that they are kept **clean and tidy**.

Section 4: Collections Management

- Museums are required to produce and maintain a **written documentation procedural manual**
- MLA will produce a model Acquisition and Disposal Policy
- There is **not** a requirement to have a 5 year backlog clearance programme
- An Inventory of all objects must be completed first if the museum does not have a full list of all the items in its collection – *'This should be a quick process'* (MLA)

4. Information Returns and Annual Returns

The 2004 Annual Return was the last round of Annual Returns for all museums. From 2005 we will begin operating a 2 yearly **Information Return**. Museums still within Registration Phase 2 that have not gone through the new Scheme will be required to submit an Information Return in **2006**. Museums that have applied for the Museum Accreditation Scheme in 2005 will not have to complete an Information Return until 2007. Information Returns will require information based on the museum's key targets.

5. Accreditation Resources

The application form for the new Scheme will be made available electronically. MLA will provide access to the online application form via a password. It will still be possible to make hardcopy applications but MLA is encouraging museums to make them online wherever possible. You will be asked as part of your invitation letter for

your preferred method of application. If you think that this may cause you any problems please contact Claire McDade, Museums Development Officer on 01925 625064

Further supporting material:

- The Accreditation Guidelines online. Hard copies will also be available from MLA on 020 7273 1444 (general) or 1458 (publications).
- Appendices which include areas for development and provide sources of advice.
- Curatorial Advisors Pack which outlines the responsibilities between museums and Curatorial Advisers.
- Information on advocacy to ensure museums promote their Accreditation status to relevant institutions – i.e. funding bodies, etc.

6. Key Relevant Organisations

- **The Council for Museums Libraries and Archives (MLA)**

MLA is responsible for running the Museum Accreditation Scheme and is also responsible for the quality assurance of the Scheme. This is carried out mainly through sampling applications, assessments and decisions with the aim of ensuring consistency and accuracy within the Scheme.

- **The Museum Accreditation Scheme Committee**

This is made up of senior museum professionals with a spread of knowledge and expertise relating to museums of all types throughout the UK. Half of the Committee is appointed by open recruitment and the other half is appointed after consultation with the Museums Association, Association of Independent Museums and other MLA Regional Agencies, including MLA North West. Members of the Committee sit on the Accreditation Panel for monthly meetings when museum cases are presented by Regional Assessors who make recommendations to the Panel. The final decision rests with the Panel. After the Panel meeting, museums are informed of their awarded status.

- **MLA North West**

MLA North West is responsible for management of the Museum Accreditation Scheme in the North West. This involves co-ordinating with MLA the timetable for invitation, advocacy of the Scheme to museums in the region, assessment of applications and managing the Information Returns. MLA North West assesses the application against the Museum Accreditation Scheme to make sure it is complete and that all relevant evidence has been received. Based upon that a recommendation is made to the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. MLA North West also provides training for museum professionals within the region who deal with Accreditation, including Curatorial Advisers.

- **Curatorial Advisers**

Curatorial Advisers are a requirement for museums that do not employ museum-trained professional staff. They observe and appraise the general performance of the museum with reference to the Accreditation Scheme. A new Curatorial Advisers Pack will be made available by MLA to support the new Scheme.

MLA North West will be calling meetings to recruit new Curatorial Advisers and to provide training on the new Scheme.

9/11/04

Claire McDade
Museums Development officer
MLA North West
The Malt building
Wilderspool Park
Greenalls Avenue
Warrington
WA4 6HL
Tel: 01925 625064
www.mlanorthwest.org.uk