



Mr Will Godfrey
Chief Executive Officer
Newport City Council
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15 January 2015

Dear Mr Godfrey,

Newport City Council's Budget Proposals 2015-2016

I am writing to you with regard to Newport City Council's budget proposals.

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (ClfA) is a professional body for the study and care of the historic environment. It promotes best practice in archaeology and provides a self-regulatory quality assurance framework for the sector and those it serves. The Institute was granted a Royal Charter of Incorporation on 03 June 2014

ClfA has over 3,150 members and more than 70 registered practices across the United Kingdom. Its members work in all branches of the discipline: heritage management, planning advice, excavation, finds and environmental study, buildings recording, underwater and aerial archaeology, museums, conservation, survey, research and development, teaching and liaison with the community, industry and the commercial and financial sectors.

Newport City Council's Budget Proposals 2015-2016

The Council's budget savings proposals contained in its recent Cabinet Report include under the heading 'Change delivery of museum and art gallery service in the city' a proposal to review 'options for the Museum & Art Gallery service ... which could involve moving from the current location, whilst retaining access to the collection and art works through temporary exhibitions and events at different venues, pending moving to a smaller permanent site'. The effect on FTE count is given in Appendix 4 to the Report as '15.9 FTE reduced by 13.9 FTE if the option for closure of the central museum and art gallery building is chosen.' Although this is not the only option, Appendix 3 lists new budget savings as £100,000 in 2015/16 and £300,000 in 2016/17 and staff impact as 13.95 FTE.

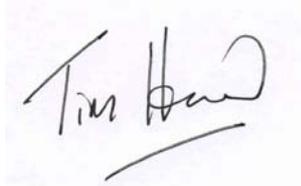
ClfA is concerned that the effect of such cuts and reductions in staff would seriously call into question the viability of a museum service which holds collections of local and national importance (its archaeological collection is surpassed in Wales only by the National Museum). Simply storing material is not enough; professional expert staff are required with sufficient resources (including premises) to curate the material and to engage the public. Even the lesser reduction envisaged if an alternative location were to be chosen (approximately 50% reduction in FTE's) could potentially fatally undermine the Council's ability to deliver a museum service that provides real public benefit for its residents.

The ability of the Institute and others (including the public) to assess and comment upon these proposals is currently hampered by a lack of publicly-available information. The details in the Report to Cabinet are sufficient to raise grave concern but insufficient properly to assess the effects of the proposed reductions on the delivery of museum services in Newport. We would urge the Council not to make any decision with regard to this aspect of the budget proposals until detailed information has been made available for public scrutiny and debate

The Institute appreciates that the Council is faced with difficult financial decisions, but the proposals would, in our view, potentially jeopardise the future of a respected museum service to the detriment of the residents of Newport.

If there is anything further that I can do to assist please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Howard", with a horizontal line underneath.

Tim Howard LLB, Dip Prof Arch
Senior Policy Advisor

cc Councillor Bob Bright, Leader of Newport Council