

Northern Ireland Museums Council - Response

Dear Madam / Sir

Regarding the above consultation document:

1) We find the rationale for excluding the 2001 measure Access to a Museum from the Proposed Indicators within the Geographical Access to Services domain to be flawed.

Page 12 of the consultation document argues that the classification of service centres according to population size and services available will make it "possible to input data on the number of bus or train services to the nearest centre of a certain size or with a certain set of key services. Constructed in this way, this indicator would generally account for access to many of the services for which road distance was measured in the NI MD 2001 (ie dentist, optician, pharmacist, library, museum, Social Security Office or a Training and Employment Agency) and so it is proposed to exclude some of these from the new Measures."

This reasoning is based on two false premises:

that those population centres above a certain size contain a museum.

that those individuals with access to a certain number of bus or train services to the nearest centre above a certain size will have access to a museum.

These premises are false for the following reasons:

They assume that those centres above a certain size contain a museum. There is no reliable correlation between size of centre or size of population and museum provision. For example, the following large towns do not have museums:

Portadown
Lurgan
Banbridge
Dromore
Dungannon
Newtownards
Portrush
Portstewart
Antrim
Ballinahinch
Magherafelt

They assume that there is a correlation between public transport provision, centres above a certain size and museum accessibility. Whilst individuals may be able to get public transport to the centre of a large town which contains a museum, museums are often situated on the outskirts of towns to which there is no public transport. For example, I may be able to get a certain number of bus services to the centre of Magherafelt, but that does not enable me to access Springhill which is situated outside the town.

For these reasons, NIMC requests that Access to a Museum be included in the new Measures.

2) NIMC was not invited to attend the August consultation meeting which included representation from the cultural sectors. As a non-departmental public body answerable to DCAL, and having advised on the measures to be included in 2001, we find this disappointing. Please add NIMC to your list of consultees for the future.

Yours sincerely

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