

Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External  
Affairs  
Fiona Hyslop MSP



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Councillor Andy Ferguson  
Chairman, Communities Committee  
Dumfries & Galloway Council  
Council Offices  
English Street  
Dumfries  
DG1 2DD

22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018

Dear Councillor Ferguson

I am writing to invite you to a meeting to discuss the way forward regarding the proposed loan of material from the Galloway Hoard to Dumfries and Galloway Council.

As you may be aware, I had considered holding a meeting with both National Museums Scotland and Dumfries & Galloway Council last summer but had decided to hold off to allow time for the partnership agreement to be worked through. I understand that, while a significant amount of progress had been made, a stalemate now appears to have been reached and therefore a meeting would now seem to be prudent.

I would find a meeting most useful to understand further the Council's position with the partnership agreement proposal by National Museums Scotland and what the Council seeks to address. National Museums Scotland has made it clear to me the feeling that the offer is extensive and that NMS is unwilling to go further. The offer also appears to me to have been thoroughly worked through by officials and officers so I would be interested in what assurances the Council might be seeking about it. I am sure you will agree that it is in the interests of people in Dumfries and Galloway wishing to see the Hoard, and indeed for the National Museums' ambition to maximise public access to it, that the agreement is concluded as soon as possible.

We can at our meeting look ahead to a potential three way meeting with the National Museums and how that can be part of a successful outcome.

If you are content to accept the invitation, please contact my Diary Secretary, [REDACTED] ([CabSecCTEA@gov.scot](mailto:CabSecCTEA@gov.scot)), to make arrangements. I would be happy for you to be accompanied by your official who has been leading on the partnership work with NMS

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Finally, I am very pleased to note that NMS is proceeding with its wider programme of loans to Dumfries and Galloway, including the Scottish Silver exhibition which will be at the newly refurbished Kirkcudbright Museum when it opens in Spring. I am looking forward to visiting Kirkcudbright and hope to be able to do so in time to see the Silver exhibition.

*Kind regards*

*Fiona Hyslop*

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Rùnaire a' Chaibneit airson Cultar, Turasachd agus  
Cùisean an Taoibh a-Muigh  
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Chairman, Communities Committee  
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DUMFRIES  
DG1 2DD

31 May 2018

Dear Councillor Ferguson,

## GALLOWAY HOARD

It was good to meet you and Harry Thomson on 10 May and thank you for a positive discussion about the potential to develop the partnership agreement with National Museums Scotland.

We discussed the broader context of developing Kirkcudbright, Galloway and South West Scotland as important tourism destinations, and the role the Hoard should play in that. I appreciate the importance of that agenda as Cabinet Secretary responsible for tourism as well as culture.

I explained that while I had offered a summit soon after the allocation decision on the Galloway Hoard was made by the QLTR, I had been asked to wait until discussions between National Museums Scotland and the Council could resolve as much as possible. I also explained that I believe strongly in the concept of curatorial freedom from Government direction and I am not in a position to instruct NMS or the Council on what action to take over curatorial choices.

You set out the Council's concerns about the current partnership agreement and we discussed a number of suggestions that would be worth further discussion with the National Museums.

There is a good working relationship between museum curators in both organisations and we suggested it would be useful to set out a mutual approach to that more explicitly in the agreement, as the foundation on which future decisions are taken. We also discussed the importance of local curators giving their own perspectives on the display of Hoard objects

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and exchanging skills. National Museums Scotland points to that as good practice in its own National Strategy, for example in the case of the Next of Kin touring exhibition it has facilitated throughout Scotland as part of the World War One commemorations.

Similarly, NMS' national strategy recognises the importance of supporting local museums in place-making (for example, recently for the re-opened Lews Castle) and NMS has, I understand, indicated it is keen to make Kirkcudbright Galleries a regular venue for touring exhibitions.

We also discussed how new research and conservation work on the Hoard, which is likely to take some years to complete, might not only be shared between the two organisations but the emerging knowledge from the research used to plan loans, displays and new public engagement. It might be worth planning some milestones for that activity, given the long timescales involved. You were also keen that as Committee membership changes in the years to come, new members would have the opportunity to learn about the Hoard from NMS. The National Museums has made a commitment to share research in the partnership agreement as it stands but these additional elements would, we felt, be worth exploring further.

Following our meeting, my officials have had a positive initial discussion with the National Museum about these points and they stand ready for further talks with your officers on the details. I do hope the partnership agreement can be concluded soon, so that it underpins what the public in Galloway and Scotland can gain from the Hoard.

Finally, I am very sorry not to be able to attend the re-opening of Kirkcudbright Galleries on 8 June, but send best wishes for an excellent occasion. I am pleased that both the National Museums and National Galleries are involved early in new exhibitions. I do look forward to seeing the Kirkcudbright Galleries on another occasion as soon as is practical.

*Kind regards*

*Fiona Hyslop*

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Tha Ministearan na h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus an Rùnaire  
Malreannach fo chumhachan Achd Colteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

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