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An Comhchoiste um Thurasóireacht, Cultúr, Ealaíona, Spórt agus Meáin

**Tuarascaíl Taistil, Leabharlann Náisiúnta na hÉireann,
Eanáir 2024**

Bealtaine 2024

Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media

**Travel Report, National Library of Ireland, January
2024**

May 2024

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Related information

Publications

All publications for this committee are available on the [Oireachtas website](#).

Committee videos

Footage of Committee proceedings can be found on the [Committee videos page](#).

Contact details

The contact details for the Committee can be found on the [Committee page](#).

Terms of reference

Read the [terms of reference](#) for the Committee.

Committee Membership

Cathaoirleach

[Niamh Smyth TD](#), Fianna Fáil

Leas-Cathaoirleach

[Senator Malcolm Byrne](#), Fianna Fáil

Members

[Chris Andrews TD](#), Sinn Féin

[Ciaran Cannon TD](#), Fine Gael

[Peter Fitzpatrick TD](#), Independent

[Brendan Griffin TD](#), Fine Gael

[Mattie McGrath TD](#), Independent

[Imelda Munster TD](#), Sinn Féin

[Christopher O'Sullivan TD](#), Fianna Fáil

[Michael Ring TD](#), Fine Gael

[Senator Micheál Carrigy](#), Fine Gael

[Senator Shane Cassells](#), Fianna Fáil

[Senator Annie Hoey](#), Labour Party

[Senator Fintan Warfield](#), Sinn Féin

Committee Membership History

[Alan Dillon TD](#), Fine Gael | Sep 2020 - Apr 2024

[Johnny Mythen TD](#), Sinn Féin | Sep 2020 - Apr 2023

Introduction

The Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media, in its 2024 work programme, has identified as a key policy priority for examination the development of and support for National Cultural Institutions and Cultural Infrastructure, such as the National Gallery, the National Library, the National Museum of Ireland, the National Opera House, and the National Theatre.

In this regard, the Committee decided to accept an invitation to visit the National Library of Ireland to tour the Library and receive a briefing on the forthcoming phase of the Library's capital development programme. The visit took place on 24th January 2024.

Members in attendance

Niamh Smyth TD (Cathaoirleach)

Senator Malcolm Byrne

Senator Shane Cassells

Secretariat in attendance

Laura Pathe, Clerk

Darren Kelly, Policy Advisor

Timothy Kelly, Clerical Officer

Programme of Events

Welcomes and arrival

The Committee was met on arrival at the NLI by Library Director, Dr Audrey Whitty, Deputy Director and Head of Estates, Brian O'Donnell, and Chairperson of the Board Eoin McVey. Also in attendance from the NLI was Liz Coffey, Head of Communications and Development, and Olwyn Enright, communications consultant.

Tour of main building and West Wing

Members received a tour of the National Library of Ireland. The tour was led by the Director of the National Library, Dr Audrey Whitty, accompanied by Chair of the Board of the National Library of Ireland, Eoin McVey and Deputy Director and Head of Estates at the National Library, Brian O'Donnell. The Director outlined the history of the National Library, which will celebrate the 150th anniversary of its foundation in 2027, and its mission to share the stories of Ireland with the world.

Members viewed the West Wing, where the Director outlined the proposed plan for the redevelopment, which has recently received planning permission. The redevelopment will allow the NLI to display highlights from the 12 million items in the national collection. CGIs of the plans were displayed by the Deputy Director and Head of Estates, who together with the Director, gave an overview of the proposed development. The new and public spaces will be housed over six levels and 1,600 square metres, and will include exhibition galleries, learning and study spaces, a contemporary writing and performance space, shop and café, while retaining original features such as book stacks. There will be specific space dedicated to exhibitions of Nobel Laureates WB Yeats and Seamus Heaney as well as the opportunity to create new exhibitions. The Director mentioned that the NLI has the collections of Edna O'Brien, Maria Edgeworth as well as Bob Geldof's Band Aid archive and the Cherish/One Family archive. The Director also mentioned that the NLI is entirely free to the public, open to all and when this project is completed it will be fully accessible.

Briefing on the forthcoming phase of the NLI capital development programme in the NLI's recently refurbished Art Room

The Director gave an overview of the major capital development project 'Reimagining the National Library,' which began in 2017, and outlined the work that has taken place since

then. Members viewed the Art Room, which reopened last year, and the Reading Room. The Director then explained that each of the individual smaller areas under the re-development have been completed, but the largest part of the plan is the redevelopment of the West Wing. Members discussed with the Director the timelines, budget and partners associated with the development.

The issue of digital collections was raised. The Director outlined the NLI's role as a depository to record the memory of Ireland. This is very clear in relation to written publications, but legislative change is needed to allow it to happen in relation to digital content. A report has been completed in relation to this and the NLI is working with the Department on it. Currently the NLI is not in a position to collect websites that have a clear relationship with Ireland or are published on a top level domain.ie which means that all of this memory is being lost.

Niamh Smyth, T.D.

Cathaoirleach

15 May 2024