

FOI Reference Number: FOI/035/2425

Date: 14 May 2024

Thank you for your information request received by the Policy team at Mid and East Antrim Borough Council (MEABC) on 17th April 2024 which has been processed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Your request:

'I am interested in how race is addressed in the council area, with particular regard to cultural activities and the built environment.

For the last year up to date, but inclusive of information and documents from work which may have begun before this period and is still being pursued by the council.

(For example, a project to identify monument may have begun in 2020, but the list compiled from this project may still be used by the council now)

Please disregard requests to schools, galleries, museums libraries as appropriate - if the council does not control these

1 Could you please provide any list or review/research/report/survey of locations (streets/buildings/parks), or public art (such as statues), plaques, commemorations, graves, memorials that the council has produced in relation to slavery, colonialism, empire/British Empire, racism, white supremacy, Black Lives Matter, decolonising, racial justice.

In question form: "What in the built environment has the organisation, or a group working on its behalf, identified as being linked to racism, slavery, colonialism: that is, contested history?"

2 Could you please provide details of what being done to highlight, reinterpret, redisplay, or rename aspects of the environment in the council area identifying in part 1 of this request

In question form: "What work (such as adding interpretation, or information boards, or plaques close to contested monuments) has been undertaken by the council to address these legacies?"

3 If applicable, can you please provide information on what is being done to address issues of slavery, colonialism, empire/British Empire, racism, white supremacy, Black Lives Matter, decolonising, racial justice in council museums/galleries?

For example, what information boards have been added, what has been taken off display or put on display, what new plaques have been erected?

4 The same as for part 3, but can you provide information on how council libraries have addressed these issues

For example, have any books been specifically banned or removed from the library? Has a system of trigger warnings been established for sensitive topics?

Could you please provide details of any books which have been taken from public display and perhaps placed at the desk, or in a reserve stack, because they may be offensive or inappropriate ?

(This can be broad, I do not need an full check of all items in the library; please do not get bogged won in this if it is likely to go over the limit)

5 Fr any council run or supported events in the area, how have these events been more inclusive or a greater focus on diversity?

For example, Bonfire nights or Christmas lights events

6 For any schools affiliated with the council, could you provide details on how the curriculum has been diversified?

Council provide any details or advice to school provided by the council on design the curriculum'

Our response:

This information is regarded as *held* for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Question 1

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council has not undertaken work on built heritage to identify any links to racism, slavery, colonialism, or contested history.

Question 2

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council has not undertaken work on interpretation, information boards or plaques in this regard.

Question 3

In 2023, Carrickfergus Museum was one of six local museums that worked with National Museums NI on their project *Global Voices, Local Choices*. This project aimed to bring diverse cultures and perspectives into Northern Ireland's local and national museums and empower people to make choices relating to World

Cultures collections and how they are interpreted. This was a decolonisation project delivered in partnership between National Museums NI, the African Caribbean Support Organisation NI, and the Northern Ireland Museums Council. It was funded by the Museums Association Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund. The programme also delivered anti-racism training for staff involved. Carrickfergus Museum worked with a group of people from a diverse range of countries all living in Carrickfergus. Some of them have been settled in the area for many years and some of them were seeking asylum here. The output of the project was an exhibition at the museum featuring creative responses to an artefact from the Ulster Museum's world cultures collection.

The exhibition also gave participants the opportunity to contribute their own objects and tell their own stories to museum audiences. Those involved in the project were very positive about their experiences and museum staff have continued to maintain relationships with several members beyond the project. Carrickfergus Museum has also been working on providing additional information for its exhibition on the Antrim Artillery. The current interpretation explores the experiences of the unit during the South African war. However, research has been commissioned from a South African academic to provide a new perspective relating to the very different experiences of Black South Africans. We are working to make this publicly available.

In 2022 Mid and East Antrim Museums participated in a ESRC research project 'Museums, Empire and Northern Irish Identity' led by Dr Briony Widdis, Research Fellow, and Dr Emma Reisz, Lecturer, Queen's University Belfast on representations of colonialism and Empire in Irish museums.

A Council museum staff member also attended and contributed to the MENII Memories, MENII Voices (MMMV) Workshop at the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, on 20 October 2023 organised by the Irish Museums Association and Queen's University, Belfast. Details on the workshop are given below.

Presented as part of a one-year public engagement project working with meaningful objects led by a QUB - IMA - ArtsEkta partnership, See: <https://pure.qub.ac.uk/en/projects/ahrc-internal-iaa-dec-22-menii-memories>
This workshop brought a small group of museum professionals together to sensitively explore the topics of colonialism, imperialism and decolonisation through museum objects and to learn from one another about how they are approaching these themes or any issues that they raise, both for themselves and for communities that they work with.

The workshop covered the following:

- Introduction to MMMV2 from Queen's University Belfast and the Irish Museums Association.
- Introduction to current practice within the Chester Beatty.

- Object Study session in the Reading Room with the Chester Beatty staff, examining relevant case studies.
- Participants discussion on the representation of empire and colonialism in their museum collections or research, and their understanding of best practice as well as their concerns or development needs.
- Group discussion of what 'decolonisation' means in an Irish / Northern Irish museum context.

Question 4

Local authorities in Northern Ireland have no remit for Libraries which falls under the responsibility of the Education Authority through Libraries NI. Please see the following Url that may assist you in locating this information:

<https://www.librariesni.org.uk>

Question 5

In relation to museums, Council developed an Access & Inclusion Policy in 2023. Please see the copy attached to this response as Appendix 1. See also attached (Appendix 2) information regarding the MEA Good Relations Plan.

More information can be found on the MEA website at

www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk

Question 6

Local authorities in Northern Ireland have no remit for education which falls under the responsibility of the Education Authority. Please see the following Url that may assist you in locating this information:

<https://www.eani.org.uk>

Please quote the reference number FOI/035/2425 on any related communications.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of part of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within forty working days of the date of receipt of the response to your original email/letter, and should be sent by email to FOI@midandeastantrim.gov.uk or by post to:

Policy Team,
The Braid,
1-29 Bridge Street,
Ballymena,
BT43 5EJ.

If you are not content with the outcome of an internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. You must make your

complaint to the ICO within 40 working days of you receiving your response or the date of your last contact with the Council.

The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire,
SK9 5AF.

Alternatively, a complaint may be made via the ICO website at:

<https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint>

Please be advised that Mid and East Antrim Borough Council may release the response to this information request into the public domain via our website at:

<https://www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/>

If we publish our response to your request, your personal data will be removed to protect your privacy.

Appendix 1



Arts and Culture Access and Inclusion Policy

Version	Version 1 (July 2023)
Date approved	<i>Pending approval by Neighbourhood and Communities Committee, 1 August 2023</i>
Review date	June 2027
Venues and service areas covered	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mid Antrim Museum• Carrickfergus Museum• The Guard Room within the Warrant Officer's House• Larne Museum and Arts Centre• Andrew Jackson Cottage and US Rangers Museum• Arthur Cottage• The Braid Arts Centre, including The Braid Theatre and Studio Theatre• Mc Neill Theatre

1.Statement of purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out Mid and East Antrim Borough Council's commitment to maximising access and inclusion, and diversifying our audience through identifying ways this can be achieved across Arts and Culture provision.

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council's Arts and Culture Service is located with the Tourism, Arts and Culture Section of the Development Directorate, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council's Arts and Culture Service is committed to ensuring that people of all backgrounds and sectors of the community have a fundamental right to engage with, use and enjoy the services it provides, including access to the Council's Museum collections. We are committed to maximising access for everyone, regardless of age, ability, gender, cultural or social background, sexual orientation, faith, language, location, or wealth, by minimising or removing barriers that can prevent people from engaging with our facilities, collections, website, social media channels, programmes and staff.

We will provide welcoming staff, engaging programming, and learning opportunities for different audiences, diverse levels of ability and tailor our programmes to meet the needs of specific groups and sensitive to all community groups within our area.

We recognise that there are barriers to participation for our users but are committed to making all aspects of our activities as fully accessible as our resources and buildings allow, including access to buildings, collections, events, exhibitions, live performances, learning sessions and to our staff and volunteers as well as visitors.

2. Access and Inclusion definition

We define access and inclusion as something that is made possible when physical, cultural, social, sensory, intellectual, financial, emotional, and attitudinal barriers are removed or reduced.

When we refer to access and inclusion, we mean the opportunity to engage with our buildings, collections, content, and expertise.

3. Barriers to access

- Physical
- Sensory
- Intellectual
- Attitudinal
- Cultural
- Economic
- Geographical

To eliminate and reduce barriers to access to make our services accessible and inclusive to ensure equality of access, we will consider: -

- Physical access: enabling people with physical disabilities, the elderly and those caring for young people to reach and appreciate every part of the Service and Council's Museum collections;
- Sensory access: to build into all aspects of the Service activities that include a wide range of different sensory experiences;
- Intellectual access: we acknowledge that people have different learning styles, and we will reflect learning styles by adopting clear interpretive guidance;
- Cultural access: we acknowledge and recognise cultural differences and seek to represent varied cultural experiences and issues through our programmes and exhibitions;
- Emotional / Attitudinal access: to ensure that all visitors feel welcomed and valued;
- Financial access: we will aim to minimise financial barriers to involvement in arts and culture programmes wherever possible.

4. Scope

This policy covers provision by Mid and East Antrim Arts and Culture venues and services, including through websites and other online activities, and outreach programmes to all users.

5. Related policies and legislation

5.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998)

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) places a statutory duty on public authorities, in carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; between men and women generally; between persons with a disability and persons without; and between persons with dependants and persons without.

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland provides advice, support and guidance to public authorities, employers and service providers on all aspects of their equality obligations and on best practice, both in respect of the anti-discrimination legislation and in respect of the equality and good relations duties.

5.2 Disability Action Plan and Equality Scheme

Mid and East Antrim arts and cultural venues approach to access is informed by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council's Disability Action Plan and Equality Scheme along with other initiatives to make services more accessible.

<https://www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/council/equality-good-relations/equality-scheme/>

<https://www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/council/equality-good-relations/disability-action-plan-2023-2027/>

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council are working towards making the Borough Dementia Friendly as a key priority.

[Dementia Friendly Communities | Mid and East Antrim Borough Council](#)

Mid and East Antrim is an Autism Friendly Borough and Council is committed to having a better understanding of autism to make services more accessible for everyone and create a more inclusive community.

[Autism Friendly MEA | Mid and East Antrim Borough Council](#)

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council states that communications to ratepayers and citizens should be clear, concise, easy to read and easy to understand. The council uses the Plain English campaign as a set of guidelines to create more accessible means of communication.

6.Policy

6.1 Physical Access

Council will uphold the statutory requirements of Northern Ireland Equality Legislation by taking reasonable steps to ensure that policies, practices and procedures do not discriminate against disabled people; by providing auxiliary aids and services, which enable disabled people to use the facilities; and by removing, altering or circumventing physical barriers within our buildings, where possible.

We will ensure delivery of our approach in a number of ways including but not limited to:

- Ensuring that lift access is provided to public spaces, where possible.
- Ensuring the provision of adapted toilets in Arts and Culture venues.
- The use of automated or push button doors where possible.
- Induction loop systems are in place to assist those with hearing difficulties.
- Providing information on nearest parking spaces for blue badge holders accessing arts and cultural services.
- Ensuring that exhibition areas, exhibitions (including individual exhibits), learning spaces (including projector systems and computers), café, toilets and reception desks are accessible to wheelchair users.
- Providing accessible seating where possible.
- Providing a complimentary companion's ticket to theatre performances for anyone who cannot attend on their own due to their disability.
- Ensuring access and inclusion for performers and artists with disabilities, including the provision of a specialist for performers to access the stage.

- Providing changing and dressing areas for performers with disabilities to include both right and left hand facilities.
- Providing a specialist lift for disabled performers to access the stage.
- Where physical access is not possible (due, for example, to legal barriers to making alterations to a listed building), putting in place alternative methods such as virtual access.

6.2 Sensory Access

We will ensure delivery of our approach in a number of ways including but not limited to:

- Providing front-of-house staff who have the awareness and skills to successfully communicate with and provide a quality service to people with visual or hearing impairments.
- Ensuring service areas use a wide range of multisensory activities.
- Where possible, in partnership with third party theatre promoters, we will provide 'Relaxed Performances' where noise levels are reduced, and house lights remain on during theatre performances.
- Endeavouring that video-based exhibits have subtitles if they use the spoken word and that key audio-visual exhibits central to a gallery or exhibition's main message include subtitles.

6.3 Intellectual Access

We will ensure delivery of our approach in a number of ways including but not limited to:

- Ensuring that the text used in exhibition areas, exhibitions, educational resources, publications, productions, website, and social media channels across the service is carefully tailored to the needs of their intended audiences.
- Providing the assisted reader function on websites <https://www.shapedbyseaandstone.com/information/accessibility-statement>
- Providing effective wayfinding signage and facility maps and pre-visit accessibility guides where possible
- Ensuring that the content and delivery of learning programmes are tailored to the learning needs of a range of audiences including autism and dementia friendly sessions.
- We will consult regularly with our audiences and non-users to ensure the broadest possible access to our facilities, services, and collections.
- Ensuring that information on Council's website is available in key languages.

6.4 Attitudinal Access

We will ensure delivery of our approach in a number of ways including but not limited to:

- Ensuring that our promotional activities and subject matters are welcoming, inclusive, and engaging for all sections of all communities.

- Ensuring that visitors are made to feel welcome on arrival.
- Creating environments in which people can feel comfortable, included, valued and able to learn at their own pace and level.

6.5 Cultural Access

We will ensure delivery of our approach in a number of ways including but not limited to:

- Making our services and programming offer as relevant as possible to Mid and East Antrim residents and visitors, and more widely to Northern Ireland's culturally and socially diverse society.
- Programming an annual series of events specifically for disabled citizens in partnership with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust and disabled service users in the Borough.

6.6 Economic Access

We will ensure delivery of our approach in a number of ways including but not limited to:

- Offering a flexible range of prices and ticket types where possible (while ensuring financial sustainability).
- Providing outreach programmes to communities where relevant.
- Where possible, obtaining funding and offering small grants to help communities in disadvantaged areas to take part in services.
- Programming a series of Social Art events with free access to local disadvantaged groups and Neighbourhood Renewal Areas.

6.7 Geographic Access

We will ensure delivery of our approach in a number of ways including but not limited to:

- Providing a rich online experience.
- Producing touring exhibitions and displays in public spaces.
- Providing alternative methods such as virtual tours.

Appendix 2

The District Council Good Relations Plan aims to promote good relations between people of a different religion, race and political group. It aligns with The Executive's Together: Building a United Community Strategy and the Race Equality Strategy NI

Mid and East Antrim's Good Relations Programme contains the following programmes to promote positive race relations:-

- Promoting Diversity Through Sport - This programme works with primary schools in the Borough and deals with good relations issues such as sectarianism and hate crime.
- Formative Years - This programme works with nursery school aged children in their formative years. It aims include that young children will begin to understand the meaning of acceptance and respect for others and will be more likely to include others who are different from themselves. These are essential building blocks for a tolerant and shared society.
- Integrate - This programme works to build capacity for integration within the Roma community in the Borough.
- Growing Cohesion - This programme works with Churches in the Borough to build capacity for collaboration to achieve outcomes around - appreciating diversity, celebrating cultural difference and supporting our neighbours.
- Embrace - This programme aims to celebrate all cultures of Mid and East Antrim and includes events, cultural diversity workshops etc.
- Good Relations Small Grants Programme - This programme enables community groups to apply for up to a maximum of £2,500 to deliver on good relations activities in the Borough including diversity projects.