

IWM Change Programme 2014

Submission by Prospect to the IWM Change Director in response to the Change Programme promulgated to staff in October 2014

8 January 2015

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Introduction

Prospect is the trade union recognised by the IWM for staff in a wide range of specialist roles including librarians, curators and conservators. This submission is made on behalf of the IWM Branch of the union.

We have consulted our IWM members in formulating this response on the proposed Change Programme. Members have provided written comments or expressed their views at various members' meetings that we have held. Much of the content of this submission has already been highlighted in formal and informal discussions with the Change Director and in responses submitted by individuals and departments.

Cuts to the grant in aid received from the DCMS have resulted in a projected £4m deficit in 2016-17. Like many other national museums and galleries, IWM has developed radical plans to "balance the books". IWM has made significant efforts in recent years to cut costs and generate income. However, we are very concerned that the Change Programme will cause serious damage to IWM's reputation and its ability to preserve its standing as an international centre for study, research and education.

Prospect is opposed to the proposed closure of Library and Explore History and we are continuing a public campaign aimed at saving these important facilities. However, we still await full details of the proposed staffing model arising from the closure proposals and we wish to have an adequate opportunity to respond to such proposals in due course.

We welcome the fact that since the proposals were published to staff at the end of October 2014 the organisation has endeavoured to engage with staff and unions. However, we are concerned that publication of proposed detailed organisation charts was delayed until the end of November 2014. Also, the published information was not clear or complete.

We welcome the various commitments that IWM has given to staff in relation to the change proposals – no compulsory relocations, use of volunteers for redundancy to create vacancies that could be filled by surplus staff, provision of 6 months' notice of compulsory redundancy.

We would look forward to further engagement with IWM over the issues we have raised in this response.

Proposed Structure/Organisation – General Concerns

Concerns have been raised about the lack of consultation with most departments prior to the proposed organisation charts being issued. When the charts were issued on 28 November 2014 – much later than expected – they just appeared on the intranet with no covering note or contextual explanation. The organisation charts were very difficult to read, eg in Fundraising & Development, it is not possible to see who reports to who. It was also referred to as a 'detailed structure' – with the inverted commas raising question marks about what this actually was.

Job descriptions for posts in the proposed structure have not been issued. This has made it very difficult for any real assessment to be made in relation to the detail of who will carry out particular tasks. In some cases job titles are confusing and the distinction between roles is not clear, for example, Assistant Director and Head of Department. Also, if Heads of Department roles are to be deleted, we have concerns as to how relevant work areas will be represented at senior level within the organisation. How will those areas be consulted and included in decision making with respect to issues and work that affects them?

Our members are concerned that existing posts are being removed, but the work carried out currently will continue to be required in the future. For example, the Head of Design post has been removed and remaining design staff will now report to the Head of Exhibitions. This leaves concerns over who will now complete the work previously carried out by the Head of Design and whether the Head of Exhibitions will thoroughly understand design concerns/work practices.

There have also been questions about some functions being separated and placed in different divisions, for example, marketing and communications.

There is also considerable concern that there is not a clear idea of what different people and departments do. One example of this is where the exhibition research teams (interpreting history for a wider audience) have been placed under Research and Academic Partnerships (working primarily in the academic field and exploiting funding from this source). Both have research in the title but the functions are very different and they do not necessarily mesh together well. We would also like to query the post of Head of Narrative and Content, which seems to have no staff beneath it. We believe that in earlier versions of the staffing structure this role was at the Assistant Director level.

There are great inconsistencies within the structure. Some Assistant Directors seem to have quite small areas of responsibility and hardly any line management duties, for example, Assistant Director Fundraising and Development and Assistant Director Strategy and Planning - why has this role been elevated to Assistant Director? There is even a Deputy in this area, when some Executive Directors don't have comparable support (and more people to line manage, refer to Executive Director for Governance). Assistant Director Commercial and Assistant Director Collections & Access have significantly larger areas to manage. There are also inconsistencies with PA support.

Divisions will be much bigger; there is no guidance on whether some responsibilities will be deferred to the 'lower' ranks from what used to be the Directors, to Heads of Departments or Assistant Directors. What will the sign-off process be? Up to now, Directors had to sign off on a lot of operational stuff, if the Divisions are bigger and the same level of responsibilities are maintained, it will be much more difficult to get approval and people on lower managerial levels (Section Head/Heads of Departments) will have less access to Executive (?) Directors as they will have huge areas to manage.

We are concerned that a new level of management is being created, with the same inconsistencies as before.

As no details of the current staffing structure were published at the same time, it was difficult to see the changes and how these impacted on individual staff; there were also comments that consideration of the staffing structure would have been easier if people's names been attached to the posts. Some posts were missing, and there was also confusion about the many secondments in the institution, with some staff being unsure what the situation was with their established role, and others being overlooked as being at risk. It also appears that staff on fixed term contracts have found out their posts are not being continued by the fact that their posts have been left of the organisation charts. Some job titles are also incorrect, which has caused confusion and concern.

There are also concerns about some of the terminology used, for example, the word "Access" appears in three distinct and different areas, and it is not clear what is meant.

Some staff were informed by their managers about changes that were happening, with other people only finding out when the chart was released. This inconsistency of approach has caused considerable concerns.

There are also question marks about the rationale of some of the changes in reporting lines – some of the changes seem illogical and leave junior members of staff working without onsite support. Some staff are being effectively demoted. Some staff also seem to be managing their peers, who are on the same (or lower) pay and grading. Questions have also been asked about whether some of these posts/positions should have been competed for

We are also concerned that some decisions have been made prior to the restructure, where posts were not replaced and people have assumed extra work and responsibilities. Decisions have still not been made on adequate recompense, and whether these temporary solutions are working efficiently.

There have also been complaints about the lack of response to questions and feedback submitted via the Yoursay email address.

There have also been complaints about the slow issue of job descriptions – ensuring these are up to date should have happened much earlier in the change process.

There is no indication and hasn't been any information on what IWM's vision as an organisation is, where priorities will lie (in terms of functions) and how ways of working will be improved

This could lead to IWM continuing to work in the same way, just in a different management structure, with fewer benefits and more risks: people are asked to do more for less money and will struggle to cope. There is no indication of what IWM will stop doing. How will IWM be more efficient and how will the organisation become more sustainable? Where is the underlying strategy paper, where is the document that outlines and analyses what IWM does and how it will be done better in future? Where is the data, a cost-benefit-analysis?

Separation of Curators from Collections

Within the proposed new structure, curators are placed within the Content & Programmes directorate and not within Collections & Governance, implying that curators will no longer be working closely with the collections. The separation of curators from

collections is a wholly unnatural split which, we understand, has not worked at the National Maritime Museum. Why should it work at IWM?

Curators derive and develop their knowledge through close working with the collections from entry through to exit which then benefits the whole of IWM. There is a danger within the proposed new structure that curators will become isolated from the collections they curate. Merging Public Programmes and Collections may further de-skill curators and that the emphasis is on work supporting Public Programmes rather than developing knowledge on our collections and promoting those. Will the inconsistent level of pay between the merged areas be addressed (will Senior Curators and Historians be paid at the same level, for instance?). Who will represent IWM in professional forums at senior level (above Department Head) where strategies on curatorial matters will be discussed and set? Who will represent the interests of curators? There is a reputational risk, what signal is the organisation sending out across the sector by getting rid of a senior management role in this area?

Education

We welcome the announcement that was made to staff on 4 December 2014 concerning additional Government funding of £2m per year for the next four years for IWM to safeguard and support education services. We await details of the proposals as to how this funding will be used and how the proposed future staffing structure will now be amended. Clearly, part of the additional funding should be used to maintain formal education services at Duxford, but we await formal confirmation of this. We note that the annual amount involved equals the total proposed annual staff cost savings arising from the Change Programme.

Provision of education services forms a very important element of the role of any museum. IWM has a good track record for attracting learners and children to participate in its on and off-site educational programmes. In our view, the Library, the Explore History facility, the Research Room and enquiry services are all important elements of the IWM's education services. Therefore, we believe that part the additional funding should be used to protect and develop these services as part of a wider initiative to maintain, support and expand other education services.

Closure of the Library & Explore History

Since IWM was founded a publicly accessible library collection has been a vital and integral part of fulfilling the museum's ambition to be the world's leading authority on conflict. IWM's vision to enrich people's understanding of the causes, course and consequences of war and conflict will never be fulfilled if the library is closed.

For visitors to the Research Room the unique library collection is the most used resource. It is also a vital resource for IWM historians, conservators and curators, providing them with important data and information which enhances the quality and authority of their work.

The Explore History facility was opened in May 2010 as a specially-designed public space giving anyone free access to photos, film, sound recordings, documents, art, ephemera and books within IWM's collections. The space was developed using donations provided by various charitable trusts and foundations.

There were nearly 55,000 walk-in collections enquiries at IWM London in 2013-14, even though the museum was closed for a significant period of time during the year. As

recently as July 2014 it was proposed that the current facilities and services in Explore History would be progressively upgraded with the introduction of new digital resources.

For the reasons given above Prospect is fundamentally opposed to the closure proposal. We are also concerned that closure will mean that IWM will no longer be able to meet the required standard for the Arts Council accreditation scheme for UK national museums – evidence must be provided that demonstrates the provision of study and research facilities for academic and public use. The library and Explore History are fundamental to the adequate provision of such facilities by IWM.

Our public campaign of opposition to the closures has gained support from around the world. Our petition (http://bit.ly/save_IWM) now has over 18,000 signatories. The following are just a few examples of the views and concerns expressed by those signing the petition.

As a former Director General of the Museum I am horrified by the suggestion that the Library might be closed and dispersed.

Alan Borg

Why spend millions rebuilding the IWM to attract visitors and stimulate interest only to then cut a world class facility to save a fraction of that spent.

Robert Foster

IWM is probably the leading war museum in the world. For it to lose its library is unthinkable - and for such a move to be announced during the 100 year commemoration activities of 2014 beggars belief.

Andrew Bamji

I frequently use the research resources at the Imperial War Museum both for TV productions I work on and for my own writing. The closure of the library will severely restrict my ability and the ability of other researchers and authors studying and writing about modern conflict to carry on their work. Suggestions that other institutions like King's College War Studies Department and the British Library can act as substitutes in the event of its closure are very wide of the mark. Given the current commemorations of the 1914-1918 war, the planned closure illustrates the enormous gap between David Cameron's speech at the opening of the new WW1 galleries this summer and the reality of self-defeating government cut backs.

James Barker

There can be no doubt, closure of the library and Explore History will drastically inhibit IWM's ability to enrich people's understanding of the causes, course and consequences of war and conflict. The projected savings arising from the closure proposals (around £300k per year) do not justify the damage that will be done to IWM. However, the Change Programme proposals do not appear to have included any consideration of the cost of closure, the future of the library collection or the additional income that could be gained if the library and Explore History remain open.

Whilst we are opposed to the introduction of specific charges for use of Explore History or the Research Room, we have made various suggestions have been made to raise income, including calls for a donation box (which has been asked for since Explore History opened in 2010, and with increasing urgency since the restructure became

imminent), donations for family history leaflets, selling photograph permits, and using Explore History to promote sales/order images. Other suggestions have included Behind the Scenes tours/Highlights from the library, workshops and courses, Development awaydays, Service Record Surgeries, Adopt a Book and republishing facsimile items.

We believe that part the additional funding that was announced to staff in early December 2014 (see above under "Education") should be used to maintain the library and Explore History. Also, we believe that evidence from other museums and galleries shows that a much greater emphasis on visitor giving has a the potential for producing significant additional income for IWM (see below under "Visitor Giving") which would then be best used to keep the library and Explore History open.

All library staff have been told that they face the risk of being made redundant, although they have also been told that a number of jobs (the exact numbers/grades have not been confirmed) will be retained. However, questions over the scope and nature of future roles and services remain unanswered. For example, no clear proposals have been tabled with respect to the future of the remote enquiry service which handled 22,000 contacts in 2013-14. In these circumstances it is impossible for us to provide a definitive response and we would wish to have further time to respond once any more detailed proposals have been formulated.

Centralisation

There are also concerns from Duxford and IWM North about centralisation, and there seems to be some inconsistency in the way the restructure has been applied, for example, with Duxford retaining its own exhibitions team. Losing the Directors at the sites is seen as a significant blow, with a fear of lack of direction and loss of prestige (and attendant business and income) in the local area. There are concerns about losing senior posts in Manchester and there seems to be a feeling that staff will not be willing to take on the roles of duty manager. IWMN currently works well as a cross-disciplinary team but there are concerns that the new structure lends itself to greater silo working. There is a strong feeling that there needs to be an Operations Manager on site at Manchester – there will be undue pressure on the Operations Coordinator as she is the person on the spot. There are also concerns about the lack of technical capacity in Manchester. Questions have also been asked about the location of some posts. For example, Head of Learning and Access has been placed in either London or Manchester, but not Duxford, while the Head of Volunteering and Engagement is given as being London or Duxford based, but not Manchester.

Visitor Giving

In a difficult financial climate it is vital that visitors are encouraged to donate as much as possible. Other national museums and galleries put much greater efforts into attracting donations from visitors and this provides positive results. Visitors face clear and prominent signage requesting donations and staff make specific requests for donations. As an example, visitor giving at the Science Museum in 2013-14 brought in more than 60p per visitor. Whilst some IWM sites charge an entry fee, we believe that visitor giving is a significant potential income stream for IWM which could make a major contribution to reversing the projected deficit.

More collection boxes should be located in IWM and efforts should be made to bring in donations when visitors enter any of IWM buildings, or when individuals visit the website. The current Just Giving page on the IWM website is not effective – more money has

been raised through the incidental Prospect plea on our petition than through most of the previous effort on that page. The donations that have been made since our petition was launched clearly demonstrate what can be achieved by simply asking for a donation.

Management of Health & Safety

IWM attracted nearly 1.9 million members of the public in 2013-14 across five sites which include an airfield and a ship. Staff work with objects and materials that pose a potential risk to health and safety. Prospect is very concerned that formal health and safety provision is not given enough prominence and we are opposed to the removal of the corporate health and safety management post. We believe that removal of this post puts the public, staff and the correct management of health and safety within IWM at risk. Prospect is happy to play its part in the management of health and safety, but there should be a specific role at the corporate level, filled by a suitably qualified professional, responsible for health and safety.

Prospect, IWM Branch