

PE1502/B

**Buidheann-Stiùiridh Cultair agus Dualchas
Culture and Heritage Directorate**

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Ur faidhle/Your ref :
Ar faidhle/Our ref :
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Dear Stuart

CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE1502

Thank you for your letter of 16 January 2014 regarding Petition PE1502 and the Ecurie Ecosse Collection. You asked for a response to the 4 questions below:

- What consideration was given to purchasing the Ecurie Ecosse collection?
- Please provide an overview of (1) the collections policy with regard to items of Scottish or historical significance and (2) the acquisition process.
- How is Scottish or historical significance assessed?
- What funding streams exist to acquire individual items or collections for the nation?

In responding to these I should state that I have seen the response to you from the National Museums of Scotland on 7 February 2014 and refer to some of the points which that response makes.

What consideration was given to purchasing the Ecurie Ecosse collection?

The Scottish Government recognised, prior to the auction, that the Ecurie Ecosse cars hold an important place in Scotland's history and agreed that it would be ideal if they could have been kept in Scotland for the public to enjoy.

These cars carried a pre-auction value in excess of £5 million – a sum that was impossible to find from the Scottish Government's culture budget, which is currently fully committed for the current and next financial years. Although there was much interest in the cars, museums in

Scotland are also facing financial pressures and simply did not have the funds to compete with the private bids that were expected to be made, and were made, at the auction.

Please provide an overview of (1) the collections policy with regard to items of Scottish or historical significance and (2) the acquisition process.

The National Museums' response to you of 7 February set out their collections policy with reference to the governing legislation. The National Galleries of Scotland and National Library of Scotland similarly have collections policies. The Scottish Government has no separate collections policy as it is not a collecting organisation nor, under the arms-length principle between Government and arts organisations, does it direct what objects should be collected by the National Collections bodies.

How is Scottish or historical significance assessed?

Again I would refer you to the response by NMS.

What funding streams exist to acquire individual items or collections for the nation?

The Scottish Government provides grant in aid (GIA) to the National Museums of Scotland annually. This includes both grant funding for NMS to augment its own collections and grant funding for the National Fund for Acquisitions (NFA), a grant scheme for non-national museums which NMS administers on behalf of the Scottish Government.

Up until, and including, 2010-11, this totalled £710k per annum, £510k being for NMS purchase grant and £200k for the NFA. Following a difficult Spending Review settlement from the UK Government in 2011-12 and in the the following years, including a significantly reduced capital budget for the Culture Portfolio, this was reduced and is now £350k per annum. In setting the budgets, the Scottish Government weighed up with the National Collections bodies the relative priorities of investing in the maintenance and repair of the existing cultural estate and the acquisition of new objects, given the reduced capital available

It is of course open to NMS and other museums to privately fund-raise when looking to acquire new objects. The Scottish Government grant can be particularly useful here in providing match funding. There are also various tax incentive schemes which enable private individuals to donate objects to the National Collections bodies, including the Acceptance in Lieu and Cultural Gifts schemes. Further details on the various schemes can be found at the Arts Council website: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-museums/cultural-property/tax-incentives/>

Yours sincerely

David Seers
Head of Cultural Excellence Team