

The Network Newsletter: tackling social exclusion in libraries, museums, archives and galleries

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The Network's Website is at www.seapn.org.uk and includes information on courses, good practice, specific socially excluded groups, as well as the newsletter archive.

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Did you see ...?

Black Europe Resources: A Blog on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic issues

The 22 Sep Newsletter¹ focusses on books, with links to info about new titles, including Kandace Chimbiri *The story of the Windrush*².

Tackling social and digital exclusion – Other Agencies

Heritage for inclusive growth

This new report³ from the RSA and British Council, outline how inclusive growth could begin to tackle inequality, and illustrates this with a series of in-depth case studies.

As noted in the Introduction, it had been intended to publish this report in early 2020, but it has been overtaken by COVID-19 – which exposed even greater inequalities within UK society – and the urgent responses to Black Lives Matter (and their impact on heritage).

“Far beyond ‘being in this together’, society continues to be divided along the lines of entrenched social, economic and environmental inequalities, which are unevenly distributed between and within places.

For those impacted directly, the reality of this is not new. But greater visibility and awareness has made it increasingly untenable for those not affected personally by structural inequalities — often including those in decision-making positions — to continue to overlook and not prioritise effective responses.

This report makes the case that heritage for inclusive growth provides one such effective response. It provides a powerful and timely model for addressing social, economic and environmental inequalities while also recognising the cultural, symbolic and emotional factors which shape the identities and experiences of individuals, communities and places.” [p10]

This builds on work already undertaken by the RSA, which led to the publication of their report⁴ in 2017 – this report defines ‘inclusive growth’ as:

¹ See: <https://blackeuroperesources.com/2020/09/22/books-newsletter-issue-22-09-2020/>.

² See: <https://clpe.org.uk/story-windrush-kn-chimbiri?fbclid=IwAR39LH0C9MuG-EQ0YDWDzT5PGTdkpJHDTZj6oVFjo0m6duL70Nh-roL54cA>.

³ Becca Antink, Ed Cox, Jamie Cooke, Stephen Stenning and Nikki Locke. *Heritage for inclusive growth*. RSA, 2020. Available to download as a pdf from: <https://www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/reports/heritage-inclusive-growth>.

⁴ Inclusive Growth Commission. *Making our economy work for everyone*. RSA, 2017. Available to download as a pdf from: <https://www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/reports/final-report-of-the-inclusive-growth-commission>.

“[...] enabling as many people as possible to contribute to and benefit from growth.” [p6]

and drafts a new model of inclusive growth:

“The Commission report outlines a new model for inclusive growth that combines social and economic policy. We argue that reducing inequality and deprivation can itself drive growth. Investment in social infrastructure – including public health, early years support, skills and employment services – should go hand in hand with investment in physical infrastructure, and in business development. This will have a first order impact on productivity and living standards.

The key shift we need is from an economic model based on growing now and distributing later to one that sees growth and social reform as two sides of the same coin [...]” [p8]

In the new report, they go on to say that:

“We define heritage for inclusive growth strategies as locally developed plans **utilising and supporting the heritage assets and activities within a place to create sustainable, equitably distributed growth and to enable the development of inclusive place-based identities.**” [p11 – emphasis theirs]

Their definition of ‘heritage’ includes:

- “Historic built environment
- Museums, archives and artefacts
- Industrial heritage
- Parks and open space
- Landscape and natural heritage
- Cultures and memories.” [p19]

and go on to argue that heritage can be used to implement inclusive growth. They illustrate this with eight case studies, and, from this, recommend that the starting points should be work that is:

- Whole place-based, eg via a local authority or a LEP
- Museum-led
- Community-focused
- Regeneration-led.

The case studies are:

- New Anglia LEP
- Dundee, Scotland
- Mid and East Antrim Museum and Heritage Service
- St Fagans National Museum of History
- Don’t Settle (Birmingham and the Black Country)

- Welsh Streets (Toxteth, Liverpool)
- Growth Lancashire (a regeneration case study)
- Margate Townscape Heritage Initiatives

Finally, the report draws out some threads from these, such the importance of diversifying the workforce in the heritage sector; the need for a wider range of voices to be heard; ways to create inclusive growth, eg via tourism; and creating sustainable futures to enhance everyone's health and wellbeing.

Well worth reading for ideas about taking forward inclusive growth in our sector (it's just a pity that it does not include libraries ...).⁵

Poverty in Scotland 2020: the independent annual report

JRF have just published their annual review of poverty in Scotland⁶.

The 'headlines' are:

- "Even before coronavirus, around a million people in Scotland were in poverty, living precarious and insecure lives.
- The Scottish Government is committed to tackling poverty, but poverty has been rising and we are not on course to meet interim child poverty targets within three years. The relative child poverty target requires a fall of a quarter in the proportion of children in poverty compared to the latest data, which has increased compared to five years previously. The picture for other groups over the last five years is similarly disappointing, with no change in poverty for working-age adults and an increase for pensioners.
- We need stronger support at the UK level to retain as many jobs as possible. Both the UK and Scottish Governments need to strengthen training support quickly for those whose jobs disappear and key employment programmes in Scotland like the Parental Employment Support Fund should be increased and extended across the lifetime of the next parliament (2021-26).
- The UK Government must retain the uplift to the standard allowances in Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit and extend this to key legacy benefits.
- While it may not be possible to extend Scottish Child Payment to eligible school-age children before 2022, the Scottish Government and COSLA should use local government payment channels as an interim alternative.
- The UK Government must keep the increase in the Local Housing Allowance and review the adequacy of support available to low-income and struggling homeowners. The Scottish Government must commit fully to an Affordable Housing Supply Programme that will create 53,000 new

⁵ Source: email from Nicky Boyd to gem@jiscmail.ac.uk, 8 Sep 2020.

⁶ *Poverty in Scotland 2020: the independent annual report*. JRF, 2020. Available to download as a pdf from: https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/poverty-scotland-2020?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=JRF%20weekly%20round-up%20wc%205%20Oct%202020&utm_content=JRF%20weekly%20round-up%20wc%205%20Oct%202020+CID_730bf09cc349b9dfd9057530cac00fe3&utm_source=Email%20marketing%20software&utm_term=Read%20the%20report.

affordable homes, 70% of which should be for social rent. They should be prepared to step in with additional legislative support and further help with housing costs, if the existing support for renters proves insufficient to keep them in their homes. The Scottish Government should evaluate all their investment in housing for its impact on reducing child poverty and supporting equality groups.

- The interim child poverty targets must be a strong focus of both political and public will as we shape economic and social recovery. Longer term, we need to prevent more people being pulled into poverty and open up routes out of poverty. Bold action by both the Scottish and UK governments across work, housing and social security will need to be matched by commitment from employers, housing providers, public services and the third sector. Scotland's recovery, if it is to be successful, must be shaped directly by those with experience of living in poverty, at every stage, as equal partners." [p1]

The report concludes:

"We have responded as a society so far to meet the challenges of coronavirus. It is now right and necessary to do the same to make sure we turn the tide on poverty and those of us on low incomes, who are most exposed by the economic storm arising from coronavirus, see our lives improved by escaping poverty's grip. Getting back on course to arrive at significantly lower levels of child poverty, as defined by Scotland's interim targets to be met within three years, demands bolder ambition across the three drivers of work, housing and social security as well as a stronger commitment to involving people with experience of poverty." [p29]⁷

Broader issues – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

"Contested heritage"

Just in case you have not seen this, Oliver Dowden⁸ has written to DCMS Arm's Length bodies⁹, setting out the Government's position:

⁷ Source: JRF *Weekly round-up*, 9 Oct 2020.

⁸ "Letter from Culture Secretary to DCMS Arm's Length Bodies on contested heritage", DCMS, 28 Sep 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-from-culture-secretary-on-hm-government-position-on-contested-heritage>.

⁹ The full list of recipients is as follows: Arts Council England, British Film Institute, British Library, British Museum, Charity Commission, Churches Conservation trust, Historic England, Historic Royal Palaces, Horniman Museum, Imperial War Museum, Museum of the Home, National Archives, National Gallery, National Lottery Communities Fund, National Lottery Heritage Fund, National Museums Liverpool, National Portrait Gallery, Natural History Museum, Royal Armouries, Royal Museums Greenwich, Royal Parks, Science Museum Group, Sir John Soane's Museum, Tate Gallery, V&A Museum and Wallace Collection.

“History is ridden with moral complexity. Statues and other historical objects were created by generations with different perspectives and understandings of right and wrong. Some represent figures who have said or done things which we may find deeply offensive and would not defend today. But though we may now disagree with those who created them or who they represent, they play an important role in teaching us about our past, with all its faults.

It is for this reason that the Government does not support the removal of statues or other similar objects. Historic England, as the Government’s adviser on the historic environment, have said that removing difficult and contentious parts of it risks harming our understanding of our collective past. Rather than erasing these objects, we should seek to contextualise or reinterpret them in a way that enables the public to learn about them in their entirety, however challenging this may be. Our aim should be to use them to educate people about all aspects of Britain’s complex past, both good and bad.

As set out in your Management Agreements, I would expect Arm’s Length Bodies’ approach to issues of contested heritage to be consistent with the Government’s position. Further, as publicly funded bodies, you should not be taking actions motivated by activism or politics. The significant support that you receive from the taxpayer is an acknowledgement of the important cultural role you play for the entire country. It is imperative that you continue to act impartially, in line with your publicly funded status, and not in a way that brings this into question. This is especially important as we enter a challenging Comprehensive Spending Review, in which all government spending will rightly be scrutinised.”

The MA has responded¹⁰; their response includes:

“The Museums Association (MA) welcomes the UK Government’s support for museums in England to date, in particular the Job Retention Scheme and the Culture Recovery Fund.

We agree with the Secretary of State’s comments in his recent letter to national museums and cultural bodies that statues and other historical objects “play an important role in teaching us about our past, with all its faults” and that “we should seek to contextualise or reinterpret them in a way that enables the public to learn about them in their entirety”.

The MA has been supporting museums to undertake this work and providing ethical guidance to our members. We would welcome an opportunity to discuss the issue with government.

¹⁰ “Our response to Oliver Dowden’s letter on contested heritage”, https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/collections/our-response-to-oliver-dowdens-letter/?utm_campaign=1819201_02102020&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Museums%20Association&dm_i=2VBX,12ZPD,27LU0M,45M7W,1.

However we are concerned that the Secretary of State's recent letter asks museums to notify the government of any activities in this area; implies that government funding may be withheld if museums do not comply; and denies museums the responsibility to take carefully considered decisions about contested heritage in consultation with staff and their communities.

We feel that this contravenes the long-established principle that national museums and other bodies operate at arm's length from government and are responsible primarily to their trustees."

The MA goes on to emphasise that it is:

"Urging the UK Government to respect the arm's-length principle for museums; and reminding our members across the UK that their responsibility under the Code of Ethics for Museums is to:

- Provide public access to, and meaningful engagement with, museums, collections, and information about collections without discrimination.
- Ensure editorial integrity in programming and interpretation. Resist attempts to influence interpretation or content by particular interest groups, including lenders, donors and funders."

"Anti-capitalism" resources

The Government Guidance, "Plan your relationships, sex and health curriculum"¹¹, which is intended "[...] to help school leaders plan, develop and implement the new statutory curriculum", includes the following:

"There are many external resources available to support the delivery of your lessons, these include:

- lesson plans
- complete curriculum plans
- other classroom materials such as videos or posters

Any materials you intend to use should align with the teaching requirements set out in the statutory guidance.

Many organisations actively promote external resources to schools. You should assess all resources carefully to ensure they are age appropriate, meet the outcome of the relevant part of the curriculum, and are in line with your school's legal duties in relation to impartiality.

¹¹ DfE. "Plan your relationships, sex and health curriculum", 24 Sep 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/plan-your-relationships-sex-and-health-curriculum#choosing-resources>.

Schools should not under any circumstances use resources produced by organisations that take extreme political stances on matters. This is the case even if the material itself is not extreme, as the use of it could imply endorsement or support of the organisation. Examples of extreme political stances include, but are not limited to:

- a publicly stated desire to abolish or overthrow democracy, capitalism, or to end free and fair elections
- opposition to the right of freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of assembly or freedom of religion and conscience
- the use or endorsement of racist, including antisemitic, language or communications
- the encouragement or endorsement of illegal activity
- a failure to condemn illegal activities done in their name or in support of their cause, particularly violent actions against people or property”

As commentators have said, the majority of these points is uncontroversial. However, including anti-capitalism in here raises concerns, especially, for example, in teaching about the environment.

As Owen Jones¹² argues in *The Guardian*, “The Tories' ban on anti-capitalist resources in schools is an attempt to stifle dissent”, and he makes some strong points about free speech and control (and likens this move to Clause 28).

Similar arguments appear in *The Conversation*, where Jennifer Luff¹³ writes:

“Most of these extreme principles – racism, antisemitism and authoritarianism – are uncontroversial. But the list also includes opposition to capitalism: the ‘desire to overthrow democracy, capitalism, or the end to free and fair elections’.”

She argues that:

¹² Owen Jones “The Tories' ban on anti-capitalist resources in schools is an attempt to stifle dissent”, *The Guardian*, 1 Oct 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/oct/01/ban-anti-capitalist-resources-schools-stifle-dissent-orban-hungary>.

¹³ Jennifer Luff “Anticapitalism wasn’t banned in English classrooms during the cold war – why is it now?”, *The Conversation*, 1 Oct 2020, https://theconversation.com/anticapitalism-wasnt-banned-in-english-classrooms-during-the-cold-war-why-is-it-now-147121?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20October%20%202020%20-%201747616923&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20October%20%202020%20-%201747616923+CID_99f34cc079b39f515109151999139282&utm_source=campaign_monitor_uk&utm_term=Anticapitalism%20wasnt%20banned%20in%20English%20classrooms%20during%20the%20cold%20war%20%20why%20is%20it%20now.

“[...] the Department of Education’s new policy goes much further than any British government during the cold war, when communist movements around the world had successfully overthrown capitalist regimes.”

and ends with a number of key issues:

“So why target anticapitalism? The curricular guidance applies only to the “relationships, health, and sex curriculum”. Feminists have long insisted that sex and relationships have everything to do with capitalism and democracy, but it’s hard to imagine that fears of feminist propaganda motivated the change.

On the other hand, movements such as Occupy and Extinction Rebellion have attracted mass followings with their systematic critiques of capitalism, inequality and environmental crisis. The appeal of such movements to young people may have motivated the government to act [...]

School curricula have become flashpoints for populist regimes around the world. Is the UK government following this trend?”

In a lengthy – and wide-ranging – interview¹⁴, Gus John¹⁵ talks to IRR’s Liz Fekete about the potential of this guidance. He argues that:

“Any teacher teaching RHSE who does not assist their students in understanding the impact of COVID on global capitalism, while challenging them to consider what this means for the world order that might emerge from this crisis, would be negligent in my view.”

and goes on to say:

“The guidelines as framed do not prevent imaginative teachers from doing or continuing to do what I have outlined above, except that the DfE’s ideological thought police would be on the lookout for teachers who by their use of particular material would be deemed to be failing to demonstrate ‘political impartiality’ as Gavin Williamson would have it. Worse yet, the guidance states: ‘Schools should not under any

¹⁴ “Clipping the wings of Black Lives Matter? An interview with Gus John”, Institute of Race Relations, 2020, https://irr.org.uk/article/clipping-the-wings-of-black-lives-matter-an-interview-with-gus-john/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=an_interview_with_britains_first_black_education_director_gus_john&utm_term=2020-10-12.

¹⁵ “Professor Gus John is a lifelong campaigner for children’s education rights, a visiting professor at Coventry University and associate professor at the UCL Institute of Education. In 1999, he co-founded the Communities Empowerment Network (now INCLUDE, which he currently chairs), a charity that provides advocacy and representation for excluded students and their families. He was the first black director of education in the UK (1989-1996) as director of education and leisure services in the London Borough of Hackney.” [Taken from: https://irr.org.uk/article/clipping-the-wings-of-black-lives-matter-an-interview-with-gus-john/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=an_interview_with_britains_first_black_education_director_gus_john&utm_term=2020-10-12].

circumstances use resources produced by organisations that take extreme political stances on matters. This is the case even if the material itself is not extreme, as the use of it could imply endorsement or support of the organisation'. The government has not proscribed Black Lives Matter (BLM) or Extinction Rebellion (ER). The legal position is therefore that it cannot debar schools from using curricular material which teachers in their professional judgment deem satisfactory and age-appropriate."

Abbreviations and acronyms

COSLA = Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
DCMS = Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
DfE = Department for Education
IRR = Institute of Race Relations
JRF = Joseph Rowntree Foundation
LEP = Local Enterprise Partnership
MA = Museums Association
RHSE = Relationship, Health and Sex Education
RSA = Royal Society of Arts

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