

**The Highland Council**  
**CITY OF INVERNESS AREA COMMITTEE**  
**10 SEPTEMBER 2015**

Agenda Item	17a
Report No	CIA/47/15

**Inverness City Heritage Trust**

**Report by Inverness City Area Manager**

**Summary**

This report informs Members on the work of Inverness City Heritage Trust (ICHT) during the financial years 2014/15. Particular attention is given to the total grant allocation to properties in Inverness Riverside and Crown Conservation Areas to date and during 2014-15. Members are asked to note the work of the Trust in partnership with Inverness College (UHI) and Historic Scotland with regard to raising awareness of traditional building skills and materials amongst professionals, practitioners, local contractors and property owners. Members are also asked to note the work of the Trust with The Highland Council with regards to the Academy Street Townscape Heritage (TH) Project.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 Inverness City Heritage Trust is an independent charitable company limited by guarantee which was incorporated on 16 June 2004. The Trust was initially set up by the Highland Council and Historic Scotland to take a strategic view of the repair and maintenance needs of the buildings forming the historic core of the city and to co-ordinate a programme of conservation work funded by grant assistance. The Trust was formally launched in May 2005 and on 03 June 2008 Inverness City Heritage Trust was designated as a Conservation Body by Scottish Ministers.
- 1.2 The Trust also gives advice to building owners, produces publications and helps to organise events and exhibitions for people interested in the history of buildings and architecture in Inverness.
- 1.3 The Trust works closely with partner organisations around Scotland namely: Aberdeen City Heritage Trust, Dundee Historic Environment Trust, Edinburgh World Heritage, Glasgow City Heritage Trust and Stirling City Heritage Trust. The Trust has also established good partnership working with a number of like-minded organisations within Inverness, to the benefit of mutual strategic objectives.

**2. Funding and Company Review**

- 2.1 The Trust had committed funding from the Scottish Executive through Historic Scotland for the period 2012-15. The Trust was allocated £600,000 for its capital grant scheme and £150,000 for revenue costs. An additional £82,386 was approved by Historic Scotland in early 2015 bringing the total for three years to £682,386.

- 2.2 Inverness City Heritage Trust has a voluntary Board of 10 trustees. Three of the Trustees are nominated representatives of The Highland Council, and there is one representative from each of the following organisations: Inverness Architectural Association, Inverness Chamber of Commerce, Inverness Civic Trust and The Inverness Chapter of The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. In addition there are three individual trustees. Trustees currently representing the Highland Council are as follows:
- Cllr. James Gray (Chair)
  - Cllr. Kenneth MacLeod
  - Cllr. Donald Kerr
- 2.3 The Trust has one part time employee, the Project Officer. The role of the Project Officer is to carry out the day to day management of the Inverness City Heritage Trust, together with the delivery of the Project's main aims.

### **3. Achievements and Performance 2014-15**

- 3.1 Since 2005 the Trust has awarded grants totalling over £2.6 Million to over 230 projects in the Inverness Riverside and Crown Conservation Areas. The Trust's grant assisted projects have helped to keep alive and raise awareness of traditional building skills and materials amongst local contractors and property owners.

In accordance with the offer from Historic Scotland, accepted on 12th March 2012, grant allocation gave priority to projects which contributed to wider urban regeneration, with the overall priority being to bring disused buildings back into economic use as businesses or to be used as affordable accommodation. The second priority was to bring dilapidated buildings back up to an acceptable standard, with deprived areas of the city remaining a priority for assistance. Grants are offered to promote, preserve and enhance a conservation area.

- 3.2 In 2014/15, £498,881 was allocated to 16 projects across the city. The Trust offers a percentage grant to owners therefore the real project costs for these 16 projects was in excess of £960k.
- 3.3 In 2014-15 a total of £49,052 was spent on management/ running of the Trust.
- 3.4 The Historic Scotland grant to ICHT covers 100% of the annual income and annual expenditure. The Highland Council does not give a grant to Inverness City Heritage Trust in monetary terms; the Trust receives support in kind in the form of office accommodation. The Highland Council provides administrative support at Trust board meetings – full recovery of the cost of this service is met by ICHT on a quarterly basis.
- 3.5 This year the Trust has been a key partner in a number of strategic projects supporting prominent elements of the city's architectural heritage including work to comprehensively repair and restore two prominent city landmarks at 58-64 Academy Street (£208,455) and Fraser Darling House (ongoing - £47,447), a building that has lain vacant for 10 years following the departure of its previous owners, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH).

Many of the grants in 2014/15 have been for commercial properties in the city centre including a grant for the conversion of two vacant 18<sup>th</sup> century vernacular town houses at 109/111 Church Street (last used as offices) to city centre holiday accommodation for the National Trust for Scotland (NTS).

Other grant work has focussed on larger properties in private and community use at St John's Church Hall and Annfield Road. The Trust has also awarded a large grant towards the restoration, repair and reuse of Merkinch Welfare Hall (£162,574), a multi funded project that will have wide reaching benefits for the local community and wider city of Inverness.

- 3.6 The Trust also commissioned two separate building studies during the year, the first an independent options appraisal to consider the potential future uses of the Midmills Building and site – built as Inverness Royal Academy in 1895 and used as a campus building for Inverness College (UHI) until the Summer 2015. This report also looked briefly at the viability and costs of various options and the report is freely available to the general public through the ICHT website or by calling the office.

The second study was on the mosaic murals at the former AI Welders building at 96 Academy Street (a priority project for the Academy Street Townscape Heritage (TH) scheme) by a specialist mosaic restorer. The four mosaic panels were installed at the building in 1896 and over the years have suffered from building movement and general weathering and one panel has now been completely lost. It is hoped that with funding from the Townscape Heritage (TH) project for Academy Street, the mosaics can be restored as part of the building repair work.

- 3.7 The Trust has established a profile within Inverness as a source of advice and funding for historic buildings. Since 2010, the Trust has worked with Historic Scotland and Inverness College (UHI) and contributed financial help and advice to deliver the Conservation Master Class series for building professionals and practitioners. In 2014, the evening lecture series was condensed into a one day conference event entitled "The adaptive re-use of historic buildings" which was held on 09 May 2014. In 2015, the conference event was entitled "Building Traditional Skills" and was held on 15 May 2015.

In 2014/15 the Trust has been in discussion with the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) with regard to setting up a Traditional Buildings Forum for the Highlands. Representatives from the Trust met with CITB in February 2015 and travelled to Edinburgh in March 2015 to attend the Traditional Buildings Skills Forum AGM. It is hoped that the work done to date with colleagues from Historic Scotland and Inverness College (UHI) can be built upon in the coming years through links with colleagues and other forums around the country.

- 3.8 The Trust has produced a Historic Trail for Inverness and is also responsible for the commissioning of "Blue Plaques" for the city. The Trail has proved to be extremely popular and has been widely distributed in the Highland area and beyond. Blue plaques are now in place at 7 locations in the city and in 2014, two further plaques were unveiled at the Northern Meeting Park – the Worlds first purpose built Highland Games venue. In 2015/16, it is hoped to add a

further plaque to mark the offices of Alexander Ross, Highland architect (1834-1925).

#### **4.0 The Future of Inverness City Heritage Trust**

- 4.1 Following an application for future funding to Historic Scotland in March 2014, the Trust was successful in securing £1.25M of future funding for the period 2015-20. This money is dependent on the Trust and The Highland Council being partners in the Academy Street Townscape Heritage scheme (£946,841 of the £1.25M budget to be directly invested in the Academy Street scheme). The remainder of the budget shall be invested in other city centre properties.

The Trust hopes to build on this partnership with The Highland Council by involving the local community, Inverness BID and other key city agencies in bringing forward a scheme of real change in this part of the city centre.

- 4.2 The Trust maintains an interest in Viewhill House, the Eastgate Hostel and a number of other buildings at risk in Inverness; recognising their architectural heritage and historical significance despite their perilous condition. These projects and the commitment of the Trust to focus continued attention on the city centre align with the priority of regeneration as per the 2015-20 Historic Scotland grant offer to ICHT.

- 4.3 The Trust aims to develop and provide an effective service and will continue to explore opportunities for partnership with other organisations for capital and revenue funding.

#### **5. Implications**

- 5.1 Resources – Inverness City Heritage Trust is entirely funded by Historic Scotland. The Highland Council provides in kind support but all staffing and administration costs are recharged to the Trust by The Highland Council.

Applications for grant are considered quarterly and any award of grant and the percentage offered are made at the discretion of the Board of Directors subject to available funds and eligibility criteria being met.

In recognition of new priorities in terms of regeneration, the Trust has taken the hard decision to suspend the residential grants scheme until at least 2017. The Trust will therefore not be accepting any grant applications for residential properties for the next two years. The remaining 25% of the Trust's budget will be used to support other projects within the city centre that can demonstrate an economic focus or contribute to the wider regeneration of Inverness.

- 5.2 Legal – Inverness City Heritage Trust has its own legal advisors at Macleod & MacCallum. Inverness City Heritage Trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee therefore all of the Trust Directors are registered under the Trust name at Companies House. The Trust is a registered Conservation Body with the Scottish Government which allows us to place legal burdens on grant aided property for up to 10 years to protect the investment from public funds.

- 5.3 Financial – Inverness City Heritage Trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee therefore our accounts are independently audited annually and a copy of this report is lodged at Companies House and with OSCR. The day to day bookkeeping for the Trust is carried out by an independent bookkeeper, Leslie Watson and the Trust’s auditors are Frame Kennedy.
- 5.4 Equalities – Applications for grant are based on the property they relate to rather than the applicant therefore the grant scheme is open to all to apply. Grants are not means tested.
- 5.5 Climate Change/Carbon Clever – Repairs to the existing built fabric are, by their nature, more environmentally sustainable than using new source materials. The grant scheme aims to cover the difference in cost of using a traditional material such as slate from a local source e.g. second hand slate rather than importing new material from central Europe, North America or Asia.
- 5.6 Risk – Over the past few years the Trust has seen a slowing in the uptake of grant due to the lack of available additional finance for owners wishing to carry out repair work (to fund the owners % of the cost). To counter this, the funding allocation for Inverness City Heritage Trust is given over a 5 year period rather than having a specific annual budget. This will allow us to work up schemes over a longer period of time.

We are also working with owners to try and identify other sources of funding available to them and also working internally with The Highland Council, Empty Homes Initiative, Scottish Government and the Heritage Lottery Fund to pull together a combined funding source that can offer applicants an enhanced grant percentage rate in the City Centre.

**Recommendations:**

The Committee is asked to Comment and Note:

1. the contributions made by the Inverness City Heritage Trust in delivering a programme of conservation work funded by grant assistance in Inverness since 2005;
2. the work carried out in partnership with Inverness College, Historic Scotland and others to deliver two conferences for building professionals/ practitioners. Also the work with CITB Scotland and other building professionals to try and find realistic options for retention and repair of important city buildings and features;
3. the current situation with regard to future funding from Historic Scotland for Inverness City Heritage Trust.

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Date: 21 August 2014

Background Papers: n/a