

**The Highland Council
City of Inverness Area Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Inverness City Arts Working Group** held in the Chamber, Town House, Inverness, on Wednesday 14 October 2015 at 11.45 am.

Present:

Mr K Gowans (Chair)
Mrs H Carmichael (Provost)
Mrs B McAllister

Mr T Prag
Mr G Ross

Officials in attendance:

Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager
Mr J Harbison, Principal Planner, Development and Infrastructure Service
Mr C Howell, Head of Infrastructure, Development and Infrastructure Service
Mrs A MacNeil, Senior Corporate Communications Officer
Ms C Shankland, Project Manager, High Life Highland, Chief Executive's Office
Mr A Todd, Area Planning Manager South, Development and Infrastructure Service
Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Corporate Development Service

Also in Attendance:

Dr V Beattie, UHI
Mr K Huneck, KHBT Engineering
Mr D Taylor, Creative Scotland
Mr S Westbrook, Economist

1. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declaration of Interest

Mr G Ross - Items 5 and 6 (non-financial)
Mr K Gowans – Item 5 (financial)

3. Exclusion of the Public

The Group **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50(A) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public should be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

There had been circulated Draft Minutes of the previous Meeting held on 6 August 2015 the terms of which were **NOTED**.

The Inverness City Area Manager informed the Working Group that:-

- Item 3: A letter had been issued to the former City Leader Mr Brown;
- Item 7: It was confirmed that Officers were looking to move forward with a structured approach in terms of 'The Gathering Place' project and a report had been circulated in this regard. Public consultation was critical to the overall process and the outcome of this would inform and enable a final decision to be taken in respect of siting. Work was also progressing in respect of the Android and Iphone Apps. The Gaelic Trail was being actioned with Planning through the City Signage project;
- Item 8: the City of Inverness Area Committee had approved the recommendation to fund a Feasibility Study; and
- Item 10: a considerable sum had been recovered from Creative Scotland in support of the Mercure project.

The Working Group **NOTED** the update.

5. The Gathering Place Site Options Appraisal

Declaration of Interest – Mr G Ross declared a non-financial interest in this item on the grounds of having a close relative who was a local artist and Mr K Gowans declared a financial interest in this item on the grounds of being an employee of the University of the Highlands and Islands but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, both concluded that their interest did not preclude their involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No ICArts10/15 by the Inverness City Area Manager dated 1 October 2015. The report set out issues relating to siting, design, cost implications, economic impact and planning which would enable Members to consider site options for the Gathering Place.

Prior to discussing the report, the Inverness City Area Manager explained that the Working Group was being asked to determine a preferred site and this would be subject to and informed by public and stakeholder consultation. However, concern was expressed that it could be perceived by the public that that the site had already been predetermined prior to the public consultation and the need for a decision on the preferred site was queried. The Inverness City Area Manager explained that identifying a preferred site, which was in no way a final decision, would enable the project to be moved forward with expediency in terms of providing detailed designs and costings whilst building in sufficient scope for the site to be changed should the consultation indicate that the preferred site was not supported. He explained that by determining a preferred site, a full consultation process could be commenced which would fully engage with the public and stakeholders and enable their views to be taken into account with regard to the final location. He further explained that to provide a detailed design appraisal for two sites would be too costly and this approach would allow the project to be progressed carefully subject to the consultation.

The Chairman further indicated that the Working Group ethos of collaborative and inclusive working should be continued and on that basis he stressed the importance of ensuring that the public was informed and consulted on all public arts projects.

Representatives were present to speak to the report and Karsten Huneck of KHBT Engineering made a presentation during which he outlined the design and maintenance of the structure; the cost and size implications; technical considerations; and pros and cons of the two sites being considered (Friars Shott and Cathedral). Steve Westbrook presented his findings of the Impact Assessment that he had undertaken during which he outlined potential marketing opportunities and benefits of the project; analysis of the two sites being considered; and the potential impacts.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- It was suggested that consideration be given to a number of issues including building a shelter/roof over part of the structure; the safety aspects and whether supervision would be required; feasibility of making the structure tilt with fewer people; the structure comprising a glass bottom; and that there should be lighting on the structure;
- In view of the fact that it would not be feasible for the structure to be supervised, it was suggested that there could be an honesty box to help with ongoing maintenance costs;
- With regard to the size of the structure and visual impact, it was explained that the size would be dictated by the budget, which was currently fixed at £300,000, with a small contingency available, however the need to stay within budget was stressed;
- It was recommended that, should the project be successful, consideration should be given to protecting the intellectual property rights with particular regard to merchandising ;
- The need to give consideration to the impact of the location of the structure on the local Angling Association was highlighted;
- With regard to planning, it was stated that two planning applications should not be submitted in parallel in respect of the two sites as in doing so the Planning Committee would then determine the site. Therefore, it was recommended that a preferred site be identified and a single planning application submitted thereafter. It was further indicated that there were no planning policy issues in respect of the two sites but that no technical consultations had yet been carried out;
- With regard to location, it was acknowledged that the structure would fit with the Cathedral site, however, a number of Members expressed a preference for Friars Shott in view of the fact that it would increase visitors and help to regenerate this area of the City. It was felt that the tidal issues could be viewed as positive in that the scenery would regularly change which would be more dynamic and could create more interaction. In addition, it was also highlighted that there had been increased footfall in this area of the City due to the flood alleviation works and it was felt that this, combined with the added feature of the Gathering Place would further enhance the area and enable a walking trail to be developed. It was suggested that there was a need to give consideration to where the biggest impact would be created and to use this as an opportunity to demonstrate the positive impact that public art could make to an area. It was also indicated that there was already a

seating area at Friars Shott which could be utilised as a picnic area. However, concern was expressed that the structure would not be big enough at Friars Shott and therefore impact would be limited. It was explained that delivery of the structure within the budget would be challenging and it was unlikely that the structure could be made bigger for the Friars Shott area within the current budget but determining a preferred site would enable detailed design plans and associated costings to be worked up.

Following discussion, the Working Group:-

- i. **AGREED** that Friars Shott be designated as the preferred site and to instruct officials to provide a detailed design appraisal for presentation to the next meeting and **AGREED** that the final siting of the project would be subject to and informed by public and stakeholder consultation;
- ii. **NOTED** a decision on the length of the structure would be recommended once budgets were more clearly established; and
- iii. **NOTED** that a single planning application would be required and submitted following approval of the detailed design.

At this point, the meeting was adjourned at 1.30 pm for lunch and reconvened at 2.00 pm.

6. River Ness Flood Alleviation Scheme Public Art Project

Declaration of Interest – Mr G Ross declared a non-financial interest in this item on the grounds of having a close relative who was a local artist but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No ICArts11/15 by the Inverness City Area Manager dated 1 October 2015. The report updated Members on the progress made since the last meeting across the five commissioned projects.

An update was provided at the meeting on the current status of the following projects – Sculptural Destination; Children’s Riverside Feature; The Trail; and Rest Spaces. In addition, an update was also given on poetry and stonecarving workshops that had been held as part of the community engagement process.

Continuing, the Project Manager explained that as a decision had now been made in respect of the preferred site of ‘The Gathering Place’ project, the public consultation could now be taken forward. The Working Group indicated the need to ensure maximum public engagement and therefore suggested that the Project Manager and lead artists meet with community councils, access groups, Inverness BID, community centres and other stakeholders. In terms of the wider public, it was suggested that an information stand could be set up in the Eastgate Shopping Centre, and although welcome, it was highlighted that this would need to be at the weekend to ensure maximum exposure and concern was expressed that one day would not be sufficient. In addition, the need for the information to be located nearer those directly impacted was also indicated. This was

acknowledged and it was explained that the information stand could be located for a period of time at a public building such as the Museum to enable the information to be accessed by the public. The need for a reasonable period of consultation to enable full public engagement was also stressed. The Working Group also indicated the need for responses to be documented and it was therefore suggested that a questionnaire should be developed to facilitate this process. It was therefore requested that a Community Engagement Plan be developed as quickly as possible and circulated to the Group via email.

With regard to the Children's Riverside Feature, the Chairman indicated that it had originally been agreed to fund 0.2 FTE teacher but this had not been feasible due to teaching constraints and limited capacity. Therefore, Dr Valerie Beattie, Programme Development Manager, Culture and Creative Industries at the University of Highland and Islands (UHI) had been approached to take this initiative forward. Dr Beattie was in attendance at the meeting and she was invited to outline her plans in respect of progressing the project. In doing so, Dr Beattie explained that she envisaged the UHI students working with the S4-S6 pupils by mentoring them to help bring their creativity to the fore and to facilitate and enable their ideas. Both students and pupils would be further supported by a UHI member of staff who had experience of working with pupils in an art context and on that basis she did not foresee any issues with moving this project forward.

The need for the project to also be educational with learning outcomes as well as fun was highlighted as were the mentoring and career development opportunities for students and staff. This approach was welcomed by the Working Group. The Working Group was further assured that the project would be extended to as many pupils from as wide a geographical area across the City as possible. It was further confirmed that a Brief was available for the project but that this would need to be updated to take account of the new approach being taken. However, it was further highlighted that the brief should not be too prescriptive to enable the project to be organic and taken forward by the participating pupils.

Following discussion, the Working Group considered the implications highlighted in the report and:-

- i. **NOTED** the plans for public consultation and development work being undertaken on the Children's Riverside Feature, The Trail and Rest Spaces; and
- ii. **AGREED** that a Community Engagement Plan be developed and circulated to the Working Group via email.

At this point, Mrs H Carmichael left the meeting (2.30 pm).

7. Financial Monitoring

There had been circulated Report No ICArts 12/15 by the Inverness City Area Manager dated 29 September 2015 setting out the revenue monitoring position for the period to 31 August 2015 and showed the actual expenditure to date.

The Working Group **NOTED** the report.

8. **Mercure Project – update**

Members were invited to note that the hotel group were in the process of considering a proposal for a new project however matters were on hold pending acquisition of the Inverness property, set to take place in October 2015.

In relation to the previous project (Ramada), the Working Group **NOTED** that the sum of £28,000 had been paid to the Common Good Fund by Creative Scotland and this settled all outstanding balances.

9. **Press relations and forthcoming PR opportunities and risks**

The Senior Corporate Communications Officer was in attendance and during a short presentation she advised that a Communications Plan was in place for the project and had recently been updated to take account of the lead artists key work programme and to coincide with key launches, community events/workshops and the next public consultation. The Plan had also been updated to include changes in the Administration's protocol and inclusion of a stock statement of all news releases on the funders and project partners. To date the Plan had delivered 20 actions and a further 14 potential actions had been identified for completion over the coming year.

There was a dedicated page in respect of the project on the Council website, and there was scope for a direct link to the page to be added to the Council's homepage and this was welcomed. There was also provision on the web page for feedback to be provided and the Working Group was of the view that comments should be encouraged through this route. It was also suggested that social media should be used as tool to drive web traffic to the project page to increase both local and national public awareness of the work being undertaken. It was further suggested that a poster campaign could also be undertaken, with these being located within local public buildings and schools, to promote awareness of the project web page and encourage feedback.

With regard to the consultation, the Senior Corporate Communications Officer stressed the importance of being clear on what the public was being asked for their opinion of and this was acknowledged by the Group. It was further highlighted that there should be a cohesive consultation approach taken to fully communicate and inform the public of the project and to then seek their views on this thereafter. The Senior Corporate Communications Officer explained that there was an opportunity to work with the Council's web team to reformat the information that had been presented at the Public Art Programme launch into a more user friendly document which could be utilised to better inform the public of the project detail.

Following discussion, the Working Group **NOTED** the update and **AGREED** that:-

- i. a direct link to the project page be added to the homepage of the Council's website; that social media be deployed to increase and direct traffic to the project page; and that feedback on the project be encouraged through the webpage;
- ii. a poster campaign be conducted in order to raise awareness of the

- iii. project and providing information on the webpage; and working in partnership with the Council's web team, the information presented at the Public Art Programme launch be reformatted into a more user friendly document/accessible document.

10. Date of next Meeting

It was highlighted that the Working Group could not proceed with the next meeting date, which had been scheduled for Thursday 17 December 2015, as this conflicted with the meeting of full Council.

It was therefore **AGREED** that an electronic diary invite be issued with an alternative date to be held in December 2015.

The meeting ended at 2.45 pm.