

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

Minutes of Meeting of the **Inverness City Arts Working Group** held in the First Floor Committee Room, Town House, Inverness on Thursday 10 December 2015 at 9.30 am.

Present:

Mr K Gowans
Mrs H Carmichael
Mr T Prag

In attendance:

Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager
Ms S Barrie, Acting Programme Manager, Development and Infrastructure Service
Ms C Shankland, Exhibitions Officer, High Life Highland
Ms A MacNeill, Senior Corporate Communications Officer, Chief Executive's Office
Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator, Corporate Development Service

Mr K Gowans in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs B McAllister and Mr G Ross.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Working Group **NOTED** the following declarations of interest:-

Item 5 – Mr K Gowans (financial)

3. Exclusion of the Public

The Working 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 Minutes of the previous Meeting held on 14 October 2015.

Members were informed that:-

- Item 5: The Gathering Place Site Options Appraisal - a progress report, including an update on the detailed designed phase, would be provided under item 5 on the agenda;

- Item 6: River Ness Flood Alleviation Scheme Public Art Project - a Community Engagement Plan was being developed and further information would be provided under item 5 on the agenda, particularly in relation to the roles and responsibilities of the key players;
- Item 8: Mercure Project – a further update would be provided under item 7 on the agenda; and
- Item 9: Press Relations and forthcoming PR Opportunities and Risks – the project web page was as up to date as it could be until such time as new information on the forthcoming exhibition and public consultation could be added. Until there was activity on the project, such as the exhibition, there would not be a direct link to the Council's homepage. However, there were links under both Consultations and Surveys and Community Life and Leisure.

The Working Group **NOTED** the Minutes and the associated update.

5. River Ness Flood Alleviation Scheme Public Art Project

Declaration of Interest: Mr K Gowans declared a financial interest in the Children's Feature project 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, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No ICArts/13/15 dated 3 December 2015 by the Inverness City Area Manager which set out the progress made since the last meeting and the next steps planned for community engagement.

The Inverness City Area Manager provided an overview of the project management team structure and explained that Ms S Barrie, Acting Programme Manager, had been appointed to take the lead on project management issues. This was timely as the project moved from the design phase to consultation and delivery. Clarification was provided regarding the purpose of the consultation and it was confirmed that there would be an opportunity to discuss the outcome thereafter.

Ms Barrie summarised her role and drew attention to the new dashboard report format which was intended to present the key information in a clear concise manner. She then provided an update on the status of the various projects, during which the following main points were raised:-

River Connections

The majority of the installation had been completed with the exception of some of the seating. The Inverness City Area Manager explained that there was now a formal verification process in place to ensure that the projects were completed as specified. In response to a question, it was confirmed that the project was on budget and the additional installation costs formed part of a contract between the artist and a sub-contractor employed to carry out some of the work.

Sculptural Destination

The original location, Friars Shott, was the preferred site for The Gathering Place and it was suggested that consideration be given, in principle, to an alternative site on the

riverside opposite the Mercure Hotel. This would require a revised design as the design for Friars Shott was site specific.

Members emphasised the importance of not compromising the Rest Spaces project although there was no reason why some projects could not share space. The collective experience was as important as the individual projects and they all had to work together. In that regard, the Inverness City Area Manager confirmed that a plan showing the proposed location of all the art projects would be produced for the next meeting of the Working Group and it was suggested that this should form part of the public consultation documentation. It would be helpful to see a design for the Mercure site and it was suggested that the artist be asked to provide a visual for the next meeting. In response to a question, it was confirmed that the Friars Shott site was still an option.

The Gathering Place

As previously advised, the project would not move to the detailed design phase until after the public consultation. However, an assurance was given that the right information was available to allow officers to design the consultation. In relation to any potential slippage, Members emphasised that there were no cost implications and it was more important to get the project right.

The Trail

It having been confirmed that the project was on programme, the Exhibitions Officer provided an update on work to connect The Trail with signage throughout the city and ensure that there was a coherent system. Members welcomed the links that were being made.

Rest Spaces

Outline proposals were in place for three rest spaces but the fourth, which was originally going to be sited at Friars Shott, had yet to be determined. It was highlighted that all of the rest spaces were different and it might be necessary to change the design to fit another part of the river.

Children's Feature

The appointment of the Education Co-ordinator was almost finalised. Their role was to engage with the students and formulate the Artist's Brief, the target for which was the end of February 2016. Thereafter, an advertisement calling for artists would be placed.

Significant coordination was required in a short timescale and Members emphasised the need to be expeditious. In response to a question, it was confirmed that discussions had taken place with the Council's Procurement Team regarding the appointment of the Education Coordinator and they were content with the process. In relation to potential sites, there were health and safety issues to take into account and it was suggested that consideration be given to a site up-river, away from busy roads, such as the promenade between Eden Court and the riverside. The Inverness City Area Manager confirmed that there was nothing to prohibit a site away from the floodwall area that was near the river.

Thereafter, clarification having been provided in relation to responsibility for maintenance issues, the Working Group welcomed the new dashboard report format and **NOTED**:-

- i. the plans for public consultation;
- ii. the development work being undertaken on all projects; and
- iii. the need for Maintenance Plans and cost implications.

It was further **AGREED**, in principle and without prejudice to the possible use of the Friars Shott site, to consider the Mercure riverside site as an alternative location for the Sculptural Destination project, subject to the Rest Spaces project not being compromised, and that the artist be asked to provide a visual of the revised design for the next meeting of the Working Group.

6. Financial Monitoring

There had been circulated Report No ICArts/14/15 dated 2 December 2015 by the Inverness City Area Manager which set out the revenue monitoring position for the period to 31 October 2015 and showed the actual expenditure to date.

The Working Group scrutinised and **NOTED** the content of the report.

7. Mercure Project - Update

The Inverness City Area Manager gave a verbal update during which it was explained that the hotel group was now considering a bigger project than had originally been envisaged, as part of an investment programme for the hotel. Creative Scotland were supportive of the project in principle and it tied in well with the City Centre Development Brief, plans for the Victorian Market and proposed improvements to Station Square and Academy Street.

Following discussion, the Working Group **NOTED** the position and that an update would be provided to the next meeting.

8. Press relations and forthcoming PR opportunities and risks

The Senior Corporate Communications Officer gave a verbal update during which it was explained that she had met with the Exhibitions Officer to discuss the outline content for the forthcoming project exhibition. A high profile area in the Eastgate Centre had been booked for Saturday 23 January 2016 and it was proposed that there be a photo opportunity that morning. It was intended to issue a news release and distribute posters week beginning 11 January. The exhibition would run at Inverness Museum and Art Gallery for four weeks from week beginning 25 January. In addition, it was proposed that there be a Facebook event, involving both Members and officers, week beginning 15 February. The questions posed during the event would replicate those in the public survey and a draft questionnaire had been prepared which would be circulated to Members of the Working Group for comment. Hard copies of the questionnaire would be available at the Eastgate Centre and the Museum but it would also be available online.

In relation to the River Connections project, a draft press release had been prepared. However, the artist needed to verify the work before the project could be launched.

Following discussion, during which Members emphasised the need to consult as widely as possible, the Working Group **NOTED** the proposals and **AGREED** that:-

- i. Members' comments on the draft survey questionnaire be consolidated and a final draft circulated for approval;
- ii. subject to approval by High Life Highland in relation to its premises, and if practicable, posters and questionnaires be placed in public places throughout the City of Inverness Area such as Service Points, libraries, community centres and the Aquadome;
- iii. in consultation with the Inverness BID Manager, arrangements be made for a business evening event/presentation for BID members, TBID members, the Civic Trust and the Chamber of Commerce on Friday 22 January 2016, failing which Thursday 23 January, at the Mercure Hotel, if available;
- iv. the possibility of holding an all-Members briefing at Council Headquarters on Thursday 21 January 2016 be explored; and
- v. a Working Group briefing be arranged as soon as practicable to allow Members to feed in to the presentation/exhibition.

9. Date of next Meeting

The Working Group **NOTED** that the next meeting would take place on Thursday 11 February 2016 at 9.00 am. The venue was to be confirmed but it was hoped that the Provost's Meeting Room would be available.

It was further **NOTED** that meetings of the Working Group would take place on the following other dates in 2016:-

Thursday 14 April
Wednesday 22 June
Wednesday 31 August
Thursday 6 October
Wednesday 21 December

The meeting concluded at 11.20 am.