

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

Minutes of Meeting of the **Inverness City Arts Working Group** held in the Second Floor Committee Room, Town House, Inverness on Thursday 11 February 2016 at 2.00 pm.

Present:

Mr K Gowans
Mrs B McAllister
Mr T Prag
Mr G Ross

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
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Corporate Development Service

Mr K Gowans in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mrs H Carmichael.

2. Declarations of Interest

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

Item 5 – Mr K Gowans (financial) and Mr G Ross (non-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. Action from Previous Minutes

There had been circulated Minutes of the Working Group held on 10 December 2015.

Members were provided with an update regarding the Mercure Project and discussions which had taken place with the hotel's current owners. In exploring how this project might progress Members were of the view that there was merit in taking a proactive approach should the opportunity arise for the project to be developed further. The City Area Manager, having explained the mechanism for funding such a

project required the approval of any new budget by the City of Inverness Area Committee, undertook to keep the Working Group informed of developments.

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.

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 ICArts/1/16 dated 5 February 2016 by the Inverness City Area Manager which updated Members on the progress made since the last meeting across the five commissioned projects.

The Inverness City Area Manager provided an overview and confirmed that all governance was in place. In turn, Ms S Barrie, Acting Programme Manager, also explained that, until the public consultation had been concluded, it was not possible to move to the detailed design phase. However, she provided an update on the status of the various projects, during which the following main points were raised:-

River Connections

A meeting had been held with the artist and the seating would be installed by the end of February. It was hoped generally that the project would be completed by March and discussions had taken place regarding maintenance and cleaning, both of which were anticipated to be minimal. In this connection, discussion also took place regarding the siting of the Workers' Memorial at Friars Shott. However, as the detailed design phase for The Gathering Place was still awaited, it was felt that the Workers' Memorial should be delayed to ensure full agreement was in place. In the meantime publicity would still be generated so momentum was not lost and to highlight the Working Group's ongoing firm commitment for the Memorial.

Sculptural Destination

A blue box, storing a pump which had been installed as part of the Flood Prevention works, was now causing a problem with the original location, Friars Shott. The design was site specific so, until a decision was reached on the location, a firm decision as to what would be provided could not be made. There was merit, at an appropriate time in the future, for the Working Group to visit proposed locations and consider which would be most suitable to propose to the artist for them to create a new site specific design.

The Gathering Place

This project could not move forward until after the public consultation was concluded but, in the meantime, Members emphasised the importance of having realistic photos available together with details of the material to be used as previous illustrations had been misleading in terms of scale and colour.

The Trail

Work was continuing in gathering together information as to what the public wanted from this project.

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.

Children's Feature

Discussion took place regarding the detail of the brief as follows:-

- in relation to the installation section, it was suggested that the need to include a water component to the artwork was too prescriptive, might add a technical complication, narrowed the project's potential focus and could have potential ongoing maintenance issues. However, it was also felt that water played a prominent feature of this project and it was important that it connected to the river and, after discussion, the wording remained unchanged;
- there was no mention in the brief in relation to the location. However, this was because, as part of the learning experience, students should consider the advantages and disadvantages of sites in relation to the suggested art work;
- referring to Stage 2 of the Artist's Process (Detailed Proposals of Preferred Option), it was felt the use of the word "numerous" was superfluous and that "diverse" was more appropriate;
- it was confirmed that integrating the public art project with UHI modules was a reasonable outcome to expect and was an important aim to achieve. However, it was accepted that the onus for accomplishing this did not lie with the artist and was the responsibility of appropriate officers to ensure;
- the requirement for the artist to have a formal degree was questioned. While it might demonstrate a level of competence it might discourage other talented artists. Accordingly it was agreed to suggest that a formal degree was "preferred";
- it was hoped student engagement would start during the current term;
- concern was expressed in regard to the delay that some projects had experienced. However, Members were assured that once the consultation was completed, projects would move quickly; and
- Members recognised that it might be necessary, depending on progress, to hold an additional meeting prior to 14 April 2016.

Thereafter, the Working Group:-

- i. **AGREED** the Children's Water Feature Artist Brief, subject to the amendments detailed above;

- ii. **NOTED** the development work being undertaken on all projects;
- iii. **NOTED** the need for maintenance Plans and that a draft composite plan together with options for meeting any maintenance costs being provided as soon as possible once the detailed design phase was concluded;
- iv. **NOTED** the public consultation was taking place and that a report would be presented to the next meeting of the Working Group on 14 April 2016;
- v. **AGREED** to postpone a final decision of the siting of the Workers' Memorial until the Gathering Place project design phase was completed.

6. Financial Monitoring

There had been circulated Report No ICArts/2/16 dated 5 February 2016 by the Inverness City Area Manager which set out the revenue monitoring position for the period to 31 December 2015 and showed the actual expenditure to date.

Work was continuing to ensure projects were able to progress after the Working Group's next meeting and that funds could be drawn down from the various funding partners.

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

7. Press relations and forthcoming PR opportunities and risks

There had been circulated a Briefing Note on the current media coverage by the City Area Manager who also gave a verbal update on the public consultation, a review of the PR to date and media opportunities. The feedback on the consultation process to date had been positive with the public appreciating the chance to comment. It was acknowledged that it was a challenging environment with the Press focus on Council budgets but, despite this, the Press and Journal had published a supportive editorial which had countered by several negative articles criticising the expenditure at a time of austerity.

The exhibition held in the Eastgate Centre had generated positive comments and the exhibition was continuing at Inverness Museum and Art Gallery and, later in February, would also be held at Inverness Library, an invitation being extended to Members of the Working Group to attend on 22 February 2016. These exhibitions were proving very useful by providing details of the proposals and many individuals, having seen sight of the proposals, were supportive of the projects. There were many misunderstandings but, by addressing these issues, many concerns could be allayed. Some individuals were concerned at the use of what was seen as public money when, in fact, the projects represented nearly £1m of investment. The use of social media was however questioned as this had had mixed results and was not proving to be particularly effective.

Concern was expressed that it appeared that Community Councils were reporting that they had not been asked for their comments. However, it having been checked, the City Area Manager was able to confirm that an email had been issued on 15 January 2016 but that it would be recirculated with an extension allowed for the comments to be fed back.

Following discussion where Members were reminded of the governance arrangements, Working Group **NOTED** the position and **AGREED** that the consultation document be recirculated to Community Councils with an extension to the deadline until mid April for them to return comments.

8. Date of next Meeting

The Working Group **NOTED** that the next meeting would take place on Thursday 14 April 2016 at 9.00 am.

AOCB

Arising from the consultation, the suggestion had been made about the possibility of providing 3D models of prominent buildings for the visually impaired, something which had been successfully done in other cities. There was merit in the Working Group considering such a project in the future.

The meeting concluded at 3.25 pm.