

The Highland Council

City of Inverness Area Committee – 1 December 2016

Agenda Item	15
Report No	CIA/59/16

Reporting of Company Activity to Council

Joint Report by Inverness City Manager and City Heritage Trust Officer

Summary

This report informs Members on the work of Inverness City Heritage Trust (ICHT) during the financial year 2015/16. Particular attention is given to the total grant allocation to project in Inverness Riverside Conservation Areas to date and during 2015-16. Members are asked to note the work of the Trust in partnership with Inverness College (UHI) and Historic Environment 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 Environment 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, Perth and Kinross 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 Following a review of the work and performance of the trust in 2010/11 and a

scored and ranked application process for future funding in 2014, the trust was given a firm offer of further funding from Historic Environment Scotland for five years to the end of March 2020 (£1.25M). The level of funding for this period is £250,000 per annum. This amount is split into two main project areas, £946,841 has been allocated and ring fenced against the Academy Street Townscape Heritage (TH) project with the remaining funds to be used for projects in the city centre that can demonstrate economic benefit outcomes for the area.

- 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 2015-16

- 3.1 Over the period 2009-15, the trust awarded grants of over £1.7M to 176 projects. 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 new grant offer from Historic Environment Scotland, accepted on 07 April 2015, future grant allocation gives priority to projects in the Academy Street TH project which contribute 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 is to bring dilapidated buildings back up to an acceptable standard, with deprived areas of the city remaining a priority for assistance. The grant is offered to promote, preserve and enhance a conservation area. The reinstatement of lost architectural details will no longer attract grants from this source of Inverness City Heritage Trust funding.

- 3.2 In 2015/16, just £16,415.32 was allocated to 2 projects in the city. The Trust offers a percentage grant to owners therefore the real project costs for the grant eligible elements of these 2 projects was £41,038.
- 3.3 In 2015/16 a total of £38,710 was spent on management/ running of the Trust.
- 3.4 The Historic Environment 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 Over the past 10 years, the trust has established a profile within Inverness as a source of advice and funding for historic buildings and the trust's grant assisted projects have contributed to initiatives to raise awareness of traditional building skills and materials amongst local contractors and property owners. Although very few grants were awarded this year the trust has been working with the TH project team and local building owners to work up grant eligible projects for the TH and general ICHT projects.

The main focus of work has been on commercial properties in the city centre, many of which have multiple owners and therefore take a considerable length of time to put in place. An extension of grant was awarded to Fraser Darling House for rot works. This is a building that had lain vacant for 10 years following the departure of its previous owners, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and is currently being converted into residential use. The other grant awarded during 2015-16 was for improvements and repairs to the shopfront for the local Citizens Advice Bureau who will be moving from upper floor accommodation to a shopfront premises in the city centre.

- 3.6 In 2015/16, the trust worked with Historic Environment Scotland, Inverness College (UHI), NTS, Inverness Architectural Association and the AHSS and contributed financial help and advice to deliver a one day Conservation Master Class conference for building professionals and practitioners. In 2015, the evening lecture series was condensed into a one day conference event entitled "Building Traditional Skills" and was held on 15 May 2015.
- 3.7 In 2015/16 the trust has continued our discussions with the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), Skills Development Scotland and The Traditional Buildings Forum with regard to setting up a Traditional Buildings Forum for the Highlands. It is planned to formalise the work done to date with colleagues from Historic Environment Scotland and Inverness College (UHI) by setting up what will be known as the "Highlands and Islands Traditional Building Forum". It is hoped that the remit of this group 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. In 2016/17, 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 Environment 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 (75% 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.

The trust is committed to a continued relationship with Inverness College (UHI) and Historic Environment Scotland to deliver conservation masterclasses/ one day conference activities in Inverness. The Masterclass for 2016 will be entitled "The Burning Question" and will take place on Friday 07 October 2016.

In 2016, the trust will also take on the running of the annual Doors Open Day event held across the Highlands in the month of September. This was previously organised by The Highland Council but due to budget cuts, the event was going to be cancelled. The trust felt that it was important to continue this, particularly in light of the Scottish Governments branded year of "Architecture, Innovation and Design 2016".

- 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 Environment Scotland grant offer to ICHT.

The trust has been working with the charity WASPS who are keen to buy the former Midmills College site to convert to workshops and artists studios. It is hoped that the trust will be able to support this project with a grant early in 2016. (A grant of £233,772 was awarded in April 2016).

- 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 Environment 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 at least the next year. 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 Environment Scotland and others to deliver 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 Environment Scotland for Inverness City Heritage Trust.

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Designation: Inverness City Heritage Trust Project Officer

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Background Papers: n/a