

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director Educational Services

Corporate Cultural Sub-Committee: 9 December 2008

Subject: Relocation of Clydebank Museum - Scoping Exercise

1. Purpose:

- 1.1 To seek approval of the Cultural Sub Committee for the Manager of Lifelong Learning to establish a Working Group to undertake a scoping exercise, examining possible alternative locations for Clydebank Museum, or its outreach exhibitions, both on a permanent or temporary basis.

2. Background:

- 2.1 Clydebank Museum is based within Clydebank Town Hall. It is the only Accredited museum within West Dunbartonshire. The museum was established in 1980 through the support of the community group Friends of Clydebank Museum and Clydebank District Council.
- 2.2 Since 2002 Clydebank Museum has been managed by the WDC Culture Section within Educational Services. During this time visitor figures have more than trebled, and the museum has been upgraded by Visit Scotland to a 4 star visitor attraction.
- 2.3 In the last four years Clydebank Museum and museum services have attracted £293,000 in external funding to the service. This has enabled amongst others: the documentation and research of the collections, development of a learning programme, curation of local heritage exhibitions and a volunteer development programme.
- 2.4 The museum promotes a learning programme for schools which attracts approx 1000 participants and includes cross curricular resources and activities linked to the museum collections and local heritage.
- 2.5 Clydebank Museum promotes on average three exhibitions per annum celebrating the local heritage of Clydebank and West Dunbartonshire. These attract average annual visitor figures of 6000 plus outreach programmes and events. Web hits average 89,000 each year where visitors can read about the history of Clydebank and downloads resources, images and fact-sheets.
- 2.6 Qualitative and quantitative data collated from visitors shows that 33% of museum visitors are from outside West Dunbartonshire, and 100% would visit again or recommend to a friend. However signage and directions have been highlighted as an issue; likewise the lack of a permanent exhibition on the history of Clydebank.

- 2.7** However, visitor figures show that the museum requires to host a changing programme of exhibitions to attract and maintain visitor figure levels. Lack of space within the existing location does not allow for both temporary and permanent exhibitions on the history of Clydebank.
- 2.8** The existing location of Clydebank Museum raises a number of issues. It is not centrally located in terms of transport routes and movement of public; it attracts little passing trade and has poor directional signage for visitors. Town centre based outreach exhibitions have been held at Clydebank Shopping Centre by Clydebank Rebuilt. These have shown that locating in a centrally based venue with increased footfall not only promotes public access but increases visitor figures. Two short term exhibitions (one 3 week, one 2 week) by Clydebank Rebuilt in shop units at Clydebank Shopping Centre, attracted 5,000 visitors. On this basis Clydebank Museum could achieve its visitor target within 6 weeks.
- 2.9** In May 2007 the Culture Section which manages Clydebank Museum carried out an initial research exercise looking at potential new locations for Clydebank Museum. This looked at relocating the museum exhibitions on a temporary basis to promote greater visitor figures and accessibility. Clydebank shopping centre was one of the locations highlighted. This was an initial search and not a full scoping exercise.
- 2.10** With these issues in mind we have been asked to produce a paper for consideration requesting approval to carry out a Scoping exercise examining options for the relocation of Clydebank Museum, and /or its exhibitions.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** Clydebank Museum is situated within Clydebank Town Hall which receives little or no passing trade as potential visitors. Although visitor figures have increased significantly over the last five years it is perceived that these figures have reached a plateau which is unlikely to be advanced without increased public accessibility.
- 3.2** Visitor figures are unlikely to increase significantly over an extended period without:
- a) the expansion of the museum, to allow expanded and permanent exhibitions.
 - or
 - b) relocation to a more central venue with increased public accessibility and footfall.
- Alternatively the museum may be retained in its existing location with an outreach venue in a town centre location promoting a programme of temporary exhibitions.
- 3.3** Clydebank Museum has shown itself to be a popular venue, consistently receiving high marks in its visitor feedback, schools evaluations, and

attracting large amounts of external funding to support its work in documenting its collections, and learning development programmes.

- 3.4 Within the WDC Museum collections there are a large number of items and artefacts relating to the local heritage many of these from Clydebank and linked to the central themes of Singer, the Clydebank Blitz and John Brown's Shipbuilding. These are of immense local value and interest to the people of Clydebank and the surrounding areas, as well as visitors from outside West Dunbartonshire who make up 1/3 of visitors. These require a permanent base to be exhibited in a larger and/or more central venue.
- 3.5 The Singer archive which forms part of the museum collection includes 600+ Singer sewing machines many of which are rare and some unique. Recent correspondence (Appendix 1) from the National Museum of Scotland indicates that this collection is of regional, national and international significance. Yet there currently exists no venue in West Dunbartonshire in which these may be exhibited to reflect this importance.
- 3.6 The scoping exercise will be led by the Manager of Lifelong Learning and will draw upon the resources and expertise of the relevant departments within WDC, and other agencies as deemed appropriate. The exercise will allow officers to examine a number of potential alternative/additional locations for Clydebank Museum. The exercise will include options appraisal through examination of: potential visitors/footfall, transportation links, signage, accessibility, financial and staffing implications, long term analysis and relevant risk assessments.
- 3.7 In line with the council's strategic aims to integrate arts and heritage into the regeneration and urban design process. Clydebank Museum forms part of the plans for the long term development of a Civic Quarter within Clydebank, which has Clydebank Town Hall at its centre. Any scoping exercise must be carried out with this long term factor in mind, to ensure the museum's involvement in the Civic Quarter initiative and allow dovetailing of both initiatives.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1 There are no personnel issues.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications within this report, although there will probably be financial implications arising from the scoping exercise.

6. Risk Assessment

- 6.1 There is no increased risk to the Council associated with the contents of this report.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1** This paper advises the Sub-Committee of the background to the existing location of Clydebank Museum, its work and the restrictions caused by its currently location. It proposes that a working group is established led by Lifelong Learning to carry out a scoping exercise looking into suitable alternative locations for Clydebank Museum with the aim of promoting public accessibility, raised public profile and increased visitor figures.
- 7.2** This proposal aims to promote the aims of the council Cultural Strategy including:
- 1) To conserve, interpret and celebrate our culture and heritage.
 - 2) To promote West Dunbartonshire's cultural identity locally, nationally and internationally.
 - 3) To increase access and participation in cultural activity for all citizens.
 - 4) To support the local economy and the development of sustainable cultural industries and tourism.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1** The Corporate Cultural Sub-Committee is invited to:
- a). Note the content of this paper and the aims and objectives of the scoping exercise examining options for the relocation of Clydebank Museum.
 - b). Approve the establishment of an Officer Working Group to undertake the scoping exercise and produce a report on its findings to committee for consideration.

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Date:

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Appendix 1

Letter from National Museum of Scotland relating to WDC Singer Collection.

Wards Affected:

All Clydebank wards are affected.