

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Strategic Lead – Communications, Culture & Communities****Cultural Committee: 25 February 2019**

Subject: A permanent museum celebrating Clydebank's history and legacy**1. Purpose**

- 1.1. This report presents to Committee proposals to progress concept designs for the creation of a permanent museum in the basement of Clydebank Library.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Committee is invited to:
- note the contents of this report;
 - approve the proposal to allocate £15,000 from the Cultural Capital Fund for this purpose;
 - agree that a further report will return to the Cultural Committee making further recommendations on progressing the installation of a permanent museum in Clydebank Heritage Centre

3. BackgroundClydebank Library

- 3.1. Clydebank Library, located on Dumbarton Road in Clydebank, opened in 1913 as a public lending library, part-funded by the Scottish philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. Following celebration of its centenary year in 2013, a new programme of improvement works commenced, focused on restoring various architectural elements of the building. Within the building, the lift was completely renovated and now serves the first floor of the library building, enabling level access to all floors of the building for the first time. Phase One of these improvement works was recently completed. Phase Two works to improve the internal fabric of the library are due to commence in spring 2019.
- 3.2. The basement of the building now houses Clydebank Heritage Centre and West Dunbartonshire's Local History collection, including a dedicated heritage exhibition space. The Heritage Centre hosts a programme of changing exhibitions, showcasing items from West Dunbartonshire's heritage collections and exploring some of the major heritage narratives of the area. Local History and Reference staff are also available to facilitate access to the Council's Local History collection for the purpose of research and learning.

Shipbuilding

- 3.3. Clydebank is synonymous with shipbuilding the world over. It is no coincidence that the town is perfectly situated on the confluence of the River Clyde and the River Cart: it was this geographic detail that led to the founding of Thomson's shipyard on a site formally known as the Barns O'Clyde.
- 3.4. West Dunbartonshire Council's heritage collections hold over 4,000 items that relate to shipbuilding in West Dunbartonshire, including fine art, photographic records, silver and commemorative ware, and items of social and industrial history. Proportionally, however, Clydebank's shipbuilding heritage is under-represented in West Dunbartonshire Council's heritage collections. The ship models currently on display in Clydebank Town Hall represent the only permanent display relating to shipbuilding from the Council's collections.

The Sewing Machine Collection and Singer Archive

- 3.5. The Local History collection holds elements of West Dunbartonshire Council's Singer Archive which, alongside its Sewing Machine Collection, is a Recognised Collection of National Significance. This collection is second only to the Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, in terms of its international importance.
- 3.6. At the core of West Dunbartonshire Council's Sewing Machine Collection and Singer Archive are the machines collected by Singer's own research department – including competitor models – as well as photographs, ephemera and other materials that collectively tell the story of Singer's factory operation and its wider impact on the communities of Clydebank. Museum officers continue to actively collect sewing machines where gaps exist in the collection. To date, the collection comprises over 800 sewing machines and extensive archival holdings.

The Clydebank Blitz

- 3.7. The Clydebank Blitz saw the sustained bombardment of the former Burgh of Clydebank over the nights of the 13th and 14th March 1941. According to official records, 528 people were killed and 617 seriously injured. There is currently no permanent museum display within West Dunbartonshire that tells the story of the Clydebank Blitz. In 2009 a Room of Remembrance was instituted within the Clydebank Town Hall complex to house memorial panels commemorating those individuals killed during the Clydebank Blitz.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1 Clydebank Library together with Clydebank Town Hall and the Morison Memorial URC Church collectively represent the traditional town centre of Clydebank. The richness and importance of Clydebank's heritage merits a permanent museum installation within the town. The opportunity to create this permanent space within Clydebank Library answers this need, and anticipates a renewed interest in the history and heritage of Clydebank as new residents and businesses move into the area and the cultural programme launches.

- 4.2** The intrinsic heritage of the Clydebank Library building, and its basement area in particular, lends credence to the proposal to create a permanent museum installation within Clydebank Library. The existing Clydebank Heritage Centre is an integral element of the Council's wider Arts and Heritage offer, however officers believe that the basement area of Clydebank Library represents an, as yet unrealised, opportunity to reimagine the space, creating a new museum within the building and bringing elevated status and sustained focus to the major heritage narratives of Clydebank.
- 4.3** In order to shape this vision, officers propose to engage an external exhibition design company to work with the service and wider stakeholders to develop a concept design. This intention is that this will illustrate the potential of Clydebank Library to accommodate a new permanent museum dedicated to Clydebank stories. The three major heritage narratives of shipbuilding, the Singer Sewing Machine Factory and the Clydebank Blitz will represent the core offer of this museum, with opportunities to explore further the wider heritage of the Clydebank area from ancient to modern times.
- 4.4** Parallel to the concept design will be work with the asset management team to cost proposals, which will be included in a business case for securing grant funding for a new permanent museum in Clydebank Library. Anticipating the 80th anniversary of the Clydebank Blitz in 2021, officers believe that any such grant application will be considered all the more timely and appropriate. Initial discussions with external funders have indicated that, subject to submitting successful applications, there is potential support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Museums Galleries Scotland Museum Development Fund and/or Recognition Fund.
- 4.5** Taking cognisance of the information provided above, the Committee is invited to approve the proposal to allocate £15,000 from the Cultural Capital Fund to progress the creation of concept designs for a permanent museum installation in Clydebank Heritage Centre.

5 People Implications

- 5.1** There are no direct people implications arising from this report.

6 Financial & Procurement Implications

- 6.1** It is the expectation of officers that this project can be delivered for less than £15,000. This allocation will be sourced from the £4m Cultural Capital Fund. Depending on the final bids received from external providers, procurement will be progressed either via the Quick Quote process or in line with West Dunbartonshire Council's Best Value guidelines and a minimum of three quotes.
- 6.2** Officers acknowledge that there could be a future impact with regards finance and procurement in light of any recommendations informed by these concept designs and associated costings. Any such impact will be detailed in a future report to the Cultural Committee, with the proposal that recommendations be

realised in part via the Cultural Capital Fund and with additional grant support, following approval by the Committee.

- 6.3** Concept design and costing works with the asset management team will include work to identify any additional operating or revenue costs for the new museum proposal.

7 Risk Analysis

- 7.1** Should this proposal not progress it is likely that the rich history and heritage of Clydebank will not be maximised and will remain an under-utilised resource in engaging new and existing audiences with the story of Clydebank.
- 7.2** There is a risk that the concept design work will not lead to a viable proposal and therefore to investment in a new museum for Clydebank. Additionally there is a risk that all external provider quotes are returned with a significantly higher value than the budget allocated for concept design and that the work is therefore unable to progress.

8 Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

An Equality Impact Screening did not indicate any further action required in relation to any recommendations.

9 Consultation

- 9.1** This proposal to create a permanent museum in the current Clydebank Heritage Centre in the basement of Clydebank Library has been developed by the Team Lead Arts & Heritage, with specialist input from officers across Libraries and Cultural Services, and Asset Management.

10 Strategic Assessment

- 10.1** The proposals within this report support the following strategic priorities:
- Efficient and effective frontline services that improve the everyday lives of residents.

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Background Papers: N/A

Wards Affected: All