

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Chief Officer – Citizen, Culture & Facilities****Cultural Committee: 17 May 2021**

Subject: Acquisition Fund for Scottish Art**1. Purpose**

- 1.1** This report proposes to establish an Acquisition Fund to acquire by purchase fine art works to enhance the Council's fine art collection and enrich its focus on Scottish art. Particular emphasis will be brought to the acquisition of works by Scottish women artists, enabling a creative programme of new exhibitions within the redesigned gallery space at Clydebank Town Hall.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** The Committee is asked to:

- note the contents of this report
- approve the proposal to allocate £100k from the Cultural Capital Fund to establish an Acquisition Fund to purchase artworks by Scottish artists, and in particular Scottish women artists
- approve the proposal to leverage additional funding, as appropriate, via applications to The National Fund for Acquisitions and/or The Art Fund
- approve the list of priority artists for acquisition from this fund

3. Background

- 3.1** In March 2018 the Council agreed to create a £4m Cultural Capital Fund to invest in West Dunbartonshire's cultural and heritage infrastructure in order to unlock regeneration, increase tourism and raise the reputation of the area. The 2018/19 Budget Document pointed to the transformation of the waterfront at Clydebank and the perfect opportunity this created to undertake bold and exciting projects that revitalise Council assets and change the way people look at our area.
- 3.2** Enabled by the Cultural Capital Fund, work is already underway to enact wide ranging improvements to Clydebank Town Hall, including the redesign of the existing gallery exhibition space. Funds have also been allocated to realise a new museum for Clydebank in the basement of Clydebank Library, bringing new prominence to Clydebank's rich history and heritage.
- 3.3** The redesigned gallery within Clydebank Town Hall will significantly increase available exhibition space, including the creation of a new long gallery which will showcase the Council's notable Scottish Colourists collection. As a flagship cultural venue within the authority area, the new gallery space will provide a platform for ambitious programming, raising the profile of West

Dunbartonshire's wider fine art collection and increasing the potential for inviting in loaned artworks from major public and national collections.

- 3.4** West Dunbartonshire Council's notable collection of artworks by the Scottish Colourists comprises work by a group of four male artists, namely Samuel John Peploe, John Duncan Fergusson, George Leslie Hunter and Francis Campbell Boileau Cadell. The Colourists gained recognition during the first half of the twentieth century, credited with continuing a tradition in Scottish art that placed particular emphasis on colour, and its interplay with light.
- 3.5** Works by the Colourists in the fine art collection include a selection of sketches, drawings, oils and watercolours that capture something of the energy and the spontaneity of working outdoors – a shared characteristic of the Colourists' artistic practice. The collection features work produced mainly in France during periods of travel and study, and in Scotland. J D Fergusson's *Eástre* (Hymn to the Sun) is the only example of sculpture in the collection.
- 3.6** Alongside this core collection, the Council also holds a small selection of works by Scottish women artists contemporary with, influenced by, or who followed the Colourists. Cumulatively and through judicious acquisition, an important and representative collection of Scottish art has been formed.
- 3.7** In January 2021 the Cultural Committee asked officers to come forward with a proposal regarding the future purchase of art works via the Cultural Capital Fund to enhance the Council's existing fine art collection, and especially its representation of Scottish art. In particular, emphasis was sought on the acquisition of works by Scottish women artists. Through these acquisitions, a programme of new exhibitions in the redesigned gallery space at Clydebank Town Hall will be enabled. This investment would also further enhance West Dunbartonshire's cultural offering to both its citizens and visitors to the area.
- 3.8** Collections development is a core principle of accountable museum management, and helps to ensure that collections held in trust remain relevant to the audiences they serve. Investment in the Council's fine art collection represents the opportunity to further raise the profile of culture within West Dunbartonshire, and grow a transformational resource that can be used to educate and inspire residents young and old. Investment in culture is also a proven catalyst for renewal. By establishing this Acquisition Fund West Dunbartonshire's communities would have significantly improved access to high quality culture on their doorstep.
- 3.9** Previous fine art collecting initiatives by the Council have laid a strong foundation for future collecting – particularly acquisition of the above mentioned series of works by the Scottish Colourists in 2006/7 . This new proposal seeks to continue the curation of a collection of cultural significance, which will serve as an important and continuing artistic legacy for the communities of West Dunbartonshire. Furthermore, investment of this nature in the Council's fine art collection will greatly enhance the Council's position as a significant advocate of, and contributor to, the Scottish cultural landscape.

3.10 Officers have also considered the potential to leverage additional external match funding to ensure best possible return on any investment in the fine art collection by the Council, and to better enable the purchase of qualitative, complementary works by the Scottish Colourists, alongside representative works by established and influential Scottish women artists.

4. Main Issues

4.1 Officers undertook a review of the existing fine art collection to consider works by which women artists – in addition to works by the Scottish Colourists – might best complement and enhance the existing fine art collection, and in particular enrich its focus on Scottish art. All such considerations took full cognisance of the Council's existing Acquisition, Disposal and Collections Development Policy.

4.2 Given the nature of the art market; availability of works for sale; and the timing of any future acquisition, a definitive list of works for purchase has not been established. However, representative potential works by Scottish women artists for acquisition (which comply with the established policy) are under consideration and include works by:

- Mary Armour
- Dame Elizabeth Blackadder
- Katherine Cameron
- Kate Downie
- Joan Eardley
- Hannah Frank
- Annie French
- Jessie M King
- Bet Low
- Frances Macdonald
- Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh
- Barbara Rae
- Anne Redpath
- Kirsty Wither
- Alma Wolfson
- Margaret Wright
- Georgie Young

4.3 With consideration given to the artists listed above, and subject to establishment of the Acquisition Fund as proposed, preparatory research by the Arts and Heritage service has identified a selection of works currently available for purchase which are described in Appendix I. These works have been considered in the context of West Dunbartonshire Council's established collecting principles and are representative in terms of artist; genre; and cost. Works included were available for sale during April 2021, although not all artists are represented. The appendix is provided for illustrative purposes and reference.

- 4.4** In addition to those artists listed at 4.2 and the works referenced in Appendix 1, should the opportunity arise to acquire works by any one of the Scottish Colourists that complements the existing collection this will be pursued.
- 4.5** Anticipating completion of the Clydebank Town Hall gallery redesign, and to support cultural programming going forward, it is intended that all fine art acquisitions through this Acquisitions Fund will be made during financial year 2021/22.
- 4.6** The collecting principles applied to all fine art acquisitions, in line with WDC's aforementioned policy, are:
- connection with existing collections
 - desirability for display
 - suitability for use in learning and visitor programmes
 - contribution to research and understanding
 - the item is in good condition
 - consideration of any conditions attached to the item

4.6.1 Connection to Existing Collections

As outlined above, the acquisition of works by Scottish women artists continues an established focus on active collecting of Scottish art by the Council. Representative works described in appendix 1 outline in more detail potential connections to the existing fine art collection. The acquisition of complementary works by the Scottish Colourists would further enhance the existing collection.

4.6.2 Desirability for display

The acquisition of new works into the WDC fine art collection represents huge potential for exhibition programming in West Dunbartonshire. Consideration of influence; period; artistic movement; etc. represents multiple opportunities to set the work of Scottish women artists and/or the Scottish Colourists in both national and international contexts. Through the augmentation of the existing fine art collection, further opportunities are created to undertake joint working with public and private collections across the UK, including both incoming and outgoing loans.

4.6.3 Suitability for use in learning and visitor programmes

Through subject matter; style; medium; etc. enormous potential is afforded to engage multiple audiences in wide ranging interpretative approaches to any newly acquired works. In turn, enhanced learning and visitor programming would seek to build greater participation, increased footfall, and repeat access to WDC's wider collections and Arts and Heritage services.

4.6.4 Contribution to research and understanding

Any new acquisition to the fine art collection represents increased capacity for knowledge exchange and collaborative research. Opportunities would exist to work with collections who hold works by the same and/or related artists, exploring the broader contextualisation of works in terms of 20th and 21st century artistic movements, as well as influence on contemporary practice.

National networking opportunities would also enhance the reputation of West Dunbartonshire Council's Arts and Heritage service as a centre for research, whilst increasing access to and understanding of the Council's collections for current and future audiences.

4.6.5 General acquisition principles

In line with good practice, the condition of any potential acquisition into the fine art collection will be checked prior to purchase, and confirmation sought that there are no conditions attached to acquiring the art work.

Works by the Scottish Colourists and Scottish women artists are held in multiple public collections. Works considered for acquisition are available for public sale through selling galleries. For these reasons there are no concerns around competing collecting priorities.

5. People Implications

5.1 There are no direct people implications arising from this report

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

6.1 Should the Committee approve the recommendation to acquire by purchase a selection of works to enhance the Council's Scottish art collection, then £100k will be committed from the Cultural Capital Fund to support these acquisitions.

6.2 If this investment came from the £4m Cultural Capital Fund as recommended then there would be no additional cost to the Council beyond what is already agreed within the Council's Capital Plan. For the benefit of Committee the following other projects are also in the pipeline for the Cultural Capital Fund. Costs are not available for one of these projects so indicative outline estimates have been provided:

Project	Cost
Alexandria Library museum, lift and new public-use room	£0.330m (Agreed)
Town Hall external roof and stonework	£0.252m (Agreed)
Clydebank Library basement museum	£0.575m (Agreed)
Bruce Street Baths upgrade	£0.100m (Agreed)
Town Hall renovations	£0.95m

Back Door Gallery renovations	£0.450m (Indicative estimate)
Total	£2.657m
Fine Art Acquisition Fund	£0.1m
Total	£2.757m
Funding left for other projects	£1.243m

- 6.3** Acquisitions will be taken forward on a work by work basis. Works for acquisition will be identified by officers in line with the list of artists in scope, and in the context of the approved West Dunbartonshire Council Acquisitions, Disposal and Collections Development Policy.
- 6.4** To support best value, and where appropriate, applications to The National Fund for Acquisitions and/or The Art Fund will be made to augment available funds. Assessment of applicability will be made on a work by work basis.
- 6.5** Should applications to the National Fund for Acquisitions and/or The Art Fund be declined, the resulting reduced funds would impact on the projected number of artworks to be acquired by purchase. In such instance, officers will prioritise the acquisition of works in line with the Council approved policy.
- 6.6** Art works purchased will be added to the Council's existing fine art insurance policy. Given the anticipated value of individual works proposed for acquisition it is unlikely that this will see a notable uplift in the cost of this policy.
- 6.7** Advice and guidance will be sought from the Corporate Procurement Unit, as required, to ensure due process is followed at all stages of purchasing.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1** There is a risk that the investment in fine art could lead to a poor use of public funds with either inflated prices paid for works, or works depreciating in value. This will be mitigated by in-depth market research, negotiation on price, and application of a museum discount, where applicable. Works to be purchased will form part of the Council's permanent museum collection; they will be selected in a curatorial context with primary consideration given to artistic merit and inherent cultural value; works will be accessioned in accordance with the Council's approved Acquisitions, Disposal and Collections Development policy. Although valuations will be retained for the purpose of insurance, as an accredited museum service there is no expectation that works will be resold in the future unless an ethical and meaningful case for disposal can be made.
- 7.2** There is a risk that this investment in fine art could be negatively perceived by some members of the community at a time when Council budgets are under pressure. This is mitigated by the fact that the investment is being made from a designated Fund created for the direct purpose of cultural investment. It will

also be mitigated by community-focused programming across West Dunbartonshire's cultural venues, and by providing access to works purchased in the context of learning, engagement, and creative activity. Officers will ensure that the purchased artwork is displayed as soon as possible, for public benefit and enjoyment.

- 7.3** There is a risk that the Council will fail to purchase artwork of suitable quality and relevance in time to fill the newly developed gallery space at the Clydebank Town Hall. This will be mitigated by the application of specialist knowledge by officers in the Arts and Heritage service; proactive research of available artworks; and adherence to the collecting principles outlined in existing policies.
- 7.4** There is a risk that should this proposal not go ahead the Council will lose the opportunity to enhance the fine art collection and fail to capitalise on the investment in the new gallery space at Clydebank Town Hall.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1** An EIA screening has been completed and no impacts were identified.

9. Consultation

- 9.1** This proposal to acquire by purchase artworks by Scottish women artists has been developed by the Team Lead Arts & Heritage, with specialist input from officers across Arts & Heritage, Performance and Strategy, Corporate Communications, and the Corporate Procurement Unit. Consultation has also taken place with Legal and Finance.

10. Strategic Assessment

- 10.1** The proposals within this report support delivery of efficient and effective frontline services that improve the everyday lives of residents.

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Date:	28 April 2021

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Appendices:	Appendix 1: Scottish Art Acquisition Fund – potential acquisitions
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Background Papers:	N/A
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Wards Affected:	All
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