

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Chief Executive

Full Council: 19 December 2007

Subject: Proposed Utilisation of Capital Proceeds of Thomas Hill Painting

1. Purpose:

- 1.1 To advise council of the background to the sale from the WDC Fine Art Collection of 'Sir Donald Peak and Selkirk Glacier' by artist Thomas Hill. To present to council for consideration a proposal of four spending themes to enhance the council's fine art assets and museum collections, utilising the residue of the capital proceeds from sale of Thomas Hill painting.

2. Background:

- 2.1 'Sir Donald Peak and Selkirk Glacier' by American artist Thomas Hill was gifted to the council by Adelaine (Ada) Allan in 1948. Having been hung in Levenford House for many years the painting formed part of the council's fine art collection.
- 2.2 The oil painting of a North American (Canadian) landscape by an American artist had no intrinsic local or historic value. The council was advised by Sotheby's that the work would be of significant value in the American art market. It was felt that selling the work within the American market offered an opportunity to realise additional monies, which could be utilised to enhance and care for the council's fine art assets/collection.
- 2.3 In 2006 'Sir Donald Peak and Selkirk Glacier' by American artist Thomas Hill was sold at Sotheby's New York. The sale of this work realised £150,326.91 for West Dunbartonshire Council.
- 2.4 At December 2007 £ 25,000 of these monies have been utilised by the council's Acquisitions Panel to contribute towards the purchase of; Scottish Colourist works and a small number of art works by women Scottish artists. A list of all works purchased by the Acquisitions Panel is attached to this report. (Appendix 1)
- 2.5 The Scottish Colourist works from the WDC collection were exhibited publically at Balloch Castle in 2006. They will also form part of a larger public exhibition of Scottish Colourists at Clydebank Museum in Feb-May 2008.
- 2.6 Discussions are ongoing with the National Park Authority with a view to finding a long-term home for public display of the council's Colourist works, potentially at the NPA's new Headquarters in Balloch.

3. Main Issues

3.1 This report proposes a number of opportunities to utilise the residue of £125,000 from the proceeds from the sale of the Thomas Hill painting. These aim to enhance the council's fine art assets by focusing on four key themes: conservation, acquisitions, National Significance Scheme and public access. This proposal aims to maximise the potential of the sale proceeds, by attracting match funding from external funding agencies. It is estimated that monies would be at least doubled through match funding attracting £125,000-£185,000 new monies to West Dunbartonshire for enhancement of its fine art assets. The proposals are summarised in appendix 2.

3.2. Theme One: Conservation

3.2.1 In 2006 WDC Culture Section commissioned a conservation report on selected fine art works in need of conservation work. It is proposed that £50,000 is employed to commission a three year programme of conservation of WDC fine art. This would enable the purchase of specialist racking and storage systems for the collections. With external funding it would enable the employment of conservation specialists to preserve valuable works of fine art, and safeguard these assets against further deterioration.

3.2.2 It is believed that this proposal would attract up to £100,000 of external funding via the Heritage Lottery Fund and Scottish Museums Council, enabling a total investment of £150,000 towards protecting the council's fine art assets. The conserved works will then be exhibited to the public in West Dunbartonshire. The conservation programme and improved storage equipment, will preserve valuable art works for the future, promote conserved works to the public, and protect the council's fine art assets.

3.3 Theme Two: Acquisitions

3.3.1 It is proposed that £10,000 be employed to enable a programme of strategic acquisitions to enhance existing fine art collections. These acquisitions will enhance the existing Colourist aspects of the fine art collection, through the purchase of Colourist works with links to West Dunbartonshire and/or artists in the collection.

3.3.2 In addition it is recommended that contemporary Colourist art works are purchased, namely paintings by living Scottish artists. This will relate the Colourist works in the WDC collection to the current art scene, and provide a focal point for the collections. In acquiring these works officers will investigate the potential to draw down external funding to assist with purchasing. A possible national source for funding includes The Art Fund.

3.4 Theme Three: National Significance/Recognition

3.4.1 It is proposed that £15,000 for the residue of the sale of the Thomas Hill painting is utilised to support a bid to the National Recognition Scheme for elements of the WDC Museum's Collection specifically the Singer collection. Owned and funded by the Scottish Executive, this scheme is managed by the Scottish Museums Council. It contributes to the implementation of *Scotland's Culture* by providing a new strategic framework for recognition of and investment in the outstanding and irreplaceable collections in Scotland's non-national museums.

3.4.2 A Recognised Collection of National Significance is one that is of such importance and quality that it merits formal recognition and support by national government. It is felt that in particular the collection of items which form the WDC Singer Collection has potential to be recognised as a unique and irreplaceable collection by this national scheme. The WDC Singer collection includes a large range of singer machines, and social and technical artefacts and data. It is believed that some of the machines in the collection are extremely rare, and may in some cases be unique. This collection has the potential to be a unique and significant record of the history and social impact of Singers on Clydebank.

3.4.3 A bid for national significance is a complex process which is expected to take 2-3 years, involving a number of criteria which must be met to qualify for recognition. However in addition to enhancing the public collections holders of such collections are eligible to apply to the designated National Recognition Fund, in order that they will have a greater impact on people.

3.4.4 It is proposed that £15,000 from the sale proceeds are:

- a) Allocated for the strategic purchasing of capital materials and equipment to support a bid for National Significance for the collection.
- b) Allocated to support acquisitions of items and artefacts which enhance and augment the existing museum collections in support of a bid for National Significance for the collection, and promoting improved and extended collections to public.

3.5 The Acquisition and National Significance theme aim to maximise the potential of the sale proceeds, by attracting match funding from external funding agencies. It is estimated that monies would be doubled through match funding, attracting an additional £25,000 new monies to West Dunbartonshire, providing a total of £50,000 to augment collections and bid for National Recognition for the WDC Singer Collection.

3.6 Theme Four: Public Access

3.6.1 It is a key aim of the council's Cultural Strategy, and Collections Management Policy to promote public access to the council's museum and fine art collections. It is proposed that £50,000 of the proceeds of the sale is employed to facilitate the development of the new gallery within the authority.

3.6.2 Currently there is only one gallery facility within the authority suitable to promote public access to the council's fine art collections, local artists and national touring exhibitions. The existing gallery, The Backdoor Gallery at Dalmuir which was jointly funded by WDC and the Scottish Arts Council, has been promoted as a best practise example of a small gallery nationally, and has proved very popular with the public. Exhibition programmes include national touring exhibitions by artists such as Picasso, Goya and Matisse, alongside exhibitions by local artists.

3.6.3 There is currently no gallery facility outside of the Clydebank area, nor is there a facility to provide a permanent home for the council's fine art works. As a result, public access to visual arts in West Dunbartonshire is extremely limited.

3.6.4 This proposal again aims to maximise the potential of the sale proceeds, by attracting match funding from external funders. This would be facilitated by submission of a capital funding bid to funding agencies such as the Scottish Arts Council. It is estimated that match funding of £50,000 would be attracted to West Dunbartonshire to promote public access to visual arts via a new gallery facility.

3.6.5 It is proposed that:

- I. £50,000 of the proceeds of the Thomas Hill painting is ring-fenced to support the development and establishment of a new gallery at a venue agreed by council.
- II. an options appraisal is carried out by council officers to identify venues for a new gallery facility for the authority, and that options are presented to council at a future date for consideration.

3.6.7 An options appraisal will examine: the feasibility and viability of existing venues for development, including staffing implications, health and safety, accessibility, environmental and security issues, and potential to meet aims of WDC Cultural Strategy.

3.6.8 Given the limitations on funding, and impact on staffing which a new gallery would involve, it is proposed that an options appraisal is limited to examining the potential of a new a gallery facility within an existing property, rather than a new build.

4. Personnel Issues

4.1 There are no personnel issues.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 The proposals within this report are based upon the utilisation of the residue of the proceeds from the WDC Museum and Fine Art Collection of the sale of 'Sir Donald Peak and Selkirk Glacier' by Thomas Hill. This amounts to £125,000. A breakdown of the proposed expenditure is attached to this report as Appendix 2.

5.2 These monies are currently held within the Corporate Budget Line. It is proposed that these monies are utilised to meet the four strategic aims of: conservation, acquisitions, National significance and public access; and to draw down external funding estimated at £125,000 - £185,000 to meet these aims, representing Best Value to the council.

6. Risk Assessment

6.1 There is no increased risk to the Council associated with the contents of this report. However failure to invest in certain themes could result in the deterioration of items within the collection and a reduction in public access.

7. Conclusions

7.1 The proposal outlined within this report offer a means to meet the aims of the WDC Cultural Strategy and offer a Best Value approach to utilising the Capital monies raised through the sale of the Thomas Hill work from the WDC Museum and Fine Art Collection.

8. Recommendations

8.1 The Committee is invited:

(i) To note the contents of this report, and its aim to meet the aims of the Council's Cultural Strategy within a Best Value Framework. Promoting public access to the council's Fine Art and Museum Collection, conserving its fine art assets, and proposed bid for National Recognition.

(ii) To approve the proposals outlined in this report for the use of the residue from the sale of the Thomas Hill painting; namely to:

a. Allocate £50,000 to enable a three year conservation programme for the councils Fine Art works.

- b. Allocate £15,000 to support the strategic purchasing of acquisitions, and potential expertise, and to support a bid for National Significance for the WDC Singer collection.
- c. Allocate £10,000 to facilitate the strategic acquisition of fine art works augmenting and enhancing the existing collection, thereby promoting improved and extended collections to public.
- d. Ring fence £50,000 toward the development of a new gallery facility within West Dunbartonshire, to host the council's fine art collection and touring exhibitions. Any development being subject to an options appraisal carried out by appropriate WDC officers being agreed at council.

.....
David McMillan
Chief Executive
Date: 10 December 2007

Person to Contact: Ken Graham, Manger of Lifelong Learning, Levenford House, Helenslee Road, Dumbarton
01389 608047
ken.graham@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Appendix 1 Inventory of Artwork

Appendix 2 Capital proposal for proceeds of sale of Thomas Hill painting

Background Papers: WDC Cultural Strategy 2005
WDC Museum Collections Management and Development Plan 2006

Wards Affected: All Council Wards are affected