

Museums and Galleries Update

Culture and Leisure Committee

23 October 2012

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To provide an update on a range of current and planned capital improvements and use of certain buildings within the museums and galleries service.

2 Main report

- 2.1 The Committee considered a report on 28 June 2011 which detailed the considerable progress which had been made since February 2008 towards revitalising the museums and galleries estate and modernising the service. The 2011 report noted that work was proceeding on a range of capital projects, including the City Art Centre, Trinity Apse, the Museum of Edinburgh and the Old City Observatory. This report provides further updates on the above projects and two additional projects relating to buildings within the museums and galleries estate – the Museum of Childhood and the Tron Kirk. All of the properties discussed in this report are held on the Common Good account, with the exception of the Museum of Childhood and the City Art Centre.
- 2.2 As previously reported, significant work to improve the customer experience of the grade A listed **City Art Centre** was completed in spring 2010. The service secured over £80,000 from the Recognition Capital Fund, managed by Museums Galleries Scotland, for two further improvements: the creation of a permanent display on the lower ground floor gallery and of a second fine art store in the basement to complement the existing storage space, which is at full capacity. Construction work and fitting out of the second fine art store is complete, and the store is now in use. The permanent gallery space will increase the profile and visibility of the collection and attract visitors all year round. It is expected that this part of the works will be complete by the end of March 2013.
- 2.3 The June 2011 report noted that discussions with potential lessees of the grade A listed **Trinity Apse** (formerly used as a brass rubbing centre) were ongoing. (Brass rubbing will be offered in the Museum of Edinburgh from 2013.) The service successfully concluded discussions with a lessee (Brown Eyed Girl Productions) for this historic building to be used as a Festival Fringe venue during summer 2011 to support young comic writing talent. Other opportunities

are currently being explored with potential commercial partners to realise additional income.

- 2.4 Phase one of the Museums Hub at the grade A listed **Museum of Edinburgh** was completed earlier this year. The venue was opened to the public in June 2012 by Fergus Ewing MSP, Minister, for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism; Cllr Lewis, Convener of Culture and Leisure; and Sheenagh Adams, Keeper of the Registers of Scotland. Members will recall that a partnership agreement with the Registers of Scotland and Edinburgh World Heritage Trust facilitated the refurbishment of two of the most important 16th/17th century buildings in Edinburgh - the adjoining Acheson House and Huntly House, which together now form the Museum of Edinburgh, the service's Museums Hub.
- 2.5 This refurbishment has created office accommodation for Edinburgh World Heritage Trust, new retail, catering and a charging audio visual display (Foundation Edinburgh), a new temporary exhibition space, two refurbished courtyard spaces and a refurbished garden. The garden is run by the Patrick Geddes Garden Club on a voluntary basis. The Club opens the garden for special events (such as this year's Doors Open Day) and intends to open it to the public on a permanent basis once the garden is fully established. This is the first stage in the complete redevelopment of the Museum of Edinburgh as a world class visitor attraction telling the Scottish capital's unique story.
- 2.6 As reported to Committee on 28 June 2011, a partnership agreement with the Collective Gallery to relocate to the grade A listed **Old City Observatory** on Calton Hill will revitalise the building and provide a sustainable future for one of Edinburgh's most important sites. A feasibility study is under way to fully cost the relocation of Collective Gallery to the Old City Observatory. As part of this study a number of areas of work have now been undertaken. The Finance and Resources Committee of 1 November 2011 approved the use of £300,000 from the capital receipt generated by the sale of the Scotsman Building (which currently houses the Collective Gallery) towards the relocation. A matching sum of £300,000 has been committed to this project within the Capital Investment Programme. In addition a 25 year lease of the Old City Observatory, including the surrounding walled garden and City Dome, was agreed for the Collective Gallery at a rent of £1 per annum.
- 2.7 The architectural brief for the redevelopment is being carried out by the Council's Multi-Discipline Design Team with a view to moving the Collective Gallery into the City Dome, and an adjacent temporary unit, by August 2013. Although a complex process due to the lack of sufficient services on the hill, and the historical significance of the buildings, initial findings have shown that this first phase can be accommodated within budget.
- 2.8 Once further funding has been sourced, the second phase of work will begin. This will move the remaining part of the Collective's service into the City Observatory building and dispense with the temporary unit. Applications are in preparation for the Wren Trust, Historic Scotland, Creative Scotland and Heritage Lottery Funding to address this. In addition, a fundraising auction organised by the Collective Gallery will be held in December to support the project. A full conservation study for these buildings, part-funded by Edinburgh World Heritage, will finalise costings and inform these grant applications. In

addition, the Collective Gallery has secured funding from Scottish Enterprise to work with the Council and stakeholders to devise innovative ways to develop a full artistic and business operation on this iconic site.

- 2.9 The service is also making improvements at the Museum of Childhood and working with partners to develop uses for the Tron Kirk. The grade C listed **Museum of Childhood** receives approximately 220,000 visitors per year and is currently the service's most popular venue. The service is planning a £400,000 refurbishment of the Museum. This refurbishment will improve the visitor experience, redisplay the collections and maximise income. The ambition is to develop a new gallery, create a new expanded retail area and a children's party and activity area. The planning and tendering processes will take some months, and work on-site will need to be carefully timed to avoid peak periods. It is not possible to give an on-site start date at this stage, but it is unlikely to be before spring 2014.
- 2.10 The grade A listed **Tron Kirk**, one of the most significant buildings in the Old Town, had been closed to the public for around five years until August 2012. The last public access before this year was through a private tour operator, which had leased the building as a base from which to promote its tours. This year, the service reached an agreement with a private individual acting as a commercial operator in association with G1 Group to allow the Tron Kirk to operate as a Fringe venue during August 2012. G1 Group is a leisure company which owns 40 venues across Scotland, ranging from restaurants, bars, clubs, cinemas and hotels. This agreement covers the commercial operation of the venue until September 2013 – during the period of Edinburgh's Christmas and next year's Fringe – but is subject to the operator obtaining all necessary consents, licences and warrants (including Listed Building Consent and Change of Use Consent). The agreement to date has generated revenue income for the service, set at the level advised by Property colleagues; any further use of the Tron Kirk by the current or any future commercial operators will create an additional commercial return for the service.
- 2.11 The Tron Kirk covers part of the site of Marlin's Wynd, a medieval close which the Council's predecessor authorities first excavated between 1974 and 1983, before this Council undertook some further excavation work in 2007, managed by the archaeological service. Alternative uses of the Tron Kirk are expected to complement this culturally significant building, important both for its architecture and for the archaeological remains within the property.
- 2.12 Discussions are under way with a number of possible partners, including the Edinburgh World Heritage Trust (EWHT), to explore the long term future of the Tron Kirk as a cultural and heritage venue for the city. Options include a partnership between EWHT and the Council to ensure the long term conservation and interpretation of this building which houses the most important medieval remains in the city. This and other options would require the service and its partners to secure essential funding. Implementation of the selected option would then take place in around three to four years' time.

2.13 During all of the above developments, the service has continued to achieve good results, including the following:

- visitor numbers have increased from 625,000 in 2010 to 675,000 in 2012;
- the annual income target for 2011/12 was achieved; and
- between 2010 and 2012, the service secured £325,386 in additional funds from trusts, foundations and grant-making bodies to support exhibitions and events.

2.14 As part of an ongoing improvement plan, the service is currently analysing its overall performance and reviewing its retail operation and opening hours. These matters will be covered in further committee reports in due course.

3 Financial Implications

3.1 The refurbishment projects described above are funded as follows:

- City Art Centre: fully funded by the grant of £80,000 from Museums Galleries Scotland.
- Museum of Edinburgh: the package of funding, generated from a range of sources, was described in the June 2011 report. The total cost of the works carried out to date on the Museum of Edinburgh is £940,000, which is within the revised budget.
- Old City Observatory: the £600,000 budget for phase one of the move of the Collective Gallery to the Old City Observatory is funded by monies within the Capital Investment Programme and a portion of the capital receipt from the sale of the Scotsman building.
- Museum of Childhood: a sum of £400,000 within the 2013 – 14 Asset Management fund is committed to the refurbishment of the Museum of Childhood.

3.2 Leases of Trinity Apse and the Tron Kirk have been negotiated for suitable rates, following advice from Property and Legal colleagues. A total of £16,000 has been generated so far from two leases. Further work is in hand to generate additional commercial income from leases of these properties.

4 Equalities Impact

4.1 As previously reported, the refurbishment of the Museum of Edinburgh has improved access to its component buildings, and the refurbishment of the Old City Observatory will improve physical access to the buildings within that complex. All of the work described in this report aims to create better public access to the historic assets which are the focus of the work.

5 Environmental Impact

- 5.1 The completed refurbishments have been done in compliance with the Council's standard procedures to minimise any negative impacts, as will any future works. Refurbishing, and in several cases, opening up buildings which had been closed to the public for years, improves the local environment in which each building sits and has a positive impact on the city's sustainability.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- a) welcomes the progress outlined in the report; and
 - b) notes that the overall performance of the service (including the retail operation and opening hours) will be the subject of future reports.

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Appendices

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Wards affected All

Single Outcome Agreement Supports National Outcomes 1, 3, 4, 10 and 12 to 15

Background Papers Reports to: Finance and Resources Committee on 1 November 2011 and to Culture and Leisure Committee on 28 June 2011, 26 April 2011 and 27 April 2010.