

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education, Culture and Sport
DATE	18 November 2010
DIRECTOR	Annette Bruton
TITLE OF REPORT	Acknowledging Aberdeen's Granite Industry
REPORT NUMBER:	ECS/10/098

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report addresses Councillor Cormack's motion of 7 January 2010 :

"In the light of the restoration and reuse of Marischal College, the second largest granite building in the world, and in recognition of the central role that the granite industry has played in the city's economic development and in its cultural identity, that this Council agrees to the production of a report with options on how the Council and its partners can properly acknowledge the key contribution that the use of granite has made to the built environment of Aberdeen and the wider North East region."

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 1) That the committee endorses option 1 To establish Granite Month and option 2 To establish a Granite Panel.
- 2) That the committee notes the progress on the development of resources and displays relating to the city's granite heritage.
- 3) That the committee remits option 5 Interpretation Panels to the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications of each option are contained within the body of the report. Funds from the Museums and Galleries revenue budget have been identified to deliver Option 1 Granite Month (£500), Option 2 Granite Panel (£150), Option 3 Podcasts, Virtual Exhibition and Granite leaflet (£500). Additional Option 3 costs will be met as follows - the Granite Trail (£2,600) will be met by Aberdeen City Heritage Trust and the Reading Bus project (£6,000) will be met by TAQA. Funding to deliver activities outlined in Option 4, with the exception of the "Building Histories" exhibition requires further development and identification of funding sources.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The report has implications for staffing time and resources as the options require dedicated staff time to realise them. There are also implications regarding the copyright of elements of the collection, such as oral histories, photographs, film clips and engineering drawings; copyright clearance to reproduce these in any display or on-line will be required and may necessitate the payment of a copyright fee

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

Background

Aberdeen is clearly branded and known internationally as 'The Granite City' but at present local pride and affection for this essential part of our cultural heritage has no single focus or location where the public can learn more about our unique cityscape and its development.

The lack of a publicly accessible focus is a major obstacle to acknowledging our granite heritage. It limits the public profile of the historic granite collections cared for by the Museums and Galleries service despite having the largest concentration of original artefacts and archives. The recommendations of this report would create focus and establish a framework for learning about and celebrating Aberdeen's industrial past with significant positive community impacts.

Officers from Aberdeen City Council have met with various partners to review the current ways in which the North East's granite heritage is acknowledged. These partners include :

- Aberdeenshire Council, Aberdeenshire Museums
- Aberdeen City Heritage Trust
- British Geological Survey
- Aberdeen Geological Society/University of Aberdeen Geology Department
- Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment at RGU
- Aberdeen Maritime Museum Oil Panel, which includes representatives of the oil and gas industry

Acting on advice from the Council's External Funding Officer, a decision was made earlier in the year to apply to *the Big Lottery Fund – Investing in Ideas* fund for a £10,000 grant to programme a series of public consultation events to ask citizens for their views and input on how best to acknowledge the granite industry's impact on North East culture. Despite a well developed application, we were informed in July that the application was unsuccessful. The reason given was that the project did not fully meet their criteria. Since then officers have worked on reviewing alternative options, within the scope of the current financial challenges.

Options

1. Establish Granite Month in 2011

The inauguration of Granite Month in May 2011 is proposed to act as a focus for celebrating Aberdeen's built heritage and the skills of those who worked in the industry. A programme of talks and walks have been developed, including lectures on Aberdeen's granite heritage, graveyard tours and a focus on the granite workers' unique skills. These events will provide a means for the community to acknowledge and explore the personal and cultural impact of Aberdeen's granite industry. A learning programme for schools will also be delivered during this month.

The success of Granite Month will be evaluated through participant feedback and visitor comments. It is the intention is that Granite Month would become a fixed event in the Aberdeen calendar and would build momentum in successive years.

The cost of delivering this in 2011 has been identified as £500, excluding officer time, which will be met from existing budgets. In addition Laing's Traditional Masonry have agreed in principle to support the month with a granite carving demonstration during the May bank holiday weekend.

2. Establish a Granite Panel

It is proposed to establish a Granite Panel for the north east, modelled on the successful Aberdeen Maritime Museum Oil Panel, which draws its membership from representatives of the oil and gas industry. The Granite Panel would meet on a regular basis to advise the museum service on its granite collections and activities and act as a conduit and champion for the Granite Month programme in future years.

Partners will be invited in December to a first meeting scheduled to take place in early January 2011. The costs of servicing the panel are estimated as £150 per annum and will be met from the Museums and Galleries revenue budget.

3. Granite Resources

A number of resources will be produced during 2011 as learning tools for schools and visitors to the city. New resources will be developed and added to GLOW for the school year 2011-12, based on feedback from Granite Month. Members of staff will also continue to deliver talks on our granite heritage to different groups within Aberdeen.

20,000 copies of the revised and extended Granite Trail leaflet will be printed in November and available from December 2010. Copies of the leaflet will be distributed widely throughout the north east by a distribution company. Funding to cover the reprinting cost of £2,600 has been met by Aberdeen City Heritage Trust.

A series of downloadable podcasts produced on the history of granite, the built heritage and the skills of the granite workers. The podcasts will be put on the Art Gallery and Museums website www.aagm.co.uk and will be online for Granite Month. Costs for this will be met from the Museums and Galleries revenue budget.

The Museums and Galleries service has piloted a virtual exhibition "A Setting in Stone" on its website www.aagm.co.uk showing historic photographs from a local granite yard, Garden and Company. Virtual exhibitions are an effective way of showcasing museum treasures and of

making them accessible to a wide range of people, including an international audience. An expanded virtual exhibition, based on this pilot and showing more of the wealth of granite related artefacts in the Museums and Galleries collections is planned for 2011/12. The exhibition will be hosted on the Art Gallery and Museums website www.aagm.co.uk

Feedback from visitors has indicated an interest in the history of the granite pillars in the Art Gallery entrance area. 5,000 copies of a new leaflet on the history of the pillars and the various quarries which they represent will be available early in 2011. Funding to cover the printing cost of £500 has been identified in the Museums and Galleries revenue budget.

The Reading Bus has secured funding from locally based worldwide energy company TAQA to produce a series of animated films. One of these will be developed with Museums and Galleries to focus on the granite industry. Children from a school in a regeneration area will work with a storyteller and professional animators in January to March 2011. The film will be screened as part of the Word festival on Saturday 16th May, with additional screenings online and at Aberdeen Maritime Museum. The project will cost £6,000 and it will reach an anticipated audience of around 1,000.

4. Display and Exhibition

We hold a significant collection of historic material relating to granite, with strengths in hand tools, photographs, catalogues, business records and drawings. The whole collection is available to users on request, however most requests currently come from academic or local history researchers. There is an ongoing programme to add granite records and images to the Museums and Galleries websites (www.aagm.co.uk and www.aberdeenquest.com) to increase public awareness of these collections at all levels in the community.

A true acknowledgement of granite's contribution to the city is not possible without acknowledging the granite workers whose skills and labour established and sustained the quarrying and manufacturing industries. Our collections have the power to convey these human stories and illustrate the international nature of the trade and the workers' careers.

Options to establish a Museum of Granite have been examined in some detail by officers. Although the creation of a museum could explore and acknowledge granite's contribution to the city's economic development, built environment and its continuing influence on our community's identity, the costs of establishing a new single purpose museum are considered prohibitive in the present economic climate. If a suitable existing location were identified, the costs of a fit-out are likely to be £2 million to £4 million capital costs. Based on current revenue costs at Provost Skene's House the running costs would be in the region of £160,000 per annum, excluding loan charges. Consequently officers are recommending that this option is not pursued at present. Although the Council is not in a position to take this option further forward, it is recommended that it is discussed further with partners through the Granite Panel.

Meanwhile the Museums and Galleries has programmed the touring exhibition "Building Histories" at Aberdeen Maritime Museum during summer 2011. This exhibition, toured by Historic Scotland, focuses on the variety of building materials and techniques used throughout Scotland. This exhibition will afford us the opportunity to include local material relating to the granite industry. The cost of this will be met from the Museums and Galleries Exhibition budget.

In addition, the service will seek to programme an internally-generated exhibition on granite in 2014, which will allow us to link with the national Homecoming 2014 programme and explore the histories of granite workers who worked abroad. Costs for this project will be developed and applications for external grant funding made.

A display comprising storyboard panels and artefacts which tell the history of granite will be located within the redeveloped Marischal College. Three possible locations have been identified by the Programme Director, Andrew Sproull. These are under consideration by the Project Board and if an update is available when the committee meets this will be presented to elected members. Staff from the Museums and Galleries team will be able to advise on the content and to lend exhibits from the Art Gallery and Museums Collections to this display.

5. Interpretation Panels

Another option is to develop granite interpretation panels similar to the existing interpretation panels throughout the city developed by Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure. These way markers would identify sites of prime importance to the industry. The cost for each interpretive panel is £2,000 based on the design and production costs of similar panels. There is no budget within Museums and Galleries to fund these and a funding source needs to be identified if this is to go ahead.

6. IMPACT

The report links to outcome 4 in the Single Outcome Agreement, 'Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens' and outcome 13 in the Single outcome agreement, 'We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity'. In particular, the activities are aimed at helping learners of all ages develop skills, confidence and knowledge about their heritage and the changing patterns of life. Museum collections are held in trust for all of society.

The report also relates to the key aims set out in the Arts, Heritage and Sport strand of the community plan, in particular:

- To encourage access to and participation in the City's cultural life
- To support cultural activities which have a positive impact on the social, economic and cultural development of the City
- To strengthen support for and ownership of the city's distinctive cultural character

There are also links with the Environment strand of the community plan, in particular:

- Protect Aberdeen's unique granite heritage

The report also links to the cultural objectives set out in 'Vibrant, Dynamic and Forward Looking':

- Recognise the contribution of sport, culture and the arts to promoting the area as a tourist destination
- Promote the City as a tourist destination

There are also linkages to the City's cultural strategy, 'Vibrant Aberdeen' as the options seek to increase community engagement in cultural activity, to improve the city's cultural profile and through working with partners to increase investment in cultural activity.

This report is likely to be of interest to the public as it relates to a topic of local heritage interest.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Background report on the contribution of granite to the economic and cultural life of Aberdeen to Education Culture and Sport Committee, 7 January 2010.

Bulletin report to Education Culture and Sport 16 September 2010.

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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