

EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE
18 NOVEMBER 2010

ACKNOWLEDGING ABERDEEN'S GRANITE INDUSTRY – MOTION BY COUNCILLOR CORMACK - ECS/10/098

7. With reference to (1) Councillor Cormack's motion to Council of 18 November 2009:-

“That in the light of the restoration and re-use 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 environment of Aberdeen and the wider North East region.”

and (2) Article 6 of the minute of its meeting of 7 January 2010, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Education, Culture and Sport which outlined various options to acknowledge the contribution of granite.

The report advised that while Aberdeen was known internationally as the Granite City, there was presently no single focus or location where the public could learn more about the cityscape and its development. This meant that although the Museums and Galleries Service had the largest concentration of original artefacts and archives, the public profile of the collection was limited. Officers had met with various partners to identify how to promote the North East's granite heritage and the report outlined the various options which had been brought forward for consideration.

It was suggested that a Granite Month could be held in May 2011, to include a programme of walks and talks, a granite carving demonstration, and a learning programme for schools. If the events were a success, Granite Month could become an annual event. The report advised that the cost of delivering Granite Month would be £500, excluding officer time.

It was further proposed to establish a Granite Panel for the North East, based on the successful Aberdeen Maritime Museum Oil Panel. The Panel would meet to advise the Museums and Galleries Service on its granite collections and activities and act as a Champion for the Granite Month programme in future years. The cost of running the Panel was estimated to be £150 per annum.

The report advised that a number of resources would be produced during 2011 to act as learning tools for schools and visitors to Aberdeen, such as a revised and extended version of the Granite Trail leaflet; a series of downloadable pod casts on the history of granite; virtual exhibitions displaying the granite related artefacts in the Museums and Galleries collections and historic photographs from a local granite yard to be made

available on the Museums and Galleries website; and a new leaflet on the history of the granite pillars at the entrance to the Art Gallery.

The report also advised that the Reading Bus had secured funding from locally based, worldwide energy company TAQA to produce a series of animated films, one of which would be developed with the Museums and Galleries Service to focus on the granite industry.

Officers had explored the possibility of establishing a Museum of Granite to acknowledge the contribution of granite to Aberdeen's economic development, however, due to the costs of developing a new single purpose museum, the Council was not in a position to take the matter forward at present. It was however suggested that the option could be explored further through the Granite Panel. In the meantime, officers had organised for a touring exhibition on the variety of building materials and techniques used throughout Scotland to be displayed at the Maritime Museum in 2011, and discussions had been held with the Marischal College Programme Director to arrange for a display on the history of granite to be located in the redeveloped building.

Finally, the report advised that there was the option to develop granite interpretation panels marking sites of prime importance to the industry. These would be similar to the existing interpretation panels throughout Aberdeen which had been developed by the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Service, and would cost £2,000 per panel. The report noted that there was no budget identified within the Museums and Galleries Service to fund these panels, and a funding source would require to be identified if this option was to go ahead.

The report recommended:-

- (a) that the Committee endorse option 1 (to establish a Granite Month) and option 2 (to establish a Granite Panel);
- (b) that the Committee note the progress on the development of resources and displays relating to the city's granite heritage; and
- (c) that the Committee remits option 5 (interpretation panels) to the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to approve the recommendations in the report and request that officers also investigate the possibility of sponsorship for the interpretation panels;
- (ii) to request that officers circulate details of the book "Granite – A Story of the Granite Industry in Aberdeen" by David Miller to all members of the Committee for information;
- (iii) to request that officers investigate the possibility of providing each school library with a copy of the book;
- (iv) to request that officers keep the Committee updated with progress on the motion through the information bulletin; and
- (v) to thank staff for their work on the matter.