

## SERVICE UPDATE

<b><u>Name of Function:</u></b>	City Growth
<b><u>Date:</u></b>	17/09/2020
<b><u>Title of Update:</u></b>	Black Lives Matters and Equalities Exhibition
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### **UPDATE:**

- 1.1 This Service Update is in response to the committee motion in June, to work with organisers of the Black Lives Matters poster protest and other race and equalities organisations in the city to mount an exhibition on the anti-slavery abolition movement in Aberdeen.

### **2. SUMMARY OF UPDATE ACTIONS**

- 2.1 The following actions are complimentary to existing programmes of work and Council priorities, with the aim of long-term engagement and learning.
- 2.2 Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums aim to offer a local Artist in Residency in March 2022, to explore the themes of equality that are current in Britain which will also be explored in the British Art Show at the Art Gallery during 2021. The chosen Artist in Residence will invite underrepresented community groups in the city to be part of the residency which will culminate in an exhibition.
- 2.3 For the Archives, Art Gallery and Museums team to further research the City's Archives and collections, and be part of a steering group in partnership with the University of Aberdeen, sharing knowledge and resource to develop a wider understanding of colonialism in the North East and the region's relationship with transatlantic slavery.
- 2.4 To embed a greater focus on increasing representation within Aberdeen Art Galleries and Museums Collection Development Policy to ensure, future collecting is reflective of the historic and contemporary diverse community in Aberdeen.

- 2.5 To apply for funding from Creative Scotland, when the funding stream launches later this year, to create an equality and diversity post to be placed either in the Local Authority or within a cultural organisation to facilitate a dialogue about equality and diversity within organisations leading to positive change.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The death of George Floyd in the US an unarmed black man who was killed in police custody, and the brutality caught on video, mobilised people to protest throughout the world and in the UK that Black Lives Matter. In Aberdeen this was a peaceful protest organised locally where Aberdeen residents were invited to create posters, artwork and messages of solidarity which were displayed from the 7<sup>th</sup> June across four sites in the city, and the following week there was a peaceful protest march on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June in the city centre.
- 3.2 This led to a motion in the June committee for the City Council to work with organisers of the Black Lives Matters poster protest and other race and equalities organisations in the city to mount an exhibition on the anti-slavery abolition movement in Aberdeen.
- 3.3 The council officers have considered this motion and feel that there is reputational risk combining Black Lives Matters with anti-slavery abolition in a single exhibition. They are two distinctive movements each with their own stories, issues and characters worth investigating and sharing. To combine the largely white abolitionists stories with those of the BLM movement, could be viewed as taking the spotlight away from black voices at a critical time in the fight for equality. Officers instead recommend a range of proposals which would focus on the continuous fight for racial equality, diversity and justice which fully consider the themes presented in the motion to Council while treating the historical legacy of abolition separate from the contemporary Back Lives Matters movement.
- 3.4 Aberdeen Art Gallery's programme provides new opportunities for the community to come together with a range of participation opportunities as part of the British Art Show, a major touring exhibition in partnership with the Hayward Gallery, Southbank Centre London. This exhibition, a survey of contemporary art practice in the UK features 48 artists exploring British-ness with some artists interrogating post-colonial identity through their work and practice. The exhibition will also feature a community outreach project with artist Grace Ndiritu, an international artist born in Kenya and living in London. This exhibition runs from July-Oct 2021.
- 3.5 As part of their programme Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums aim to offer a local Artist in Residency in March 2022. Applications will be invited from BAME artists and artists who wish to work professionally with the BAME community. The residency will explore the themes that

are current in Britain, equality and diversity alongside Black Lives Matters. The chosen artist will invite underrepresented community organisations and groups in the city to be part of the residency which will culminate in an exhibition. This proposal is inclusive to all and meets with the City Council's Equality Outcome 7 and lowers potential reputational risk. Funding for this residency will be sought from external organisations and grant awarding bodies. Art Gallery staff have been in conversation with the organisation who arranged the peaceful protest in Aberdeen and the organisation currently is not considering an exhibition of the BLM posters and artwork. They have expressed a strong interest in adding a representative sample of the BLM posters to the gallery's collections, however, it has not been currently confirmed if they will do so at this time. They will be invited to engage with the proposed artist residency alongside other groups in the city.

3.6 To build a wider picture on slavery in the North East, the long-term plan for the Archives, Art Gallery and Museums team is to further interrogate the City's Archives and Museums Collections through new research. They will be part of a steering group and will work with the University of Aberdeen who have appointed a Lecturer in the History of Slavery for a two year period, sharing knowledge and resource to develop a wider picture of colonialism in the North East and the region's relationship with transatlantic slavery. This will build on the work undertaken in 2007 by a steering group which examined the history of slavery and abolition in the North East to commemorate the bicentenary of the Slave Trade Act 1807, resulting in a partnership exhibition and virtual resource in the city hosted by the University of Aberdeen. By undertaking this research and by working with partners over the next two years there will be new narratives developed to contribute to Aberdeen and the North East's connection with slavery and its abolition. 3.6 and 3.7 will be funded through existing staffing resource.

3.7 The Museums and Galleries team is also embedding a longer-term plan to increase representation in the Collection ensuring current collecting is reflective of the historic and contemporary diverse community in Aberdeen.

This includes:

- Establishing best practice relating to re-naming artworks with potentially divisive or offensive titles.
- Adding a layer of interpretation throughout existing displays exploring links in Aberdeen's history, art history, and use of commodities to slavery and colonialism.
- Bringing more voices, diversity and representation into the interpretation of the existing collection through interventions within collection displays.
- Engaging in open dialogue and public seminars to better understand the depth of colonial influence on the city's collections. And being part of the nationwide consultation and discussion led by Museums Galleries Scotland to represent a more accurate portrayal of Scotland's colonial and slavery history.

- Undertaking consultation on the current Collection Development Policy 2019-2023 in preparation for revision.  
<https://advisor.museumsandheritage.com/news/scottish-government-seeks-accurate-portrayal-slavery-colonial-history-museum-collections/>

3.8 In addition, Council officers working with Culture Aberdeen have been in dialogue with Creative Scotland regarding establishing a new Diversity Agent for Change post in Aberdeen. The post holder will be placed in a local arts organisation in the city or the Local Authority and will facilitate a dialogue about equality and diversity within organisations leading to positive change, creating an environment where the fundamental importance of equality, diversity and inclusion is understood, and creative activity is valued and vital to the lives of everyone. This funding opportunity is led by Creative Scotland and is due to be launched later this year.

#### 4. Funding Options

4.1 Creative Scotland - Create: Inclusion funding stream opening soon  
This fund seeks to increase the diversity of people in the arts, screen and creative industries. Applicants can seek funding to help them progress, develop their creative and professional practice, their capacity or to support them to take professional and creative risks. The Fund is open to individual creative practitioners, organisations, groups and networks in the arts, screen and creative industries.

<https://www.creativescotland.com/funding/funding-programmes/targeted-funding/createinclusion#:~:text=This%20fund%20seeks%20to%20increase,take%20professional%20and%20creative%20risks>

4.2 Creative Debuts - Black Artist Grants  
£2,000 given out monthly to black artists in the UK, with each artist selected receiving £500 each.

The BAG offers no-strings attached financial support to help the selected artists in whatever area they want –to make new work, buy equipment or materials, travel, research, visit exhibitions or conferences, or to even just cover some life expenses. <https://creativedebuts.co.uk/bag/>

4.3 Jerwood Arts

Jerwood Arts is the leading independent funder dedicated to supporting outstanding UK artists, curators and producers to develop and thrive. They collaborate with organisations across art forms to imagine a more sustainable sector. Their programmes provide transformative opportunities for early-career individuals through awards, fellowships and commissions, and they present exhibitions in their gallery in London

and on tour nationally. Their work is grounded in listening and responding to artists' needs and valuing and supporting diversity and inclusion in all their forms. Covid-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement have laid bare the lack of resilience in the arts, surfaced deeply embedded racism across the arts, and created a grim economic forecast.

<https://jerwoodarts.org/our-funding/>

#### 4.4 Esmée Fairbairn

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation aims to improve the quality of life for people and communities throughout the UK both now and in the future. They do this by funding the charitable work of organisations that are building an inclusive, creative and sustainable society.

Examples of projects funded under Social Change and Arts:

<https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/operation-black-vote-obv>

<https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/tara-arts>

#### 4.5 Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust - Rights and Justice Programme

Grants are available to support projects aimed at promoting racial justice and equality of opportunity as a basis for a harmonious multi-racial, multi-ethnic society in the UK. Application deadline 30/11/2020

<https://www.jrct.org.uk/funding-priorities>