

ANGUS COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENTAL & LEISURE SERVICES COMMITTEE – 16 OCTOBER 2003

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF BRECHIN TOWN HOUSE MUSEUM

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF LEISURE SERVICES

ABSTRACT

This report outlines the proposed development of the remainder of Brechin Town House Museum which has been agreed with the Friends organisation.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that: -

- a) the Committee agrees to the development of the upper floor of Brechin Town House Museum as outlined in the report.
- b) The Cultural Services Manager in consultation with the Director of Property Services prepares costed plans of the development and, in partnership with the Friends of Brechin Town House Museum seeks external funding.

2. BACKGROUND

The Policy and Resources Committee agreed on 29 October 2002 (Report No 1280/02) to open the ground floor of Brechin Town House as a museum by transferring the town museum from the annexe to the library there. The Committee further agreed that the Cultural Services Manager meet with the Friends of Brechin Town House Museum (the Friends) to agree upon the development of the upper floor of the building.

The ground floor of Brechin Town House opened to the public on 2 August 2003, and is to be officially opened by the Provost on 30 October 2003 (Report No 957/03). The museum tells the story of the ancient city, from its beginnings in the ninth century to the present day.

Andy Kerr, MSP, Minister for Finance and Public Services, visited the museum on 7 August including the undeveloped upper floor. He praised the Council for the initiative, and wished it well with the development of the remainder of the building.

Meetings have been held with the Friends, and an agreed plan of development is outlined below.

- a) The remainder of the ground floor comprises of two vaulted cells. One of these will be restored to a prison cell, when it was referred to as one of the worst prisons in Scotland. The other cell will be reconstructed into the medieval Scriptorium of the Cathedral, where priests wrote Latin charters on vellum and a record of Scotland's Kings was kept. Both displays will include realistic models and will be created to achieve an authentic late medieval atmosphere by Cultural Services staff.
- b) The stairwell leading to the upper floor will be redecorated to a gallery standard in order to display a wide selection of the works of David Waterson RE already in the Council's museum collections. This will mirror the stairwell in the Meffan, Forfar where a similar selection of the works of James Watterson Herald are displayed.
- c) A lift be installed to permit disabled access to the upper floor. Space for this on the ground floor was allocated prior to the museum renovation.

- d) The whole of the upper floor be renovated, with the room at the east of the building to be gutted or converted to an art gallery capable of attracting a regular programme of exhibitions. Seating would also be provided, in order that various cultural events could be held there including lectures, poetry and musical events.

This gallery would be available for hire to community and commercial organisations in the same way as the present galleries in our libraries and museums are currently, thus providing an element of income.

The middle room would largely be taken up with the installation of the lift and the provision of a storage room for chairs for the gallery. The small room to the rear would also be restored as far as possible to its former appearance, and it would also be used for smaller changing exhibitions and displays.

The development of the displays in the two vaulted cells on the ground floor can be accommodated within the Cultural Services work programme. The development of the upper floor will, however require to be costed and sources of external funding will have to be sought in conjunction with the Friends.

A display of the proposals will be produced and will be made accessible in the museum for members of the public to view.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The development of the remainder of the ground floor of Brechin Town House can be contained within the Leisure Services Revenue Budget for 2003/4. This consists of, in the main Design Team staff time.

The development of the upper floor will require external funding, and the Scottish Arts Council, Heritage Lottery Fund and other funding bodies will be approached.

A costed report on this work will be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee.

4. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

There are no Human Rights Implications arising from this Report.

5. CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, the Director of Law and Administration and the Director of Finance have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

JOHN R ZIMNY
DIRECTOR OF LEISURE SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NOTE: No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied on to any material extent in preparing this report.