



West Lothian Council

COUNCIL EXECUTIVE

GRASSROOTS PUBLIC ART GRANTS

REPORT BY HEAD OF DEVELOPMENT AND REGULATORY SERVICES AND HEAD OF CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to advise on the current Grassroots Public Art Grant scheme and to seek endorsement of the projects recommended for grants.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council Executive:

- approves the allocation of £44,000 from the council's Public Art Fund to the Grassroots Public Art Grant scheme; and
- approves the four schemes recommended as recipients of grants under the Grassroots scheme with a subsequent paper to follow in due course reviewing the scheme within a wider report on the progress of public art in West Lothian.

C SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values

- Focusing on our customers' needs
- Being honest, open and accountable
- Making best use of our resources
- Working in partnership

II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)

The project supports the West Lothian Local Plan, the council's Cultural Strategy and the Public Art Strategy. The recommended use of the Public Art Fund is in keeping with the approved Supplementary Planning Guidance: Developer Contributions for Public Art Projects.

III Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)

The Grassroots Public Art Grants scheme comprises £44,000 from the council's Public Art Fund, which is generated through developer contributions, £50,000 awarded from the National Lottery administered through the Scottish Arts Council and £5,000 from West Lothian on the Move.

IV Consultations

The selection of the recommended recipients of the Grassroots Public Art Grants was undertaken, in accordance with the Public Art Strategy and the Scottish Art Council's requirements by a specially convened Public Art Strategy Group panel. It is expected that the successful candidates will work with their communities in developing their projects with presentations to the relevant Local Area Committees. Some projects may require planning permission and liaison with a range of consultees, services and bodies before implementation. Finance confirm that there are sufficient resources in the Public Art Fund to support the project.

D TERMS OF REPORT

The council's commitment to the promotion of public art as a contributor to the amenity of its communities is set out in principle in the West Lothian Local Plan, dealt with in detail in the Public Art Strategy (approved 19 August 2008) and underpinned by the Supplementary Planning Guidance: Developer Contributions for Public Art Projects.

The Public Art Fund, which benefits from contributions from developers undertaking certain types of new development, contains £68,950 generated by 10 planning applications. The new developments currently within the planning process will add to this considerably when the Core Development Areas come on stream. There is currently no agreed standard process for disbursement of the funds, but as stated in the council's approved Public Art Strategy, it is intended that the funds will be used to benefit the communities being impacted by the new developments generating the funds.

In addition to the funds generated by developer contributions, some developers have agreed to provide public art directly with such commitments being covered by planning conditions and legal agreements. Developments at Wester Inch, Bathgate, Glenmorangie at Alba Cmapus, Heartlands at Whitburn and the new crematorium at Starlaw, Livingston all fit into this category. In these cases a high degree of community engagement is expected.

There are a number of public art initiatives being pursued through the town centre improvements initiatives being funded by the Scottish Government. There are public art components in a number of council projects including the Burgh Halls, Linlithgow and Howden Park Centre, Livingston, financed through the partnership funding arrangements with Scottish Arts Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

As a means of developing capacity in both the council and the wider community and as a means of identifying and bringing forward potential projects and maximising the potential of the Fund, the council applied to the Scottish Arts Council under its National Lottery funded Grassroots Public Art scheme using a proportion of the Public Art Fund as a basis for match funding. The application was successful and an award of £50,000 was made. The council contribution of £44,000 from the Public Art Fund was further matched by £5,000 from Arts Services and £5,000 from West Lothian on the Move. The resulting West Lothian Grassroots Project has invited applications for grants in the range of £10,000 - £24,000 from across the whole of the West Lothian community.

During summer 2009 details of the scheme were circulated widely to community groups and through community venues and public facilities such as doctors' surgeries and post offices. Presentations on the scheme were given to all Locality Planning Officers at one of their regular meetings, to the West Lothian Physical Activity Alliance and to the public at the first of a series of public art seminars at Howden Park Centre.

The scheme recognises that art can make a substantial contribution to the character of an area and can help encourage individual well-being and local confidence and seeks projects in which the community works with artists to deliver public art projects that involve community well-being and the environment. Ideas have been encouraged for any kind of public art, temporary or permanent that can demonstrate a lasting benefit to the community. The aim is that the public should feel better about themselves and their community and that the artwork should take place within accessible public spaces. Projects for under valued, under appreciated or under used places have been particularly encouraged. Every project must engage a professional artist, who should be on board from an early stage.

Applicants have been assessed by the specially convened Public Art Strategy Group of officers from the council and the Scottish Arts Council in a two-stage process. This was in accordance with the council's Public Art Strategy which identifies the group as the means for providing expert recommendations to the council on the quality of public art projects and on the disbursement of the Public Art Fund. Of the nine applications which reached the second stage, four have been identified as meeting the criteria of the project and therefore worthy of support with grants of between £20,000 and £24,000 each. The project is now in a position to advise applicants of the outcome of the assessment and to allow the successful candidates to proceed to the artist engagement, development and implementation stages.

Planning and Arts Services have a shared view that the model has proved highly effective and could form the basis for future rounds of disbursement, irrespective of the theme adopted or whether further external funding can be attracted. Of the applications that are not recommended for awards several could, subject to further satisfactory work, become viable schemes that might be supported by the council's Public Art Fund in future. It is intended that such applicants will be advised of this opportunity and encouraged to develop their interest in public art through participation in seminars and other activities with support from Arts Services.

The applications which are recommended for the grants are those which best meet the assessment criteria of quality and creativity of concept, lasting benefit to the community, demonstration of the applicant's commitment and ability to realise the project and the potential to enhance health and well-being.

The recommended schemes will also result in a geographical spread of projects across West Lothian and comply with the strategy and supplementary planning guidance which requires that funds from developers should be used in the

communities affected by the developments generating the contributions.

The applications recommended for grants are:

- The Sunny Dale Association for an art based garden at Mayfield Community House, Armadale. This will complement volunteer action to improve the environment of this facility. Grant: £24,000
- Shale People Project of artworks in Broxburn Town Centre celebrating the town's association with the shale industry led by local artist Shirley-Anne Murdoch. This, if successful, will attract further funding through the Broxburn Town Centre Improvement initiative. Grant: £24,000
- A project for Dedridge Burn Plantation by members of DEEP (Dedridge Environment Ecology Project) through which the group will work with an artist to meet its aspirations for the location. Grant: £21,600
- The pARTners in the Park project for the commissioning and implementation of art to enhance and give identity to an underused area of ground adjacent to the Boghall Drop in Centre, Bathgate. It is intended that all participants in this project will make and own a replica or fragment of the completed work. Grant: £20,700

A list of all applications considered in the second stage assessment is included in Appendix 1.

E CONCLUSION

It is recommended that the sum of £44,000 be allocated from the council's Public Art Fund towards the Grassroots Public Art Grants scheme, that the four schemes identified in the report be offered grants under the Grassroots initiative and that a subsequent report be brought back to the Executive on the implementation of the schemes and the project as a whole.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

West Lothian Local Plan.

Public Art Strategy 2008-2011.

Supplementary Planning Guidance - Developer Requirements for Public Art Projects.

Appendices/Attachments: Appendix 1: Stage 2 Applications, Grassroots Public Art Grants Brochure.

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