

SPEAKER'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WORKS OF ART**Note of the meeting held on 10 June 2020 at 2.00pm [INF01]**

[Virtual meeting]

Members present: Hywel Williams (Chair)
Simon Baynes
Sarah Champion
Theo Clarke
Chris Evans
Sally-Ann Hart
Daniel Kawczynski
Barbara Keeley
Kim Johnson
Dean Russell

Apologies: Caroline Nokes

In attendance: Melissa Hamnett, Curator of Works of Art and Head of Heritage Collections
Pernille Norregaard, Media Officer
Grace Saull, Assistant Curator
Melanie Unwin, Deputy Curator
Sileas Wood, Assistant Curator

1) Introductions

The Chair welcomed the members of the new Committee.

2) Introduction by the Head of Heritage Collections

Melissa Hamnett, Head of Heritage Collections, briefed the Committee.

Ms Hamnett provided an overview of her work since joining the House in May 2019, the priorities for the Curator's Office and the proposed strategic direction for the works of art collection in the current Parliament. Collections care and widening access, such as through online channels, would be among the key priorities for the current Parliament, while capital building projects such as the Northern Estate Programme and Restoration and Renewal would provide a significant opportunity to improve the conservation, documentation and storage of the Collection for future generations. There was also a legacy benefit through Parliament's investment in the creative economy which would encourage craft and conservation skills as well as other research partnerships.

The following points were discussed:

- Members welcomed a proposal for an introductory tour of artworks on the Estate;

- it was noted that more could be done to improve the Collection's online presence of and ease of communication for enquirers; and
- it was recognised that while steps had been taken to focus on increasing the diversity of representation in the Collection, there was still much to be done.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the introduction by the Head of Heritage Collections.

3) Financial statement [WOA 01a and WOA 01b]

Melanie Unwin, Deputy Curator, briefed the Committee.

Ms Unwin reported that the Committee had ended the 2019/20 financial year with £16,500 remaining in its acquisitions budget as it had only met on four occasions during that time. For the current year, the statement included projected spending for portrait commissions and additional expenditure for the 2019 General Election Artist commission. There was £45,000 remaining in the budget for the current year with an additional draw-down of £25,000 available on application to the Director of Finance.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the financial statement.

4) Election Artist 2019 [WOA 02]

Sileas Wood, Assistant Curator, and Nicky Hirst, Election Artist 2019, briefed the Committee.

Ms Hirst gave a visual presentation from her studio on the work undertaken for the commission to date. Installation costs for the final artwork would be covered from within the Committee's budget and the Curator's Office would explore the practical considerations for its display.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update on the 2019 Election Artist commission.

5) Impact of Covid-19 on the management of the collection

Melissa Hamnett, Head of Heritage Collections, briefed the Committee.

Ms Hamnett provided a summary of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on staff, ongoing projects and current work progressing in relation to the works of art collection. She raised the following points:

- access to the Estate was restricted so that the work of the Heritage Collections team was limited to essential projects, though staff in other relevant onsite teams had been issued with guidance so that they could check and monitor artworks on behalf of the curators;

- the Curator's Office currently had limited ability to carry out picture hangs for Members' offices;
- much had been done to engage with the lenders and borrowers to confirm that artworks on inward/outward loan were suitably cared for;
- a new post of Heritage Salvage Co-ordinator had been created to work with various stakeholders on incident reporting, salvage plans and business continuity for the collections; and
- the pandemic had highlighted the need to improve the incident response triage and the need for a procedure to manage the collection during a pandemic.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

6) Heritage Collections Online Services [WOA 03]

Grace Saull, Assistant Curator, briefed the Committee.

Ms Saull provided an update on the Heritage Collections Online Services Project (HCOS) to develop a new website, which would bring Parliament's heritage collections together for the first time. The project had been put on hold by the Parliamentary Digital Service and the loss of the current Art in Parliament website meant that the Collection would have a significantly reduced online presence in the interim.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update and **agreed** to the proposed method of project updates.

7) Updates, acquisitions, displays, moves and loans

a. VE and VJ Day commemorations [WOA 04]

Sileas Wood, Assistant Curator, briefed the Committee.

Ms Wood provided an update on the Heritage Collection activities to mark the 75th anniversaries of Victory in Europe and Victory in Japan Day in Parliament.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the Heritage Collection activities to mark the 75th anniversaries of Victory in Europe and Victory in Japan Day in Parliament.

b. World War II bomb damage display [WOA 05]

Grace Saull, Assistant Curator, briefed the Committee.

Ms Saull put forward a proposal for works from the Collection to be displayed on the Officials' Corridor at the Back of the Chair to mark the 75th anniversary in 2020 of Victory in Europe Day and Victory over Japan Day.

Decision

The Committee **agreed** the proposal for a display at the Officials' Corridor/Back of the Chair.

8) Procedural and administrative matters

Rob Cope, Secretary, briefed the Committee.

Decision

The Committee **agreed**:

- that the quorum of the Committee would be three Members; and
- that the Committee may reach decisions by correspondence;

The Committee also **agreed** to delegate the following responsibilities to the Chair:

- agreeing the circulated agenda for meetings (subject to the right of any Committee member to raise issues for the Committee to consider);
- engaging in correspondence on Committee matters which is not sufficiently significant to require approval by the Committee;
- arranging informal meetings on matters relating to the Committee's remit;
- authorising the issue of press notices; and
- taking decisions which are consequential on matters already decided by the Committee or which are urgent.

9) Any other business

Black Lives Matter

The Committee held a discussion on diversity of representation in the Collection in light of the Black Lives Matter protests. Several Members reiterated the point that whilst steps had been taken to increase the diversity of representation in the Collection through recent acquisitions and commissions, there was still much more to be done. The Chair noted that it was an important issue on which a full discussion should be held at a future meeting.

The Welsh language

The Chair noted the lack of educational and interpretational materials available in the Welsh language and asked if the curators could raise it with colleagues in the Participation Team.

10) Date and time of the next meeting

The Committee will next meet in July (date to be confirmed).