

SPEAKER'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WORKS OF ART**Note of the meeting held on 19 January 2021 at 4.30pm [INF07]**

[Virtual meeting]

Members present: Hywel Williams (Chair)

Simon Baynes
Sarah Champion
Sally-Ann Hart
Kim Johnson
Gagan Mohindra
Caroline Nokes
Barbara Keeley
Dean Russell

In attendance:

Gary Connor, Media Officer
Melissa Hamnett, Curator of Works of Art and Head of Heritage Collections
Lorcan O'Donoghue, Media Officer
Grace Saull, Assistant Curator
Melanie Unwin, Deputy Curator

1) Informal Note [INF06]

The Committee **agreed** the informal note of the meeting 15 December 2020.

2) Financial statement [WOA 34]

Melissa Hamnett, Head of Heritage Collections and Curator of Works of Art, briefed the Committee.

Ms Hamnett reported that the financial statement had been updated to reflect the Committee's recent acquisition of the silver salver commemorating the knighthood of William Jenkins MP.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the financial statement.

3) Collections care

Melissa Hamnett, Head of Heritage Collections and Curator of Works of Art, briefed the Committee.

Ms Hamnett reported that Parliament was to receive eleven oil cartoons by Sir Edward Poynter for the mosaics in the arches above Central Lobby that had been on long-term loan to the Victoria and Albert Museum. This presented an opportunity to carry out a full conservation programme on the cartoons.

The following points were then discussed:

- it was noted that, while the current priority was to address the conservation and storage requirements of the artworks, display opportunities would be considered as soon as circumstances allowed; and
- it was noted that conservation costs would be met from a central conservation budget overseen by the Heritage Collections Team.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

4) Inward loan renewals [WOA 35]

Melanie Unwin, Deputy Curator, briefed the Committee.

Ms Unwin presented a list of the artworks on inward loan from private lenders that were imminently due for renewal and sought the Committee's views on whether to renew the loans and, where applicable, to agree the term of the renewal. A second paper which covered loan renewals from institutional lenders would be presented to the Committee before the end of March.

The following points were then discussed:

- It was recognised that the curators performed due diligence for inward loans and lenders to identify and manage any reputational risks to the House.
- It was noted that the inward loan of artworks provided an important opportunity to fill gaps in the Collection.

Decision

The Committee **approved** the suggested renewal period for the loans listed in the paper.

5) Collections Advisory Group

Melissa Hamnett, Head of Heritage Collections and Curator of Works of Art, briefed the Committee.

Ms Hamnett provided an update on work to establish a Collections Advisory Group. She had met with the directors of Diversity and Inclusion in both Houses and with colleagues in HR and the Commons Governance Office to clarify the process and policy on the appointment and remuneration of experts appointed to the Group. In addition, the Heritage Strategy Group had discussed potential areas of expertise that could be beneficial to the work of the Group.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

6) BAME artwork commission [WOA 36]

Melissa Hamnett, Head of Heritage Collections and Curator of Works of Art, and Melanie Unwin, Deputy Curator, briefed the Committee.

Ms Hamnett and Ms Unwin gave a visual presentation on the proposal to commission an artwork to mark the BAME contribution to Parliament, provided examples of previous artwork commissions and residences overseen by the Committee and looked at examples of comparable public art projects.

The following points were then discussed:

- A Member said that care should be taken to ensure that the commission celebrated the contributions of those from BAME backgrounds and promoted cohesion.
- A Member felt that the selection of a topical theme would stimulate discussion and debate.
- A Member noted that selecting and highlighting the story of an individual could help to bring the artwork alive rather than adopting a broad concept or theme.
- A Member suggested that parliamentary ‘firsts’ be considered for the theme of the work.

Decision

The Committee:

- **noted** the update with the expectation that it would receive further updates on progress in the coming months; and
- **noted** two proposals for the artwork commission submitted by We Too Built Britain **[WOA 39a and WOA 39b]**

7) Updates, acquisitions, displays, moves and loans

a) Works of art collection moves

Melanie Unwin, Deputy Curator, briefed the Committee.

Ms Unwin sought the Committee’s approval of a request from the Collections Registrar to extend the pause of new picture selections that had been approved in November. Under the proposal, the moratorium on picture selections would be extended current lockdown until the current lockdown had ended, when the decision would be reviewed in light of any developments. She added that in the interim the Curator’s Office had halted non-essential work but continued to undertake construction and enabling works essential for Strategic Estate projects; overseen the removal of onsite artworks that were at risk; and responded to salvage incidents.

Decision

The Committee **agreed** to the Registrar's request to extend the pause of picture selections until the current lockdown had ended.

b) Heritage Collections Online Services (website update) [WOA 37]

Grace Saull, Assistant Curator, briefed the Committee.

Ms Saull reported that development of the new Heritage Collections website was progressing well, and a significant milestone had been reached with the completion of the data build of the website. The design process had also begun, and website visuals would be presented to the Committee at its next meeting. In addition, Ms Saull presented a list of priority topics that would be published on the new website when it went live.

Decision

The Committee:

- **noted** the update; and
- **endorsed** the list of priority topics for the website.

8) Any other business

Heritage Collections monthly highlights report [WOA 38]

Grace Saull, Assistant Curator, briefed the Committee.

The Committee **noted** the highlights report for December.

7) Date and time of the next meeting

The Committee will next meet on **Tuesday 23 February at 4.30pm.**