

SPEAKER'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WORKS OF ART**Note of the meeting held on 13 July 2021 at 4.30pm [INF03]**

[Virtual meeting]

Members present: Hywel Williams (Chair)

Simon Baynes

Sally-Ann Hart

Barbara Keeley

Gagan Mohindra

Caroline Nokes

Dean Russell

Apologies: Kim Johnson

In attendance: Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury, Lord Speaker's Panel on Works of Art

Melissa Hamnett, Curator of Works of Art and Head of Heritage Collections

Lorcan O'Donoghue, Media Officer

Edward McCarthy, Secretary to the Lord Speaker's Panel on Works of Art

Grace Saull, Assistant Curator

Melanie Unwin, Deputy Curator

1) Informal Note

The Committee **agreed** the informal note of the meeting on 15 June 2021.

Matters arisingFuture meeting arrangements

The Committee considered its meeting arrangements following the return of the House in September.

The Committee **agreed** that it would hold hybrid meetings in the autumn to allow Members to participate virtually if they wished to do so.

2) Financial statement

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 acquisition of the portrait of Edwin S Montague MP by Estelle d'Avigdor Nathan.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the financial statement.

3) Potential acquisition – ‘Division’ by Adam Dant

Melanie Unwin, Deputy Curator, briefed the Committee.

Ms Unwin gave a visual presentation inviting the Committee to consider the acquisition of ‘Division’, a print by the artist Adam Dant documenting the locations of division bells in the Westminster area. The print included a depiction of the ongoing restoration of Big Ben, of which there was only one other work depicting the scaffolding in the Collection, as well as the current New Scotland Yard building, of which there were no depictions in the Collection.

Decision

The Committee **agreed** to purchase a copy of the print for £600 for the Collection.

4) Updates, acquisitions, moves and loans**a) Outward loan request**

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

Ms Hamnett presented a request from a national institution for the outward loan of four artworks from the contemporary portrait collection. If loaned, the absence of the display of these would be backfilled with other artworks currently in storage on the Northern Estate.

Decision

The Committee **agreed** the outward loan request.

b) Inward loan renewals (part three)

Melanie Unwin, Deputy Curator, briefed the Committee.

Ms Unwin sought the views of the Committee on whether to renew several artworks on inward loan.

Decision

The Committee:

- agreed the loans for renewal; and
- endorsed the recommended renewal periods.

c) Launch of Heritage Collections Online Services

Grace Saull, Assistant Curator, briefed the Committee.

Ms Saull demonstrated the new Heritage Collections website that was launched in June. The launch had gone smoothly, though a few minor display bugs had been reported on some devices. Work would now focus on ensuring that the website was updated with new content, better information for artworks from the Collection and improved search results.

The Chair and several Members commented that they were very pleased with the design and functionality of the website.

The following points were then discussed:

- The Chair asked if any user feedback had been received on the new website. Ms Saull said that the website had been ‘soft launched’ so that it was first rolled out to internal groups to identify and resolve issues and seek feedback before it was released and promoted more widely
- It was noted that accessibility had been improved and that the website would eventually include additional enhancements such as British Sign Language interpretation layered over video content.
- The potential for working with schools to promote the website and inform and educate about the Collection was raised, as was the possibility of partnering with broadcasters. Melanie Unwin (Deputy Curator, jobshare, in attendance) said that the Heritage Strategy Group had discussed the potential for partnership opportunities to promote Parliament’s heritage collections.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

d) Forthcoming office moves and works affecting Works of Art

Melissa Hamnett, Head of Heritage Collections and Curator of Works of Art, and Melanie Unwin, Deputy Curator, briefed the Committee on the following office moves and works affecting Works of Art:

- Norman Shaw North decant and refurbishment of I Derby Gate – the curators had undertaken a site visit at Derby Gate and had identified an alternative location in the building for the two paintings to be displayed in the entrance lobby after the location that was originally proposed was found to be unsuitable. The curators had written to all the Members due to be decanted from NSN to explain that any pictures from the Collection displayed in their offices would be moved to a temporary store and rehung in their new offices before the House returned in September.

- Terrace Cafeteria refresh – this presented an opportunity to refresh the artworks on display and it was suggested that the painting *The Building of Westminster Bridge* by Anderson (WOA 1164) be removed and replaced with *Westminster Bridge* by Antonio Joli (WOA 5548).

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

e) Tours of the Collection

Melanie Unwin, Deputy Curator, briefed the Committee.

Ms Unwin sought the Committee's views on a list of proposed tours of the Collection to be arranged for the autumn.

Decision

The Committee **endorsed** the list of tours which would be circulated after the meeting for Members to state their availability and preferences.

f) Collections care updates

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

Ms Hamnett gave a visual presentation on the conservation of the painting *Latimer Preaching before Edward VI at Paul's Cross, 1521* (WOA 2591) in the East Corridor that had suffered recurring surface changes, including mould growth, caused by water ingress in a void behind the wall. Reglazing the painting had been identified as a priority and members of the Heritage Collections Team visited Exeter College, Oxford, to learn about a pioneering technique using acrylic glaze to protect wall paintings of this nature. More information on how this technique could be used in Parliament was expected in due course.

A Member asked if the new glazing technique would be used to protect other works in the Collection and secure their future. Ms Hamnett said that by trialling the technique on the painting under discussion it was hoped that it could be rolled out to other such artworks across Parliament, though this would be subject to cost and connected to wider programmes such as Restoration and Renewal.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

5) Any other business

Collections Advisory Group

A Member asked if an agency had been selected for the recruitment of the external members of the Group. Ms Hamnett said that the contract had gone out to tender and that she and the other stakeholders overseeing the process were working with the

agencies that had responded to tighten their submissions to emphasise the need for the recruitment of external members that reflected a national reach and a breadth of disciplines.

Heritage Collections monthly highlights reports

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

Print on Demand

The Committee noted the print on demand statistics provided by the Retail Team

6) Date and time of the next meeting

The Committee will next meet on **Tuesday 14 September at 4.30pm.**