

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: THE PARK GALLERY: RELOCATION AND CONSULTATION
Meeting: LEISURE, TOURISM AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE
Date: 8 JUNE 2010
Author: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members of the Committee about the relocation of the Park Gallery within Callendar House and to review the responses to the consultation undertaken by Community Services following the decision to relocate.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The decision to relocate the Park Gallery to Callendar House was taken at the Leisure Tourism and Community Committee on 15 September 2009. This has been followed by an options appraisal to determine the most suitable location within Callendar House and a consultation exercise
- 2.2 The purpose of the consultation was to seek the views of funders, stakeholders, artists and the public to ensure that any issues identified are appropriately addressed in the relocation plan.
- 2.3 The consultation took the form of letters to key funders and stakeholders and a questionnaire aimed at the public, including visitors to and users of both the Gallery and Callendar House, and local artists.

3 LOCATION FOR THE PARK GALLERY

- 3.1 Following an options appraisal that looked at a range of possible locations for the Park Gallery in Callendar House, the most suitable space has been determined as the existing temporary exhibition gallery on the ground floor. This best replicates the existing Park Gallery space and is easily accessible for visitors. It is also easily accessible for off-loading works of art for exhibitions. The gallery can be secured against access during exhibition “set up” times. As the gallery is in a central position within Callendar House, it is anticipated that this will develop the audience for contemporary visual arts and crafts exhibitions and the visual arts assistants will be available to provide information and interpretation, as well as organising sales and providing security. In 2009 -10 there were 30738 visitors to Callendar House and 6788 to the Park Gallery so is hoped that visitor numbers to the Park Gallery will be increased and their understanding of contemporary arts facilitated. The exhibition space will continue to be branded as the “Park Gallery” with appropriate signage. Careful monitoring of visitor numbers to the gallery will allow an analysis of new audiences to take place.
- 3.2 As a consequence of relocating the Park Gallery into the current temporary exhibitions space (normally used for heritage based exhibitions), accommodation has been found on the second floor. The new heritage based exhibitions space will occupy a suite of rooms at the start of the Forbes’ Falkirk displays, which were opened in 1998. In turn, some of the information panels and displays from Forbes’ Falkirk will be condensed and refreshed to ensure that the whole exhibition continues to flow around the second floor.

- 3.3 The first exhibition in the new Park Gallery will open at the end of June, with works of art by Alan Davie, to celebrate his 90th year. Alan Davie is Scotland's longest living and working artist and is highly regarded locally, nationally and internationally.
- 3.4 Work on establishing the new heritage gallery space and making alterations to Forbes' Falkirk will start at the beginning of October, once the summer season (with peak visitor numbers) has come to an end, and will take approximately three months. During this period, access to the second floor will be limited. Supervised access will be provided for educational visits and pre-booked groups, but not to the general public, because of health and safety and security issues.

4. CONSULTATION: METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 A hard copy of the questionnaire was mailed to all people on the Callendar House and Park Gallery mailing list and artists' database; the questionnaire was also available online on the Falkirk Council website and additional print copies were mailed on request to people without internet access.
- 4.2 Funders and stakeholders whose views were sought included the Scottish Arts Council, Museums Galleries Scotland, Forth Valley College, VAGA (Visual Arts and Galleries Association), Artlink Central and VisitScotland and the letter sought to capture the organisation's view in general on the relocation, and any operational implications of the move; they were asked if the relocation:
- might have the potential to increase the number of visitors to contemporary art and craft exhibitions?
 - might encourage or deter artists from exhibiting their works? If the view was that artists may be deterred from exhibiting, what steps should Falkirk Council take to prevent this from happening?

They were also asked if, from their organisation's perspective, there might be any other factors or implications that should be considered as part of the relocation plan. Similar views were sought from local people, including local artists. A copy of the questionnaire is attached as Appendix 1.

- 4.3 The mail out of questionnaires took place in late December and the online community consultation went live on 31 December and ran until 5 February 2010.

5. SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRE

- 5.1 Percentages quoted related to the percentage of respondents answering each question; the total number of respondents (out of 418) is shown in brackets.
- 5.2 A total of 418 individual responses to the questionnaire were received of which 212 gave a local address; a further 93 were not from the Falkirk Council area but of these, 52 came from within a 30 minute drive time of the Gallery; 113 did not provide an address.

5.3 The responses showed that:

- 72% of respondents (297) were aware of the relocation decision prior to receiving the questionnaire;
- 90% (376) had previously visited an exhibition at the Park Gallery and of these 54% visited either every exhibition or 'as often as possible'. 86% (341) had visited Callendar House exhibitions and, of these, 37% visited every exhibition or 'as often as possible' and 54% visited 'only occasionally';
- 89% (326) rated exhibitions at the Park Gallery as either very good or good; 85% (291) rated exhibitions at Callendar House as very good or good;
- 40% (156) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement 'to what extent do you agree that adding a contemporary arts and craft exhibition space will enhance the overall visitor experience at Callendar House?'; 29.5% (115) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement 'to what extent do you agree that the relocation of the Park Gallery to Callendar House will help generate new audiences for contemporary art and crafts?';
- 48% of remaining respondents did highlight a range of other factors which they felt should be considered in the relocation plan and these included: potential impact on the fabric of Callendar House as an A-listed building; impact on/reduction of existing heritage displays and exhibitions; the need to ensure the range and quality of exhibitions is maintained; ensuring the new gallery space is fit-for purpose; the need to make improvements to parking and disabled access; effective marketing of the new facility; clear signage within the House and Park; the possible impact in terms of wear and tear of increased visitor numbers on Callendar House; finding a new use for the current Park Gallery to ensure the property is not left vacant. 4% of respondents thought the move was positive and that it would enhance the overall experience in Callendar House.

5.4 In terms of comments, respondents echoed comments that had been considered prior to the consultation that the relocation plan for the Gallery will need to consider the following:

- maintaining the ethos, feel and layout of the existing space (welcoming, light, good layout, exhibition content, staff knowledge);
- minimising the negative impact on the overall Callendar House visitor experience, including: no consequent loss of space devoted to heritage displays and exhibitions; ensuring the House's A-listing is not compromised;
- maintaining and, where possible improving, all aspects of accessibility including parking and disabled access; clear signage within the House and Park and effective promotion of the new facility.

6. SCOTTISH ARTS COUNCIL RESPONSE

6.1 The Park Gallery was funded in part by a national lottery award from the Scottish Arts Council. Members will be aware that such awards include conditions relating to potential repayment in the event that the original grant conditions are no longer fully delivered.

- 6.2 The Scottish Arts Council requested clarification on how the relocation will work in practice and a meeting took place with a representative of the Scottish Arts Council on 14 May 2010 to discuss the relocation proposals. At this meeting reassurance was given by Falkirk Council that the new location would deliver at least the same public benefit and artistic and educational programme as approved for the Park Gallery as part of the Lottery Grant and that the associated resources would be maintained. Further discussion will take place about the future use of the vacated Park Gallery.

7. SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FROM OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

- 7.1 Of the six stakeholders consulted, Forth Valley College and VisitScotland responded in writing and Museums Galleries Scotland requested a meeting with managers to discuss any implications for Callendar House and museum service; VAGA and Artlink did not respond.
- 7.2 Forth Valley College noted that 'Creative Industries staff believe....Callendar House would require considerable renovation and change to the fabric of the building to create a space which was appropriate for the display of contemporary artwork' and emphasised that if the space did not match that currently available in the Park Gallery, then the response of audiences might be less positive. In conclusion, the College stated its commitment to continue to support Falkirk Council's provision of contemporary art and craft and noted the 'well-balanced curatorship of the gallery'.
- 7.3 VisitScotland noted that 'as long as the Gallery is offered the same level of space, facilities and promotion as it is in the stable block then there is the opportunity to attract either the same level or more visitors....'
- 7.4 Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS) was concerned about the rationale for the relocation and the impact that it might have on Callendar House.

8. IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Financial

A capital budget of £50,000 will be sought from the Leisure and Culture Capital Fund for the establishment of the new heritage based exhibitions space.

8.2 Legal

There are no legal implications.

8.3 Personnel

There are no human resource implications.

8.4 Policy

There are no policy implications.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The new Park Gallery will open to the public in Callendar House at the end of June, in the current temporary exhibitions space. It is anticipated that the relocation to this space will address many of the concerns expressed by the consultation respondents.
- 9.2 The new heritage based exhibition space will open to the public in January 2011.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1** It is recommended that the Leisure, Tourism and Community Committee note the contents of this report.

.....

Director of Community Services

Date: 17 May 2010

Contact Officer: Sue Selwyn, Head of Cultural and Lifelong Learning. Tel: 0903.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil.