

**FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**Subject : THE PARK GALLERY**  
**Meeting : LEISURE TOURISM & COMMUNITY COMMITTEE**  
**Date : 15 SEPTEMBER 2009**  
**Author : DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 At the meeting of Falkirk Council on 11 February 2009, the budget report noted that a review of the Park Gallery would be undertaken with a view to reducing operating costs. The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Committee with information about the Park Gallery to enable them to consider such future options.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Park Gallery is situated in Callendar Park, adjacent to the Callendar House Tea Room. It was opened in 2001 to provide a venue for contemporary arts and crafts as a complement to the historical displays in Callendar House.
- 2.2 The refurbishment of the Gallery was supported by funding of circa £90K from the Scottish Arts Council and the Gallery continues to receive financial support for programmes and projects from the same source. The Park Gallery is one of 40 Scottish Galleries participating in the UK Own Art scheme, administered in Scotland by the Scottish Arts Council and designed to encourage the purchase of contemporary art and crafts.
- 2.3 There is a strong interdependency with other facilities in the Park (Callendar House, the Teashop and the Park itself) and programmes link to other initiatives such as the Big Draw and Homecoming Scotland
- 2.4 The venue has the appropriate infrastructure e.g. appropriate security and environmental systems installed together with appropriate insurance cover, which allows the venue to hire or curate exhibitions that require such conditions. It is a dedicated and recognised space in which to exhibit works of art or crafts to a high standard.
- 2.5 However, it should be said that there are some drawbacks to the venue. In the first place it is quite a small space, comprising two galleries with low headroom. This has restricted the range and scale of professional exhibitions that can be shown. It also lacks storage and staff facilities, which again has placed restrictions on workshops and other activities. A larger venue with good ancillary facilities would allow a higher profile for exhibitions and activities.

**3. STRATEGIC CONTEXT**

- 3.1 The Park Gallery is one element of a strategic approach to arts development in the Falkirk Council area and sits within the national context of the Scottish Arts Council's priorities for the visual arts in Scotland.
- 3.2 Falkirk Council has an excellent track record in supporting visual artists and craftspeople and has established a national reputation for hosting contemporary art and craft exhibitions. The Park Gallery is a venue with which artists and exhibition lenders are happy to be associated. This is recognised by the Scottish Arts Council and has helped

the Council secure funding to deliver the Falkirk and Stirling Visual Arts and Crafts Awards Schemes, supported by SAC and delivered in partnership with Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils. Cultural Services hosted a Craftmakers' Networking Day at the Park Gallery designed to provide information to craftmakers on business support and development which attracted 25 local makers. Forth Valley College also uses a number of exhibitions, including the arts and craft exhibition "Winter Warmth" as study visits for students

#### 4. PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

- 4.1 The programme of exhibitions and associated events is wide ranging and seeks to balance increasing visitor numbers with engaging local people and visitors in contemporary arts and crafts. The aim is both to attract those who already have an interest in contemporary arts and crafts and also to encourage those for whom visiting exhibitions is a new experience. The Gallery has a key role to play in supporting emerging local artists and for supporting students from Forth Valley College to show their works in a professional environment.
- 4.2 The programme is varied, with exhibitions covering a wide range of artistic media – paintings, sculpture, photography, ceramics and glass, textiles and crafts. Some of the exhibitions are hired from other organisations, some are developed in house and some are the result of a partnership approach. There is an educational programme linked to exhibitions, that encourages children, young people and adults to become involved with the arts through workshops and talks
- 4.3 Equally, the Gallery exhibits works by nationally renowned artists, thus giving local residents the opportunity to view and enjoy art works not usually accessible to them. Recent examples have included the artist David Hockney, the photographer Man Ray, the exhibition of paintings, drawings and prints by Joan Eardley and a major retrospective of the works of Lesley Banks (a local artist of national repute).
- 4.4 *Visitor Figures*
- 4.4.1 Visitor figures for the Park Gallery in 2006 /07 were 4744; in 2007 /08 they were 4138 and in 2008/09 they totaled 4143. Whilst these figures have remained fairly consistent, there has been an increase in media interest and publicity for the Park Gallery programme. This has resulted in an increase in visitor figures for the 2009/10 season. During 2009 there has been a number of high profile exhibitions, including "Documenting Life", paintings and drawings by Joan Eardley and Audrey Walker; "Lesley Banks: 25 years of Painting" and "Marion Smith: Long View" . As a result visitor figures have increased considerably. During the period April to July 2009 visitor numbers totaled 3115 (in 2008 it was 1333 for the same period). The exhibitions are attracting visitors from beyond the Falkirk Council area who are coming specifically to visit the Gallery

#### 5. OPERATING COSTS

- 5.1 For the financial year 2009/2010 the Park Gallery will have the following direct operating costs. The detail is set out below:

Staffing Costs	£27,360
Property Costs	£4,490
Supplies and Services	<u>£18,640</u>
	<b>£50,490</b>

## **6. OPTIONS FOR REDUCING OPERATING COSTS**

6.1 A number of options for reducing operating costs are listed below.

### **6.2 Reducing Opening Hours**

The Park Gallery's current opening hours are as follows:

- Monday to Saturday 10 am – 4pm ( October – March)
- Monday to Saturday 10am – 5pm and Sunday 2pm – 5pm (April to September)

6.3 The Gallery is also closed to the public during periods of exhibition changeover. This is standard practice. The Gallery could be closed for one or more days per week or open for afternoons only. If the Gallery were closed for one additional day per week, the annual saving in staff costs would be £4,378. This would be multiplied if there was more than one additional closed day. The reduction in opening hours may have implications for staff contracts and consultation with trade unions would be required. This is explained further in 10.1.

6.4 In terms of implications, a reduction in opening hours would require promotion to alert potential visitors. In general, visitors can be deterred by irregular opening hours.

### **6.5 Reducing the Park Gallery Exhibition and Workshop Programme**

As stated in Section 2, the Gallery was established with funding from the Scottish Arts Council, to provide a venue for contemporary arts and crafts. Many of the exhibitions are purchased as part of touring programmes, whilst others are developed by staff in partnership with the artists concerned. The costs associated with the development of this programme are £18,640. This includes promotion and publicity, insurance cover and the purchase of material.

The number of exhibitions per annum could be reduced, with an associated 50% reduction in costs of £9,320, although this could leave the Gallery closed for long periods between shows.

## **7. OPTIONS FOR RELOCATION**

7.1 As explained above the Park Gallery provides a dedicated and nationally recognised venue with a clear focus both on exhibiting contemporary arts and crafts, and encouraging participation in the arts. It also has appropriate security and environmental measures in place. There is no other similar venue managed by Falkirk Council, so relocation is likely require further investment.

7.2 A number of locations have been considered:

### **7.2.1 Callendar House**

Callendar House has one temporary exhibition space which is used for object based exhibitions of historical interest and significance. Many of the exhibitions are curated from the museum collections, allowing visitors the opportunity to view artifacts from the collection which are not usually on display. The exhibition space has been designed to allow for object based displays and in its current guise would not be suitable for immediate relocation.

However, it is at least 12 years since Callendar House fully opened to the public. Professionally recognised standards suggest that “permanent” museum displays should be refreshed on a 10-15 year cycle, so the current provision of displays and services within the House should be examined with a view to upgrading and refurbishment. This would be a major project, involving external funding. Nevertheless there would be

an opportunity to factor in a dedicated art gallery within the overall facility as a consequence of the refurbishment works. This could provide an improved and larger dedicated space for art exhibitions and associated activities. Funding for this remodeling study was agreed at the Policy and Resources Committee on 11 August 2009.

#### 7.2.2 Falkirk Town Hall

Falkirk Town Hall currently has an upstairs corridor which is used for community style art exhibitions e.g. from the Arts & Civic Council and for small displays that complement activities in the Town Hall., but it does not replicate the Park gallery as a dedicated exhibition venue.

#### 7.2.3 Other Facilities

Other facilities such as Falkirk Municipal Buildings, libraries and community centres have been considered for the relocation of the Park Gallery. In all cases, whilst it might be possible to hang paintings on office, corridor or foyer walls at minimal cost, there are real security issues associated with this course of action. Unfortunately, no exhibition lender or professional artist would be willing to hire out an exhibition under such conditions.

### 8. **CLOSURE OF THE PARK GALLERY**

8.1 The final option for the Park Gallery is to consider complete closure. There are a number of implications associated with this.

#### 8.2 External Funding

At this stage the Scottish Arts Council (SAC) will not issue a formal response to the possible closure of the Park Gallery. It will do so if, and when, the closure is announced. As part of the normal grant conditions SAC retains a 25-year interest in any property it has supported through funding. At this stage, SAC will also not comment on the future implications for other funding applications that Falkirk Council may wish to submit to SAC for future projects although there is an indication that some future funding strands may require applicant bodies to demonstrate resilience in the current economic downturn by demonstrating a commitment maintaining existing resource allocation to cultural provision.

The same principle holds true for relocation and removing the professional programme.

#### 8.3 Property

If the Park Gallery were closed, the property would still require to be maintained so there would be an ongoing cost of around £4,500. There would also be a one-off cost to board up the large picture window at the entrance to prevent vandalism. It should also be noted that potential future funders of other development in Callendar Park may have regard to the closure in their assessment of project appraisals.

#### 8.4 Staff

The part-time Visual Arts Assistants would require redeployment to elsewhere in the Council generating potential staff savings of £27,360. Paragraph 10.1 below provides detail on the consultation implications of such a change.

### 9. **SAVINGS**

#### 9.1 Reduction in Operating Costs

Operating costs for the Park Gallery could be reduced by cutting the exhibition programme budget and/or reducing opening hours. A 50% reduction in the programming budget could release savings of £9,320 per annum. Reducing opening hours, following consultation, could increase this annual saving.

9.2 Closure of the Park Gallery

This would achieve full year savings of £46,000. This figure retains the £4,490 of property costs, until such time as a further use was identified for the space.

**10. CONSULTATION**

- 10.1 At this stage no formal consultation with stakeholders (public, artists, funders etc) has taken place. Members of the Committee may wish to consider which options presented above should be subject to a consultation process. Members will also be aware that given the potential for a redundancy situation arising from any decision, legislation requires that trade unions are consulted on any options being considered to ensure every step possible is taken to achieve minimal impact on employees. As such, any options being proposed by the Committee would be subject to specific consultation with the trade unions in line with legislation, prior to a final recommendation being presented.

**11. CONCLUSION**

- 11.1 It is not possible to immediately relocate and replicate the functions of the Park Gallery, in its current form, to another venue. The only real option that would maintain the current functions, and maintain the object based exhibitions programme is a longer term option of an internal remodelling of Callendar House. As referenced in 2.5 the Park Gallery does have limitations and a refurbishment of Callendar House would allow for an expansion and development of the visual arts and crafts programme and activities. This could provide visitors with a greatly enhanced experience. Consultation on the preferred options with trade unions and stakeholders will be essential prior to a final decision being made.

**12. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 12.1 It is recommended that Members consider the options presented.

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**Director of Community Services**

**Date: 25 August 2009**

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**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**Nil**