
Report To:	Inverclyde Council, as Trustee of the Watt Institution Trust Fund	Date:	30 June 2022
Report By:	Corporate Director Education, Communities and Organisational Development	Report No:	IC/03/22/AW
Contact Officer:	Alana Ward	Contact No:	01475 712330
Subject:	Request to use the Watt Institution Trust Fund for collections improvements at the Watt Institution		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Inverclyde Council's approval, as trustee of the Watt Institution Trust Fund, to use funds from the Watt Institution Trust Fund to improve the safety and security of collections at the Watt Institution.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 There is a requirement for improvements to be made at the Watt Institution, specifically to improve the safety and security of the archival collection and the taxidermy collection.
- 2.2 In order to maximise the archival information which can be stored at the Watt Institution, it is proposed to create a further archives store room in the ground floor (west wing) of the Watt Library. This will provide increased safety and security for the collection, and sensitive archival records will be prioritised for the move from external storage to the Watt Institution. The total cost of this work is £30,000 with building and racking costs of £20,000 (subject to tendering/procurement) and storage resource costs of £10,000. It is proposed that Property Services allocates £20,000 and the Watt Institution Trust Fund contributes the resources cost of £10,000.
- 2.3 In order to move the taxidermy collection from the Greenock Municipal Buildings (GMB) basement to the Watt Institution, the service requires professional advice and support from a specialist in the conservation of natural science collections. Officers would procure an appropriately qualified natural sciences conservator to undertake collections appraisal and inventory; and safely handle, pack, transport and move the collection back to the Watt Institution. The cost of undertaking this work will be a maximum of £13,000 for conservator assistance and £2,500 for lightweight shelving in the Watt Institution to store the repatriated collection. It is proposed that the Watt Trust funds the total cost of this work.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that Inverclyde Council, as trustee of the Watt Institution Trust Fund, approves the proposal to use £25,500 from the Watt Institution Trust Fund to improve the safety and security of collections at the Watt Institution.

Ruth Binks
Corporate Director Education, Communities and Organisational Development

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Greenock corporation took over responsibility for running the Watt Library, McLean Museum, Art Gallery and Watt Hall (collectively known as the Watt Institution) from the Watt Trust in 1973. Further to a *cy pres* scheme approved by the court of Session in 1984, Inverclyde Council, as the statutory successor of Greenock Corporation, is now responsible for holding the land and buildings in trust as a memorial to the late James Watt LLD and to use it as a library, museum and hall for the benefit of the inhabitants of Greenock. The Council is the sole trustee of the Watt Institution Trust Fund, this being an unincorporated trust.
- 4.2 The repairs programme at the Watt Institution which took place 2017-19 was a targeted refurbishment addressing core building fabric and associated works so did not involve works in all areas of the building. Where décor was addressed, it was targeted at areas of the building for public use. External funding has been sought for additional works, for example the National Lottery Heritage Fund has funded the creation of a Creativity Space. However, it is more difficult to obtain external funding for background spaces which are not used by the public.
- 4.3 As the service progresses its work on archiving and overall collections management, a requirement for improvements to be made at the Watt Institution, specifically to improve the safety and security of the archival collection and the taxidermy collection, has been identified.

4.4 Archival collection

Inverclyde Council's archiving function sits within Cultural Services at the Watt Institution, where the Council employs a permanent 0.6 FTE Archivist to preserve, conserve, and catalogue the archival collections in its care. The collection contains both the formal archive of the Inverclyde Council and its statutory predecessors, and also the historic archives of the Inverclyde area, for example family papers, business records etc. Both collections are stored between the Watt Institution and the Council's external store at Kingston dock.

In order to maximise the archival information which can be stored at the Watt Institution itself, rather than externally stored, it is proposed to create a further archives store room in the ground floor (west wing) of the Watt Library. This will provide increased safety and security for the collection, and sensitive archival records will be prioritised for the move.

The total cost of this work is £30,000 with building and racking costs of £20,000 (subject to tendering/procurement) and storage resources of £10,000. It is proposed that Property Services allocates £20,000 to fund the building work and the Watt Trust funds the resources cost of £10,000.

4.5 Taxidermy collection

Dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Watt Institution's natural sciences collection is estimated to consist of over 10,000 specimens encompassing taxidermy, zoology, palaeontology, geology, entomology, and herbariums. The collection's origins lie with the members of the Greenock Philosophical Society and are at the heart of the founding and early development of the museum.

Due to the nature of their contents, natural science collections often have health and safety implications in respect of safe handling, storage and access. The handling of taxidermy specimens in particular requires special care and attention due to the delicacy of the artefacts and the processes and chemicals historically used to preserve the specimens in the first place.

A large proportion of the taxidermy collection was removed from the museum and placed in the basement of the Greenock Municipal Buildings (GMB) approximately 30 years ago. The majority of the taxidermy specimens are uncased and have been untouched since. The collection has accumulated dust from various building works over the period, adding to the issues around safe handling, storing and transportation of the collection.

In order to move forward in addressing this issue, the service requires professional advice and support from a specialist in the conservation of natural science collections in order to:

- compile an inventory of the taxidermy collection and its condition;
- safely handle, pack, transport and repatriate the collection from the GMB basement to the top floor of the Watt Institution; and
- make recommendations with indicative costs for the long term care, conservation and display of the collection.

Following the completion of this work, officers would then be in a position to seek external funding for a conservation programme, collections research, and display of this nationally significant collection.

Officers would procure an appropriately qualified natural sciences conservator to undertake collections appraisal and inventory; and safely handle, pack, transport and repatriate the collection from the GMB basement to the Watt Institution. The cost of undertaking this work will be a maximum of £13,000 for conservator assistance and £2,500 for lightweight shelving in the Watt Institution to store the repatriated collection. It is proposed that the Watt Trust funds the total cost of this work.

5.0 PROPOSALS

5.1 It is proposed that:

- (1) a further archives store room be created in the ground floor (west wing) of the Watt Library, providing increased safety and security for the collection, and that sensitive archival records will be prioritised for the move;
- (2) the total cost of this work is £30,000 with building and racking costs of £20,000 (subject to tendering/procurement) and storage resources costs of £10,000. Property Services has indicated it would allocate £20,000 to fund the building work on the basis that the Watt Institution Trust Fund contributes the resources cost of £10,000;
- (3) the Watt Institution obtains professional advice and support from a specialist in the conservation of natural science collections in order to compile an inventory of the taxidermy collection and its condition; and safely handle, pack, transport and move the collection from the GMB basement to the top floor of the Watt Institution, where it will be stored on lightweight shelving on the upper floors;
- (4) the total cost of this work will be a maximum of £15,500 and it is proposed that the Watt Institution Trust Fund contributes this cost.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Finance

Financial Implications

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments

Trust Funds	Watt Institution Trust Fund		£10,000 (resources for archives improvement work)		Property Services to fund £20,000 and the Watt Institution Trust Fund to fund the balance of £10,000.
			£15,500 (taxidermy improvement work)		Estimated fund balance as at 6 June 2022 is £56,887.98
TOTAL			£25,500		

Annually Recurring Costs/ Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (if applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

6.2 Legal

The funds accruing to the Watt Institution Trust Fund can be used for maintenance of assets and therefore the request for funds from the Watt Institution Trust Fund is appropriate as the activity to be funded directly contributes to the safekeeping of the moveable property. The legal background to the Council's status as sole trustee of the Watt Institution Trust Fund is summarised above at 4.1. Elected members have separately been given training on the legal duties of charity trustees.

6.3 Human Resources

There are no known human resources implications contained within this report.

6.4 Equalities

Equalities

(a) Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

YES	
X	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required

(b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.	
X	NO

(c) Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

X

YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.

NO

6.5 Repopulation

Culture, arts and heritage are useful ways in which to raise the profile of Inverclyde, and make it an attractive place to live, work and visit.

7.0 CONSULTATIONS

7.1 None.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 None.