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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Education and Communities Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>4 September 2012</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Corporate Director Education, Communities and Organisational Development</b>	<b>Report No:</b>	<b>EDUCOM/30/12/AW</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Alana Ward, Libraries and Museum Manager</b>	<b>Contact No:</b>	<b>01475 712347</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Disposal of "Torch" Engine from McLean Museum and Art Gallery</b>		

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## **1.0 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To seek Committee approval for the disposal of an item from the collections of the McLean Museum and Art Gallery.

## **2.0 SUMMARY**

- 2.1 Since 1977, the McLean Museum and Art Gallery has been in possession of an engine from the Clyde buoy tender vessel "Torch" although due to its size, weight and state of incompleteness it has never been possible to either store it or display it in the Museum. It has remained in various storage locations without any purpose or use.
- 2.2 The engine can no longer be accommodated in its present location. Attempts to transfer it to another Museum have been without success and all transfer options have now been exhausted.
- 2.3 Local scrap merchants have been invited to quote for the value of the scrap which would be generated should the engine be sold, and the cost of disposal. The best quote received would generate a net income of £400 for the Council.

## **3.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 That the Committee approve the sale of the "Torch" engine to Ross & Fullerton Metal Merchants.

**Albert Henderson**  
Corporate Director Education, Communities and Organisational Development

## 4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In 1977 the engine from the Clyde buoy tender vessel “Torch” was gifted to the McLean Museum by the Clyde Port Authority. The engine was built at the Ailsa shipyard in Troon, and not in Inverclyde.
- 4.2 As the engine is very large in size and also heavy, it has never been possible to display it at the Museum, or even to store it there. It remained in the former Scott Lithgow premises at James Watt Dock until 1998, and since then has been stored in a garage behind Glenburn School. It has now become necessary to vacate these premises.
- 4.3 In 2003, a report was commissioned into the feasibility of external display of the engine. The consultants, Heritage Engineering, found that it would cost £23,107.34 to prepare the engine for proper and safe exhibition. A bid for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund to do this was turned down in 2003. Consequently, the engine is unable to be used in any way.
- 4.4 In terms of the McLean Museum’s Acquisition and Disposal Policy previously approved by Inverclyde Council’s Regeneration Committee in 2010, the engine has been assessed as contrary to the Museum’s collecting policy. (Please see Appendix 1- Significance Statement for the Engine of M.V. Torch)
- 4.4 In terms of the McLean Museum’s Acquisition and Disposal Policy previously approved by Inverclyde Council’s Regeneration Committee in 2010, any decision to dispose of an exhibit from the collections, whether by exchange, sale, gift or destruction must have Committee approval and that in the first instance any item for disposal should be offered to another museum. The engine was advertised for transfer on the Museum Association’s website for several months, and, in addition, the McLean Museum’s curatorial staff made direct enquiries to Scottish museums who would be likely to have an interest in the engine. The advice was that the engine was not special or unique enough to merit a place in any museum’s collection.
- 4.5 Should the engine be disposed of, Ross & Fullerton scrap merchants of Greenock have valued the scrap, less their costs for disposal, at £400.

## 5.0 PROPOSAL

- 5.1 It is proposed that the Committee approve the disposal of the “Torch” engine.

## 6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Finance:

Financial Implications – One Off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Year	Proposed Income this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
Museum	Income	2012-13	(£400)		

## Financial Implications – Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

<b>Cost Centre</b>	<b>Budget Heading</b>	<b>With Effect from</b>	<b>Annual Net Impact</b>	<b>Virement From (If Applicable)</b>	<b>Other Comments</b>

6.2 Personnel: There are no Personnel implications.

6.3 Legal: The engine is not currently displayed and cannot easily be displayed and is outwith the curator's assessment as significant for local display. The curator confirms the proposal follows the approved policy for disposals, firstly having sought alternative Museum display and only thereafter any commercial sale.

6.4 Equalities: There are no Equalities implications.

# Significance Statement for the Engine of M.V. Torch



When assessing a major object for retention or disposal the McLean Museum and Art Gallery conducts a significance assessment to inform any decisions relating to the future of the object. Significance includes all aspects of an object that add to the object's story including the history, use and the social and spiritual values of an object. It is through these that the object gains meaning. The individual significance of an item and its value to the McLean Museum and Art Gallery collection are evaluated as part of the significance assessment process.

Through the significance assessment process the McLean Museum and Gallery demonstrates the importance or otherwise of the item to the collection and the community. The significance assessment process includes these steps:

- Researching the object's history and provenance.
- Consulting with relevant donors, owners, users, community groups and ethnic communities.
- Establish an understanding of the object's context
- Document the object's condition.
- Look at any comparative examples.
- Make a significance assessment against the main significance criteria.
- Complete the process by writing statement of the object's significance.

The McLean Museum and Art Gallery employs four main criteria when assessing significance:

- Historical significance: There is a proven association between the object and a known individual, event or historical period that is considered significant by the McLean Museum and Art Gallery.
- Aesthetic significance: The McLean Museum may consider objects as significant because of their beauty, age, skill used in creation, style or design.
- Scientific, research or technical significance: The item shows a significant degree of technical or creative achievement for the period of their creation.
- Social or spiritual significance: Objects considered important by communities because of their cultural or spiritual associations.

The McLean Museum and Art Gallery also employs extra criteria which may alter the main criteria assessment when evaluating the object's significance. They are:

- Condition and completeness: An incomplete object or object in poor condition can only tell part of its story.
- Contribution to interpretation: The ability of an object to interpret particular themes, people or ideas to users of the Museum service.
- Provenance: This is crucial in assessing significance because knowledge of the provenance increases the Museum's capacity to communicate the story of the object. Without a provenance, the Museum may only communicate a partial, possibly inaccurate history of the object.
- Representativeness: The object may or may not represent a particular category of item or activity, a way of life or some other theme relevant to the Museum's purpose.

- **Rarity:** The significance of an object to the Museum would increase if it is rare or uncommon and relates to the Museum's mission statement and policies.

Other factors include the impact of the object on the collection. The McLean Museum and Art Gallery strives to acquire artifacts and specimens that generally are complete and in good condition, and for which provenance or locality is well documented. The decision to acquire an artifact or specimen will be based upon the following considerations:

- **Relevance:** Relevance to the collections development objectives. Acquisitions must be of value in promoting and supporting the objectives and purposes of the McLean Museum as set forth in the Museum's mission statement. Acquisitions must be authentic and should not be copies, reproductions, mass-produced or fakes.
- **Significance:** The item must be significant through an association with an event, person, historical period, or geographic area or representing locally significant themes, processes, activities, and culture
- **Resources:** Availability of resources, both human and financial, to acquire, document, preserve, store, and exhibit the object or specimen. The cost and expenditure of staff time and other resources in acquiring, researching, transporting, processing and storing acquisitions must fit within the Museum's available resources. The condition of a proposed acquisition must be such that the McLean Museum can adequately care for and preserve it. Acquisitions must be of a suitable size and physical state for the McLean Museum to provide adequate storage space and security
- **Use:** The item should provide opportunities for use, exhibition, research, and other requirements. Any documentation, oral or written, available to support the ownership, authenticity, study, and use of the object should be included in the accompanying catalogue record.
- **Physical condition of the object:** The condition of the object must not be such that it hinders the storage or use of the item, nor pose a danger to staff and the collections.
- **Cultural sensitivity of the object:** The object must not have such cultural sensitivity that it hinders opportunities to use, exhibit or research the object
- **Risk:** Health and safety compliance and the absence of threats to users or to other elements of the collection.
- **Absence of restrictions on use:** Acquisitions must be free of any restrictions or conditions, and exceptions to this criterion will be made only in extraordinary circumstances and in consultation with the Museum's governing body, Inverclyde Council.
- **Compliance with applicable legislation and regulations.**

## **The Engine of M.V. Torch**

### **Background:**

The engine of M.V. Torch came into the possession of the local authority in the late 1970s. It is not and has never been a formal part of the McLean Museum's collections and was acquired at the time under the circumstances of 'object rescue', pending further full consideration of its long term future and viability. Since that time it has remained in various storage locations without any purpose or use being resolved for reasons outlined below.

- **Historical significance:** The engine is part of the propulsion system of the M.V. Torch, a light buoy tender which operated on the Clyde from 1924 under the auspices of the Clyde Lighthouses Trust and successor body. The engine is, in and of itself, of little historical significance and contributes little to our understanding of the work of the Clyde Lighthouses Trust and to our knowledge of the history of Clyde navigation. The McLean Museum and the Watt Library already hold a collection of material relating to the field of Clyde navigation and believe that the work of the Lighthouses Trust and the history of the Torch tender is more thoroughly told and understood through archival documents, photographs, oral histories and objects that have a more intimate connection with those who worked on the vessel and in the

field of Clyde navigation more generally. The Museum and the Library will continue to acquire material in this field where the items can add to the stories of those involved and the history of the subject.

- **Aesthetic significance:** The engine has no aesthetic significance nor does the engine demonstrate the use of any special skill or talent in its creation, style or design.
- **Scientific, research or technical significance:** Discussions with specialist museums about the engine indicate that it is of a very basic common design and that it has no significance in the history of marine engine design, shipbuilding or other fields of technology. This has been confirmed by their unwillingness to consider a possible transfer of the engine to their collections for they generally already possess similar examples.
- **Social or spiritual significance:** The engine has no spiritual associations and does not add significantly to our understanding of the social and cultural role of Clyde navigation or its impact on the history of communities in Inverclyde. Understanding the social and cultural role of this field is best made through the records, memories and documented experiences of those involved. It is through their stories, rather than the acquisition of commonplace technology, that people understand the emotional context and experience of others.
- **Condition and completeness:** The engine of MV Torch is not in original 'working' condition. It has suffered various losses of ancillary equipment and is currently incomplete and therefore represents, at best an object that can only tell a limited and incomplete story.
- **Contribution to interpretation:** Because of its partial nature and its removal from its original context, the engine has a poor ability to interpret themes, people or ideas to users of the Museum service. Exploratory discussions with various bodies have revealed that any possible scheme to produce restoration and display would be both expensive and provide limited public accessibility (for health and safety reasons) and would significantly impair the Museum's service in other areas. In 2003 a conservation and restoration scheme was costed and at that time was estimated at over £24,000 – four times the Museum's annual budget on exhibits.
- **Provenance:** The provenance of the engine is well established.
- **Representativeness:** The engine does not represent any major activity, a way of life or some other major theme relevant to the Museum's mission.
- **Rarity:** The engine does not represent a rare example of its kind and therefore has no added significance because of this.
- **Relevance:** The engine is not of any great relevance to the collections development objectives. The history of Clyde navigation is an important theme in the Museum's collection but it is believed that other objects can more thoroughly communicate that history to our visitors and that the engine would not be of value in promoting and supporting the objectives and purposes of the McLean Museum as set forth in the Museum's mission statement.
- **Resources:** Retention of the engine would represent a severe drain on available resources, both human and financial, to document, preserve, store, and exhibit the engine. The cost and expenditure of staff time and other resources in transporting, processing and storing the engine would be beyond the Museum's available resources.

The formal acquisition and retention of the engine would be contrary to the Museum's current collecting policy, approved by Committee in 2010, that any proposed acquisitions must be such

that the McLean Museum can adequately care for and preserve it and must be of a suitable size and physical state for the McLean Museum to provide adequate storage space and security.

- **Use:** The engine has limited use as a display item and would not significantly contribute to the exhibition, research, and other requirements that service users have.
- **Physical condition of the object:** The size, weight and condition of the engine mean that retention would impose considerable restrictions and costs on the storage or use of the item.

In considering the significance of the engine and the possible contribution it might make to the Museum's services along with the opportunities its retention might offer to service users it is clear that the level of significance is rather low, its contribution to the story of Clyde navigation limited and the benefits that retention might offer are insufficient when considered in relation to the costs of retention and its impact on the Museum's work in other areas.

Consultations with other professional Museum staff in specialist areas have confirmed the marginal significance of the engine and therefore the retention of the engine within the McLean Museum's collection cannot be justified on the basis of the criteria above.

**McLean Museum Staff – August 2012**