

Culture and Sport Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 21 October 2014

Ross Fountain

Item number	7.1
Report number	
Executive	
Wards	All, and City Centre in particular

Executive summary

This report outlines the history of the Ross Fountain and updates Committee on its current poor condition. Specialist solutions have been developed to restore the Fountain and return it to use, and Committee is asked to approve a proposal to begin fundraising for an option which would secure the future of the Fountain for 100 years.

Links

Coalition pledges	P31, P40
Council outcomes	CO19, CO20
Single Outcome Agreement	SO4

Ross Fountain

Recommendations

- 1.1 To note the update on the current poor condition of the Ross Fountain, and measures required to minimise risk to public safety.
- 1.2 To approve the proposal to begin fundraising to refurbish the Ross Fountain.
- 1.3 To approve the refurbishment Option B.
- 1.4 To note that the relevant Committee will be asked to approve the eventual appointment of a contractor.

Background

- 2.1 The Ross Fountain in West Princes Street Gardens was taken out of use four years ago as a result of extensive water losses and the subsequent discovery of signs of structural corrosion to the cast iron fixings.
- 2.2 This prompted further investigation, and reports commissioned from specialist conservation companies explored various refurbishment options to secure the long term future of the fountain. Two of these options are viable solutions for this iconic feature.

Main report

- 3.1 The Ross Fountain is one of only two A listed cast iron fountains in the UK from the world famous foundry of Antoine Durenne, in Sommevoire Haute Marne in France. The Fountain is a magnificent example of 19th century cast-iron work, in the neoclassical style commonly known as Beaux Arts. The figures were sculpted by Jean-Baptiste Jules Klagmann, born April 1810, whose other work includes figures for the Louvre and fountains in the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris. The Fountain was purchased by an Edinburgh gunsmith, Daniel Ross, at the Great Exhibition of 1862, and eventually installed in its present position in 1872. Since then the Fountain has become one of the most recognisable features of Edinburgh. The Fountain's significance is attested by some of Scotland's leading architectural heritage experts, including Historic Scotland's Director of Conservation and the Director of the Edinburgh World Heritage Trust (see appended letters).
- 3.2 Two options to secure the Ross Fountain's long term future have emerged from reports commissioned from specialist conservation companies. Option A should last for around 25 years before any further major refurbishment is required, and

- option B, which includes additional works to improve the foundations and service access tunnel for ongoing maintenance, should last for 100 years.
- 3.3 In both Options, the Fountain would have to be fully dismantled (at an estimated cost of £0.5m) so that the following issues can be addressed, and the Fountain be brought back into service:
- 3.3.1 health and safety risk to the public;
 - 3.3.2 water leakage;
 - 3.3.3 foundation instability;
 - 3.3.4 metal erosion causing structural instability; and
 - 3.3.5 the safe treatment of water.
- 3.4 After the Fountain is dismantled, further expenditure would be required in both Options. The 25-year Option A would require a further £0.8m, and thus cost £1.3m in total; the 100-year Option B would require a further £1m and cost £1.5m in total.
- 3.5 As Option B offers better long term value, it is recommended that this solution be developed further. A third of the £1.5m has been allocated in the Corporate Property Asset Management Budget dedicated to the Culture and Sport estate; a fundraising exercise would be required to secure the rest and it is expected that this would take up to 18 months.
- 3.6 Some initial discussions have taken place with potential external funders. A similar A listed cast iron fountain in Paisley has just been refurbished and has secured substantial external funding for this work. Therefore it is anticipated that an appropriate project to conserve and enhance the Ross Fountain could also attract the additional external funding.
- 3.7 Initial security fencing has already been installed around the Fountain to keep members of the public safe. Some temporary structural supports will be installed to mitigate the existing risk from metal erosion to the Fountain's structural integrity. If the Committee agrees that the Fountain should be refurbished, these two measures would allow the Fountain to remain in place until the full funding package has been secured. Should the Committee decide not to proceed with the proposed project, the fencing and structural supports would need to remain indefinitely.
- 3.8 Given the exceptional quality and cultural significance of the Fountain and the specialist nature of the conservation project, advice will be sought from the Procurement team during the fundraising period regarding any procurement restrictions and the timescale for appointing a design team and contractor.

Measures of success

- 4.1 The conservation and restoration of the Ross Fountain as befits its cultural significance, and its subsequent return to service.

Financial impact

- 5.1 A sum of £200,000 has been allocated to the Ross Fountain in the 2014/15 Corporate Property Capital Asset Management budget, and £300,000 in 2015/16; these will be realigned to future years 2016/17 and 2017/18 to reflect the revised programme. The remainder of the capital cost of conserving and refurbishing the Fountain will be sought from external funders.
- 5.2 An estimated revenue cost of approximately £30,000 to £50,000 has been identified, to put in place the required structural supports as described in paragraph 3.7. A proportion of the income generated by the 2014 Festival Wheel installation in Princes Street Gardens would be used towards this cost and the restoration of the Fountain. Funding from the Corporate Property Revenue Budget will also be required and the implications for this budget of ongoing future maintenance will be determined during the next phase of the project.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 There are no policy or governance impacts arising from this report, but the Council risks significant reputational damage if the option chosen falls short of full and long term restoration of the Fountain, which is deemed by Historic Scotland to be the best of its kind in the UK. The category A listing denotes its national or international importance and so any work undertaken must comply with recognised conservation standards and methodology.
- 6.2 The risk of structural failure in the short term will be partially mitigated by an early decision on the future of the Fountain.
- 6.3 Working water features raise the public safety issue of biological contaminants, but a modern UV treatment unit is proposed to address these concerns.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 There are no direct equalities impacts as a result of this report.

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 The Fountain's water usage will be addressed during the conservation process with the aim of using best practice in water management. The installation of new and more efficient components would greatly reduce running costs and water charges.
- 8.2 Any structural or construction work will be carried out in accordance with the Council's Considerate Contractor policy and waste will be minimised.

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 Initial consultation has taken place with several potential external funding bodies. As noted above, Historic Scotland has confirmed the historic significance of the Ross Fountain and this will help the Council's funding campaign. Copies of recent letters from Historic Scotland and the Edinburgh World Heritage Trust are appended.

Background reading/external references

None.

Alastair D Maclean

Director of Corporate Governance

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Links

Coalition pledges	P31 - Maintain our city's reputation as the cultural capital of the world by continuing to support and invest in our cultural infrastructure P40 - Work with Edinburgh World Heritage Trust and other stakeholders to conserve the city's built heritage
Council outcomes	CO19 - Attractive Places and Well Maintained – Edinburgh remains an attractive city through the development of high quality buildings and places and the delivery of high standards and maintenance of infrastructure and public realm CO20 - Culture, sport and major events – Edinburgh continues to be a leading cultural city where culture and sport play a central part in the lives and futures of citizens
Single Outcome Agreement	SO4 - Edinburgh's communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric
Appendices	1. Letter from Historic Scotland 2. Letter from the Edinburgh World Heritage Trust



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ALBA AOSMHOR

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4th March 2014

Dear David,

Re: Ross Fountain, Edinburgh

Thank you for your email reply dated 3rd March 2014. I would be happy to give my opinion.

Scotland was at the forefront of the manufacture of architectural cast ironwork for around 100 years, with globally recognised firms exporting structures across the world. I have devoted my professional life to this area of research and Scottish firms, and I have to say that the best cast iron fountain to be found in Scotland, and indeed the UK, is the Ross Fountain in Princes Street Gardens. The quality of the design, pattern making and casting is not matched by any other I know of. It is also of course, internally, an iconic structure, and it is very common to see pictures of Edinburgh Castle framed with the fountain in the foreground.

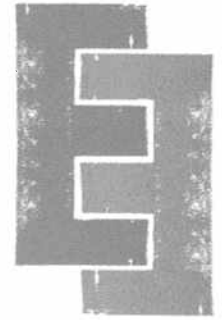
Please don't hesitate to get in touch, if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Dr David S Mitchell
Director of Conservation



www.historic-scotland.gov.uk



Frank Little
Museums and Galleries Manager
City of Edinburgh Council
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Edinburgh EH8 8BG

16th July 2014

Dear Mr Little,

Ross Fountain, Princes Street Gardens

Edinburgh World Heritage is very supportive of the initiative for the conservation, repair and renewal of the Ross Fountain. While the city is well endowed with natural springs, ancient well houses, drinking fountains and the drama of the Water of Leith, there is only one public fountain of any note, in the most splendid of settings.

The Ross Fountain is an ebullient concoction of seahorses, lions' heads and figurines, surmounted by a fine female figure holding a cornucopia. This wonderfully complex artistic structure is a celebration of the vigour of the city. It stands in contrast to the collected calm of the First New Town and the apparent jumble of the Old Town and Castle, between which it is sited.

In this respect, it could be argued that the fountain plays an important role in the outstanding universal value of the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site, sitting in Scott's "Great Arena" of the Waverley Valley, and being of neither the Old or New Towns – instead it represents a point in time rather than a place on the ground, with its celebration of the nude female form, a strong theme in French classical sculpture. By the time of its completion in 1872, what we now regard as the historic city centre was by and large complete, and the fountain can be seen as a celebration of this.

Yours sincerely,

Adam Wilkinson
Director

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