
Proposed Donation of Artwork to the National Galleries of Scotland

Briefing Paper by Hannah MacLeod

HAWICK COMMON GOOD FUND SUB-COMMITTEE

20 JANUARY 2021

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

This report is to advise Members of the Hawick Common Good Fund Sub-Committee of the results of the public consultation carried out in terms of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 in respect of the proposal to donate to the National Galleries of Scotland, a portrait of the Earl of Minto by George Chinnery.

The consultation was carried out through Citizens Space, and was advertised on the Council's website. It opened on 14 September 2020 and closed on 7 December 2020. The consultation advised the public of the proposed donation, explained the reasons for the proposal, and requested comments.

2. BRIEFING

Twenty responses were received to the consultation. Of those, the majority were positive and provided comments such as "a good solution", a "sensible and appropriate" solution, and "very important for the preservation of the painting".

Seven of the twenty responses noted an objection to the proposed donation. Of these seven responses, three objected to the notion of donation – they wished the portrait to be sold, and the proceeds to go to the Hawick Common Good.

Three of the objections wished the portrait to be restored by the HCG fund and then hung in Hawick. One responder highlighted that the town had the availability of the Town Hall, the library, the museum, Heritage Hub, and Tower Mill, and questioned why the painting could not be accommodated in any of these places.

The seventh of the non- supportive responses asked that the following questions be considered before any decision was made:

- Has the council considered the value that could be obtained for the picture if it was sold on the open market?
- Is the picture ever likely to be displayed by NGS or will it be permanently in storage?
- Has it been assessed by curatorial staff on its value to the history of the Scottish Borders and been judged significant?

Members will recall that the proposal to donate was formulated in light of various factors, including the cost of restoring the painting, the cost of insuring the painting, its significant size and the lack of suitable hanging space in the town, and the preference for retaining the painting within public ownership in terms of the Museum Association Code of Ethics.

3 Next Steps

In accordance with the 2015 Act, Members should now consider the comments received in response to the consultation and decide whether to proceed with the donation or not.

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Background Papers:

Previous Minute Reference:

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below.

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