

Museum Conservation (Oil Paintings Conservation Report)	11th October 2016
To: Leisure and Development Committee For Information	

Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)	
Strategic Theme	Resilient, Healthy & Engaged Communities
Outcome	Council will work to develop and promote stable and cohesive communities across the Borough
Lead Officers	Head of Community & Culture Cultural Services Manager Museums
Cost: (If applicable)	As indicated

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a report on proposed conservation treatment programme of oil paintings held by Council.

Background

As part of the Museums Accreditation Scheme, administered for Arts Council England in Northern Ireland by Northern Ireland Museums Council, all Council's Accredited Museums have individual Conservation Management Plans in place. An integral part of each of the legacy Council's Conservation Plans is the completion of condition assessments of the collections. This work is currently underway as resources to bring in specialist conservators are made available. Coinciding with this programme of work is the corporate need to align all our Museums Policies Procedures and Plans to ensure resources and programmes are directed appropriately and proportionally across the five Accredited museums.

Prioritising Conservation Work on Collections

A process to prioritise the conservation treatments, once collections have had the condition assessment completed, has been developed. This process will be applied to key parts of the collection: watercolours, original photographic prints, fine arts, maps, rare books 3Dimensional art pieces, oil paintings textiles and civic memorabilia.

The criteria used to compile the rankings for works of art are:

- Historical merit: Score of 1- 5 - 1 being local and 5 being of international significance.
- Artistic merit based on information provided by external valuation assessments: Score of 1 -5 -1 being local and 5 being of international significance.
- Display priority: Score of 1- 5 -1 being unplanned at this stage and 5 being 2017.
- Display ability: Score of 1-5 -1 being suitable for display as is and 5 being very unsuitable for display.

Conservation assessments status 2016

To date assessments by legacy Councils have been completed based on specific programme led elements of the collection e.g. Sam Henry photograph albums, 1859 Revival Bible, The Book of Coleraine, Ballymoney Bronze Age material, Ballymoney archaeological timbers, Irish Home Industries Collection of wood turned artworks, Hugh Thomson and J.W. Carey watercolours.

In 2015 Museum Services were requested to prioritise the assessment of the oil paintings held by Council. A specialist Oil Paintings Conservator was therefore appointed to carry out a costed condition assessment. Please see attached Annex A.

Oil Paintings in Councils Collections

All four legacy Councils held a total of 13 oil paintings amongst over 45,000 objects in our Accredited collections. There are also 4 large 19th century portraits that have been removed for Town Hall renovations during the mid-1990s and kept in storage by Limavady and Ballymoney Borough Councils.

It should be noted that the oil paintings held in the Accredited Museum collections are either provenanced to:

- Recognised professional artists of regional (Ulster) national (UK) and International reputations or;
- Recognised local people and places of local and regional significance with at least some artistic merit or;
- Arts Council Northern Ireland Gifting Scheme which in 2011 handed over its art collection to Accredited Museums across Ulster. Coleraine Museum on behalf of three legacy Councils (Coleraine, Limavady and Moyle) received 3 oil paintings amongst other works.

The total cost to conserve these 13 items is £18,331 - £20,481 excluding travel costs. The Civic Portraits removed from Town Halls;

- Limavady Town Hall 19th Century Civic Portraits.

In the late 1990s, after removal from the old Town Hall, new frames were ordered in advance of planned conservation of the two paintings.

In 2011 Limavady Borough Council received a conservation estimate for these two portraits of £37,500. At that time Council took the decision not to go ahead with the conservation work.

- Ballymoney Town Hall Civic Portraits.

Similarly Ballymoney Borough Council in 2005 received a conservation estimate for its two 19th C civic portraits £26,080 - £39,120, noting that the works were in terrible condition. At the time Council decided not to proceed and offered one of the portraits back to the family. The offer was declined.

Valuation experts then and now have noted that these 4 substantial pieces are of low artistic merit and consequently the necessary conservation costs to get them display ready were inappropriate.

The total costs to conserve the four civic portraits are £45,250 - £55,250 excluding travel costs

Summary

The oil paintings held in our collections are not a current priority for permanent display. Their condition is such that the items can be used for temporary displays. The four civic portraits,

however, are not in suitable display condition but are not deteriorating further. There are currently no plans to display them. The scale of work required is substantial and costly.

Next steps

Council's Museum Services will seek funding as and when the opportunities arise to carry out the conservation of these works in order of their priority within the Collections Management Plan.

Annex A: Oil Paintings Assessment & Costs

Ref No	Collection accession number	Full Painting Title	Artist	Cost inc frame	Heritage merit	Artistic merit	Display prog priority	Display able in current condition	TOTAL	RANK
1	BC:2007:009	Mountain Landscape with donkey cart and figures	Charles McAuley	£1,600-£2,100	2	3	3	1	9	= 8
2	BC:2007:005	Stormy seascape	Charles McAuley	£1,400 - £1,700	2	3	4	1	10	= 5
3	BC:2007:004	3 Figures on headland	Charles McAuley	£350	2	3	4	1	10	= 5
4	BC:2007:003	Moonlight Bay	Charles McAuley	£250	2	3	3	1	9	= 8
5	BC:2007:006	Country Road with man and dog	Charles McAuley	£250	2	3	3	1	9	= 8
6	CM:2000:403	Road from Ballymena to Ballymoney	unknown	£1,950 - £2,200	3	1	1	1	6	17
7	CM:2005:945	Charmister Hill, Bournemouth	Hugh Thomson	£1,031-£1,231	4	5	2	1	12	= 1
8	CM:2010:57	Portrait of Edward Gribbon 1800 - 1875	unknown	£1,500-£1,650	2	2	3	2	9	= 8
9	CM:2001:181	Portrush from White Rocks	Norman Wilkinson	£2,000-£2,250	3	4	2	2	11	= 3
10	CM:2010:354	His Old Ship	A.D. McCormick	£1,500	4	5	2	1	12	= 1
11	Arts Council Gifting Scheme	The Chest	Michael McGuiness	£2,000-£2,500	2	4	3	2	11	= 3
12	Arts Council Gifting Scheme	Causeway I	Mickey Donnelly	£3,250	2	3	3	2	10	= 5
13	Arts Council Gifting Scheme	Eden Tree I	Ross Wilson	£1,250	2	3	3	1	9	= 8
14		Dr William Taylor	James Magill	£10,625-£12,625	2	1	1	5	9	= 8
15		James Cramsie	James Magill	£12,625 - £14,625	2	1	1	5	9	= 8
16		Samuel Maxwell Alexancer	Thomas Alfred Jones ?	£8000 - £12,000	2	1	1	5	9	= 8
17		William Wilson	unknown	£14,000 - £16,000	2	1	1	5	9	= 8