

## ZIG-ZAG – NATIONAL BURNS EXHIBITION

### 1. Purpose of Report

This report provides Members with information on the 2009 exhibition 'Zig-Zag: the Paths of Robert Burns', which was staged at Gracefield Arts Centre in July/August 2009. It includes information on capital and revenue costs, evaluation of the exhibition and the legacy of the investment made in terms of improvements to the cultural infrastructure in Dumfries.

### 2. Recommendations

Members are asked to note the evaluation of the 'Zig-Zag: the Paths of Robert Burns' exhibition, held at Gracefield Arts Centre in July/August 2009, the associated capital and revenue costs and the future legacy of the works undertaken to the Gracefield Arts Centre.

### 3. Background

3.1 The 'Zig-Zag: the Paths of Robert Burns' exhibition was staged at Gracefield Arts Centre in July/August 2009. Members requested a report on the best value arrangements for the exhibition at Resources Committee on 4 December 2009.

3.2 'Zig-Zag: The Paths of Robert Burns' was a touring exhibition featuring many priceless artefacts closely associated with the life and works of Robert Burns. It was conceived to mark the 250th anniversary of Burns's birth as part of Homecoming Scotland 2009 and was organised by the National Library of Scotland (NLS) and the National Galleries of Scotland (NGS).

3.3 The exhibition brought together highly valuable items from the National Burns Collection, now recognised as a collection of national significance under the Museums Galleries Scotland Recognition Scheme. These items are owned by a variety of museums and institutions situated across Scotland, so this was the first opportunity to see them together in one exhibition.

3.4 A report submitted to Homecoming Scotland by NLS in 2010 indicated that the cash cost of putting the exhibition together in Edinburgh and touring it to three locations across Scotland (Aberdeen, Dumfries and Glasgow) was £146,465, and in addition the NLS contributed £43,000 in kind, making a total cost of £189,465. The cash costs, which included exhibition development, design and installation; transport and storage of exhibits and display cases; graphics, 3D and interactive exhibits; publicity design and couriers' expenses, were funded by Homecoming Scotland grant of £98,140 with the balance met from the NLS core budget.

3.5 In addition the cost of insuring the items on tour from NLS and NGS was covered by the Government Indemnity scheme. This scheme allows museums, galleries and libraries to borrow and display high value objects and in the event of loss or damage, compensation is paid to the owner by the Government. In order to qualify for this indemnity very high levels of security and environmental control are required of exhibition venues.

3.6 As a partner in the National Burns Collection, Dumfries and Galloway Council's Museums Service contributed a number of items from the Council's collection to the Zig-Zag exhibition. Due to the significant links that the town has with Robert Burns, senior officers within Community and Customer Services were keen that Dumfries should be one of the locations to which this prestigious exhibition would tour during the Homecoming Year.

3.7 Resources Committee at its meeting on 22 January 2009 agreed to alter priorities within the 2008-09 and 2009-10 Community and Customer Services capital programmes to ensure the exhibition could be accommodated in the Gracefield Arts Centre.

3.8 At its meeting on 17 February 2009 Resources Committee noted the reasons for the choice of Gracefield as opposed to other venues under consideration.

#### **4. Financial considerations**

##### Capital costs

4.1 Significant capital investment at Gracefield Arts Centre was required to stage the exhibition in order to upgrade security and environmental control arrangements and meet the requirements of the Government Indemnity scheme as detailed in paragraph 3.5 above. An initial estimated figure of £58k was reported to Resources Committee at its meeting on 22 January 2009.

4.2 Following detailed discussions with NLS on the necessary security and environmental control arrangements, the estimate was revised based on more accurate assumptions and increased to £98k. This was reported to Resources Committee on 23 April 2009 within a report on the Community and Customer Services capital programme 2009/10.

4.3 As detailed in a report to Resources Committee on 4 December 2009, the overall project cost eventually rose to £150k due to additional works that were required. The additional work required became apparent during the course of the work and included door condition and security and services infrastructure concerns such as electrical and legionella.

4.4 Arriving at accurate cost estimates for these works was clearly difficult given their specialist nature, the limited information available on the Exhibition details and the additional requirements uncovered as the works progressed.

##### Revenue costs

4.5 As detailed above, the production costs of the exhibition were funded through Homecoming Scotland. As reported to Resources Committee on 17 February 2009, additional revenue costs of temporary additional staffing, dedicated education programmes and marketing were sought through fund-raising from grant-giving bodies.

4.6 In March 2009 Nithsdale Area Committee considered a report requesting £23,254 to cover the estimated additional revenue costs required to host the exhibition which would cover additional staffing and security patrols to meet NLS/NGS security requirements, extended opening hours for Gracefield during the exhibition period, insurance for items not covered by Government Indemnity, local marketing and educational activities. The Area Committee agreed an award of £10,000 towards the costs of staging the exhibition at Gracefield.

4.7 In the event the revenue cost of presenting the exhibition at Gracefield rose to £30,057. The increase was due to unanticipated staffing, signage and print material costs, as well as transport costs for the Jean Armour portrait which was a unique selling point for the Dumfries showing of the exhibition, but had not been included in the original estimate.

4.8 The revenue costs of £30,057 were met by the £10,000 Nithsdale Area Committee grant, a civic reception grant of £650 and the balance from the Arts Service revenue budget.

## 5. Evaluation of the exhibition

5.1 7,332 visitors were recorded during the seven weeks of the exhibition in July and August 2009, which represented a 36% increase on the average attendance for this period since 1998/99. A comprehensive visitor survey was carried out during the exhibition and 259 questionnaires were returned by visitors. In addition a comments book recorded visitor responses.

5.2 In a comparison with average weekly attendances at the touring venues, which with the exception of Dumfries were all major city venues, Dumfries' attendance figures held up well especially considering that while the Aberdeen figures were the highest in the table, they represented a decrease on the average attendance for that venue at that time of year.

Venue	Average weekly attendance during Zig-Zag exhibition
Edinburgh: National Library of Scotland	1,450
Aberdeen: Aberdeen Art Gallery	3,355
Dumfries: Gracefield Arts Centre	1,047
Glasgow: Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery	1,287

5.3 An analysis of the visitor survey extrapolated for all attendances found that just under a third of visitors to the exhibition at Gracefield were from outside the region, and 6% of these came to the region especially to see the exhibition. Using Visit Scotland standard multipliers this 6% equated to £32,000 additional spend in the region that was directly attributable to the exhibition.

5.4 The most effective marketing tool for visitors from outside the region was the flyer produced by Gracefield for the Zig-Zag exhibition in Dumfries (37%), followed by word of mouth (33%) and the Homecoming Guide (17%). 40% of local audiences reported seeing information in the local papers and 35% said that they had seen the flyers.

5.5 95% of visitors had heard of the Year of Homecoming and 50% said that the fact that the exhibition was part of the Year of Homecoming had encouraged them to attend. 90% of those who visited the exhibition rated it as excellent or good with less than 2% rating it as poor or very poor.

5.6 Analysis of all the comments received found that most visitors seemed very proud to have such a high calibre event in Dumfries. However there was a mixed response to the audio-visual aspects of the exhibition presentation and many felt the very low levels of lighting that had been stipulated by the national institutions for their exhibits meant that it was difficult to see all the displays clearly. Unfortunately these aspects of the exhibition were beyond the control of Dumfries and Galloway Council.

### 5.7 Legacy

5.7.1 In the wake of the Zig-Zag exhibition Gracefield Arts Centre has benefited from improved facilities for exhibition display, improved fire safety and security and improved facilities for users of the café bar and activity rooms. Whilst environmental control still requires some longer term improvement (the Zig-Zag solution for this was a temporary one), Gracefield has been successful in receiving national acknowledgement for the improved standard of its facilities.

5.7.2 As a direct result of the Zig-Zag improvements Gracefield has been able to become an approved receiving venue for the 'Artist Rooms' national touring exhibitions, a series of contemporary artworks gifted by the art collector Anthony D'Offay to the Tate and the National Galleries of Scotland in 2008. The first 'Artist Rooms' exhibition at Gracefield will take place during the summer of 2011.

## 6. Governance Assurance

The Operations Manager Accountancy and the Operations Manager Strategic Property Services were consulted during the preparation of this report and are in agreement with its terms.

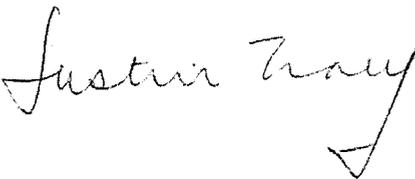
## 7. Impact Assessment

As this report does not propose a change in policy, the formal adoption of a plan, policy or strategy it is not necessary to complete an Impact Assessment

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### Approved by

NAME	DESIGNATION	SIGNATURE
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### Appendices - 0

**Background Papers**

Report to Resources Committee 22 January 2009; The Year of Homecoming 2009

Report to Resources Committee 17 February 2009; Zig-Zag National Burns Exhibition

Report to Nithsdale Area Committee 11 March 2009; Zig-Zag National Burns Exhibition

Report to Resources Committee 23 April 2009; Community and Customer Services Capital Programme and Property Issues – December 2009

Report to Resources Committee 4 December 2009; Community and Customer Services Capital Programme and Property Issues – December 2009