



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

4 FEBRUARY 2024

THE LEWIS MUSEUM TRUST

Report by Chief Officer, Economic and Community Regeneration

PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the Report is to seek approval for the proposed transfer of title of the collection and other assets of the Lewis Museum Trust to Museum nan Eilean.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Lewis Museum Society (“the Society”) held a collection of items of historical and cultural value. In 1991, the collection and other assets of the Society were transferred to the newly established Lewis Museum Trust (“the Trust”), and the collection was loaned to Museum nan Eilean, where it has remained ever since.
- 2.2 The Trust is now being wound up and has asked that the Comhairle take ownership of the collection and the remaining assets.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 **It is recommended that the Comhairle approves the proposed receipt of the collection and remaining assets of the Lewis Museum Trust on terms to be agreed by the Chief Executive.**

Contact Officer: Colin George Morrison, Team Leader, Heritage and Culture
Appendix: None
Background Papers: None

IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	There is no direct financial implication; the collection will come under the Comhairle's existing insurance cover.
Legal	None
Staffing	None
Assets and Property	None: Museum nan Eilean has been in possession of the collection for many years
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	None
Equalities/Child Rights	None
Corporate Strategy	Support and promote the cultural heritage of the islands
Environmental Impact	None
Consultation	None required

BACKGROUND

- 5.1 The Society was set up in order to collect and preserve items of local historical culture. In 1991, recognising that the circumstances under which it was formed had radically changed and that by then the Comhairle had established Museum nan Eilean, the Society resolved to make over its collection to the Comhairle. It also set up a charitable trust, the Trust, in order to hold any remaining assets of the Society, also with a view to those assets eventually being transferred to the Comhairle. The Society would then be dissolved.
- 5.2 Around the same time, the Society loaned its collection to the Comhairle, apparently in furtherance of the resolutions referred to above. Since then, the collection has been held by Museum nan Eilean which has assumed responsibility for its management and storage.
- 5.3 The collection comprises approximately 1000 objects relating to the maritime, social and military history of Lewis and Harris. Of particular importance is the collection of glass plates taken by Donald 'Dolly Doctor' Macdonald documenting rural life the first half of the twentieth century.
- 5.4 The collection also includes a small group of archaeological objects, some of which are of national significance.
- 5.5 Objects and images from the collection have been used by Museum nan Eilean for permanent and temporary exhibitions since the collection came under its care and management and will continue to do so.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

- 6.1 Recently, the Trust's accountants have written to the Comhairle in relation to the winding-up the Trust, suggesting that ownership of the collection, and the small balance of the Trust's funds, be formally transferred to the Comhairle. The Comhairle has received a letter from the remaining active trustee confirming that that is the wish of the Trust.
- 6.2 The funds of the Trust would require to be applied for charitable purposes consistent with the Trust's objectives, which are:
 - the advancement of education

- maintenance of the collection
- acquisition of items to add to the collection

CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The transfer of the Society's collection to the Comhairle was anticipated when the Trust was formed in 1991. Now that the Trust is being wound up, it seems appropriate that the transfer take place in order to ensure that the collection is preserved. As the collection has been in the hands of Museum nan Eilean for many years, there will be no significant additional resource or expense involved in acquiring ownership of it.