



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Request for Delegated Authority to appoint conservators for the Carey Paintings
Date:	16 January 2008
Reporting Officer:	Marie Therese McGivern, Director of Development, ext. 3470
Contact Officer:	Tim Husbands, Managing Director, Belfast Waterfront Hall, ext. 1400

Relevant Background Information

Phase two of the refurbishment of the grade B1 listed Ulster Hall began in June 2007 and includes extensive work to the main auditorium. A £7.5million project will restore the building to its former glory, giving as wide public access to the heritage of the Hall as possible and redeveloping the accommodation at the rear of the building.

As part of this major refurbishment 'The Carey Paintings' are being restored. They will then be displayed in the re-opened building and will play a key role in the interpretation of the heritage of the Ulster Hall.

These are thirteen paintings commissioned by Belfast Corporation from Joseph W Carey (1859-1937) and Richard Thomson, to mark the civic acquisition of the Ulster Hall in 1903. They are large scale canvases dealing with the history and mythology of the Belfast region and replaced the decorative plaster panels below the windows and alcoves at the rear of the auditorium.

The paintings were removed from their original positions several years ago to protect them from damp and from any potential harm during the refurbishment of the Ulster Hall. They will not return to their original positions high on the balcony under the windows, since these are being opened to daylight for the first time since the early 1980s. Instead they will be relocated to the lower corridor on the north side of the building where they will form the centre piece of a permanent display designed to illustrate the civic and cultural significance of the Ulster Hall to the City of Belfast. There they will remain accessible to the general public and to interested parties, regardless of the programme of events going on in the main auditorium and the building as a whole. Interpretative panels will accompany the paintings.

An extensive education programme based around the heritage of the Hall is planned.

Key Issues

The Current position

The procurement process, to appoint a conservator to undertake the restoration and preparation of the Carey paintings for display, is currently underway. A specialist with experience in working with late Victorian oils is being sought by public advertisement and by direct contact with the main British and Irish professional bodies. The tender return date is 25th January 2008.

Evaluation criteria

Candidates will be assessed against the following criteria

- Methodology
- Experience of similar projects
- Cost / value for money
- Resource capacity and capability
- Project plan including ability to meet timescales (it is anticipated that the project will take in the region of 9 months to complete, paintings must be ready for display in January 2009)
- Environmental impact management plan

Resource Implications

Financial Information

The £7.5million refurbishment of the Ulster hall is being funded in partnership with the following external bodies

DCAL	£2,000,000
Environment and Heritage Service	£200,000
Arts Council Northern Ireland	£687,639
Heritage Lottery Fund	£999,500

The estimated cost for the restoration of the Carey paintings is £65,000 of which £44,615 is to be funded from the HLF grant for the project, with the balance being funded from the Council's contribution to this capital project. These amounts are included in the overall budget for the project previously approved by the Waterfront and Ulster Halls Board on 26 February 2007.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Delegated authority is sought to appoint a conservator immediately on completion of the procurement process.