

REPORT TO: THE MORAY COUNCIL ON 14 MAY 2008

SUBJECT: MORAY MUSIC CENTRE: SOUND PROOFING

BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Council with information regarding noise transmission issues at the Moray Music Centre, Francis Place, Elgin, in order to assist them in coming to a decision about the funding of possible improvements.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Council consider whether or not to upgrade sound proofing at the Moray Music Centre, Francis Place, Elgin at an estimated cost of £43,000.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Moray Music Centre was created following conversion of a former education premises, the Mackintosh Building, in Francis Place, Elgin.
- 3.2 The conversion of the Mackintosh Building formed two premises, the Moray Music Centre and the Elgin Youth Café.
- 3.3 The impetus for the development of the Music Centre came from the Alistair Maclachlan Trust. The Trust's vision was for the creation of a purpose built facility that would enable young musicians to practice, to develop their skills and to record music. It was also seen as offering a base for local music groups.
- 3.4 The Trust's original intention was that the Council would donate the premises whilst the Trust would fund the conversion. The necessary funds, however, were never raised and the Council completed the conversion and now manages the facility.
- 3.5 Francis Place is a partially residential area and consequently planning permission for a Music Centre included strict conditions. The principal ones relating to noise were:

- Noise associated with all activities undertaken at the proposed Centre shall be inaudible from noise sensitive premises;
 - No musical activities using amplified music shall be permitted to use the premises unless prior details of a noise impact assessment regarding the proposed music activity using amplified music have been submitted and approved and written agreement has been received from the Council as planning authority in consultation with the Environmental Health Manager.
- 3.6 Shortly after opening, complaints were received from neighbours regarding noise. Several attempts were made to reduce the problem these included both sound proofing works and attempts to reduce noise volume. However, complaints persisted and in 2003 all amplified music was stopped. This did not resolve the problem however, and in 2006 all musical activity ceased as the centre was in breach of its planning consent. Since that time the centre has been used as a general purpose meeting/training venue.
- 3.7 In 2007 a specialist consultant was engaged to identify the reasons for the problem noise transmission and possible solutions to it. The consultant identified a number of substantial improvements that could possibly resolve the problem. He expressed concern however, that due to the construction of the building and its proximity to neighbouring properties, it could not be guaranteed that the improvements would entirely eradicate the transmission of noise.
- 3.8 The estimated cost of such improvements is £43,000.
- 3.9 Since ceasing musical activity at the Centre, a substantial number of letters have been received from the two main musical groups; Moray Swing Band and Elgin City Band. Both groups have expressed their desire to return to the Music Centre and both have also highlighted the difficulties they are experiencing, such as inadequate storage, since being relocated.
- 3.10 In the event that the Council is not able to approve upgrading of the Music Centre, it will continue to operate as a meeting, training and general purpose venue. In this eventuality, consideration could be given to the provision of school and community music rehearsal and practice facilities as part of the Elgin Academy PPP.
- 3.11 Members should also be aware that the Music Centre has been identified as potentially available for use as temporary office accommodation for staff who will be temporarily decanted during the replacement of the heat distribution system in the Council headquarters. This work is programmed to be carried out during the Summer months of two consecutive years.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Development Plan/Community Plan/Service Improvement Plan

This report supports the Council's corporate working principles of efficiency, effectiveness and economy.

(b) Policy and Legal

There are no policy implications arising directly from this report.

(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)

The cost of upgrading the Music Centre is estimated at £43,000. Whilst this expenditure will improve the situation, there are no guarantees that it will eradicate the problem of noise transmission. If the Music Centre is not upgraded, existing music groups will have to continue to meet elsewhere in less than ideal facilities. The Music Centre will continue to operate as a general meeting venue.

There is no provision for this project in the draft Capital Plan submitted as a separate item to this meeting.

There are no staffing implications arising from this report.

(d) Consultations

Consultations have been undertaken with Mark Palmer, Chief Financial Officer, Alastair Keddie, Chief Executive, John Black, Head of Estates, Ron Phillips, Property Manager and Alasdair McEachan, Senior Solicitor. Any comments received have been incorporated in the report.

Elgin Swing Band and Elgin City Band have been informed that Members will be considering the issue of the Music Centre at this meeting.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Meeting is asked to consider whether or not to undertake improvement works that may enable the Moray Music Centre to operate as a music facility.**

Author of Report: Nick Goodchild, Educational Resources Manager
Background Papers:
Ref: DMD/JR/Reports/Full Council/14 May 2008/ Moray Music Centre – Sound Proofing