

## Purchase of a painting by William Kidd

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### Committee on the Jean F Watson Bequest

12 October 2011

#### Purpose of report

- 1 To consider the purchase of a painting by William Kidd (1790-1863).

#### Main report

- 2 The following painting by William Kidd is presented to the Committee for consideration:

**Craigleith Quarry**

Oil on canvas  
31.8 x 42cms  
£4,500

- 3 William Kidd began painting at the age of 13 and by 1817 he was exhibiting at the Royal Academy in London. Kidd was best known for his genre scenes and comic figures; particularly his ability to capture domestic and rural life, the frequent subject of his smaller scale works. His paintings regularly feature scenes of peasants, fishermen and people going about their daily activities. Kidd's work grabbed the attention of contemporary artists and authors such as Sir David Wilkie, David Robertson, Sir Walter Scott and Robert Burns.
- 4 The date of the painting under consideration is unknown. Craigleith Quarry is illustrated in full production, with workers shown going about their daily tasks, and billowing smoke adding to the interest. The piece features a wide array of activities, including figures in the background manually carrying loads of rubble and others breaking up rock. In the foreground two figures are engaged in conversation. To the right of the canvas are a group of figures with one on horseback, perhaps indicating he is a figure of higher status.

- 5 Craigleith Quarry is set on the western fringe of the city and was widely known in and around Edinburgh. It is most famous for providing most of the stone for Edinburgh's New Town. The Quarry produced two kinds of stone: one of a fine cream colour called 'liver-rock' and the other a greyish white called 'freak-rock'. These colours are a distinctive feature of the Edinburgh New Town.
- 6 In its prime, around 60 carts were making an average of 4 journeys per day into the city from Craigleith. Due to its importance in the making of Edinburgh's New Town, the rental of the quarry grew from £50 to £5,500 (when at the time around £160 - £180 would have furnished an entire house).
- 7 In addition to Craigleith's significant contribution to Edinburgh's New Town, the columns that are on either side of the entrance to the Old College of Edinburgh University were fashioned from single pieces of stone from this quarry. Although briefly revived in the 1920s, by 1942 all work had ceased. It is now home to a large retail complex.
- 8 This charming view of the quarry complements a number of other works already in the City's collection, including a major oil painting by John Bell, a lithographic print by William Leitch, and two photographs from the late 1850s by Thomas Begbie. William Kidd is not at present represented in the collection.
- 9 The painting is being offered for sale by Bourne Fine Art, and the price includes a 10% gallery discount.

### **Financial Implications**

- 10 The funds for the purchase of the painting will come from the Jean F Watson Bequest. Grant aid will be sought from the National Fund for Acquisitions.

### **Equalities Impact**

- 11 The contents of this report are not relevant to the public sector equality duty of the Equality Act 2010.

### **Environmental impact**

- 12 There is no direct environmental impact arising from this report.

## Recommendations

- 13 It is recommended that the Committee approves the purchase of the painting *Craigleith Quarry* by William Kidd.

**Alastair Maclean**  
Director of Corporate Governance

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<b>Appendices</b>	None
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<b>Wards affected</b>	All
<b>Single Outcome Agreement</b>	Supports National Outcome 1: “We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe”
<b>Background Papers</b>	The Jean F Watson Bequest files held at the City Art Centre