

Committees:	Dates:
Culture Heritage & Libraries Streets & Walkways Open Spaces, City Gardens & West Ham Park (for information only)	Urgency Urgency 8 October 2012
Subject: Robert Hooke Bell	Public
Report of: Town Clerk	For Information

Summary

The City has received an application to install the Robert Hooke Bell immediately outside the south gate of St Paul's garden for a period of six months. Officers have confirmed that this location is suitable.

In view of the suitability of the location, the City connection and the "enlivening" role played by art installations, it is recommended that the application be approved.

Recommendations

- It is recommended that the Culture, Heritage & Libraries and Streets & Walkways Committees, subject to planning permission being granted, approve the installation of the Robert Hooke Bell immediately outside the south gate of St Paul's garden for a period of six months, commencing in November.

Main Report

Background

1. Representatives of the MEMO project have approached the City to request that a scale model of the Robert Hooke Bell be placed immediately outside the south gate of St Paul's garden for a period of six months. The location is illustrated at appendix 1.



The MEMO Project

2. Although the City is only considering the temporary installation of the Robert Hooke Bell, some further context on the MEMO project is provided:
 - a. MEMO is an educational charity dedicated to building a biodiversity education centre which forms the heart of a £20 Million pound regeneration project in Dorset, designed to emulate the success of the Eden Project in Cornwall.
 - b. Full planning permission has already been given to build MEMO on the Isle of Portland on the south coast of Britain, overlooking the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Jurassic Coast.
 - c. There are a range of high profile and respected supporters including the Royal Society. HRH The Duke of Edinburgh is the Patron.

The Bell

3. The Bell will be 1.2m in diameter and 1.1m high. The bell itself will be cast in a carved Portland stone mould, which means that outside of the bell has taken on the texture of the fossil imprints left within the stone. It will be mounted on a plinth which is 0.75m x 0.75m and 0.4m high. It will weigh just less than 1.25 tonnes. Officers have confirmed that the location is suitable for this loading.
4. It is proposed that the Bell be installed in early November. The project organisers would like the Bell to be in place in time for a visit from a party of American sponsors and reception at Buckingham Palace on 12 November 2012.

Connection to the City

5. The City location is felt to be appropriate due to the various connections between the installation and the City:
 - a. Robert Hooke was Surveyor to the City of London at the time of the Great Fire. It was as a result of examining Portland stone damaged by the fire that the theory of evolving/disappearing species occurred to him. He was also a collaborator of Wren's in building St. Paul's Cathedral.
 - b. The bell has been cast in a carved Portland stone mould, meaning that the outside of the bell has taken on the texture of the fossil imprints left within the Portland stone – something all City workers

are familiar with as it is one of the most commonly used building materials in the Square Mile (e.g. Guildhall Yard east).

- c. The final Portland bell (for which this bell was the test piece) will be cast within the original cast iron 'flask' that yielded "Great Paul", the bell housed in the steeple of St Paul's and the largest ever cast in the UK. It is this final piece that will reside at the main project site in Dorset
6. St Paul's Cathedral have been consulted and are supportive. They have involved in the MEMO project for several years and have hosted other art pieces connected with the project within the Cathedral grounds. The Bishop of London is also a supporter.
7. Public art plays an important role in enlivening the City streets and the cultural offer of the City generally. This is discussed both within the current City Cultural Strategy, and the new strategy which will be presented to the Court of Common Council in October. The City Arts Initiative was established by the Policy & Resources Committee in order to promote public art within the City and to clarify decision making processes.

Current Position

8. The application was first considered by the City Arts Initiative who recommended the installation to the Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee, subject to planning permission and appropriate highways consents. At its July meeting, the Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee requested further information and this has been provided to the Committee over email. Due to the timescales involved in project, it is proposed that the Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee approves the project under urgency procedures as they will not now be meeting until 22 October.
9. It has been confirmed that the installation will require planning permission. As the application is in line with planning policies, it is anticipated that subject to the statutory consultation requirements, the application will be determined under the City Planning Officer's delegated powers.
10. Due to the location of the Bell immediately outside the south gate of St Paul's garden, permission is also sought from your Committee.

Options

11. The options available to your Committee are to approve the application to place the Robert Hooke Bell immediately outside the south gate of St Paul's Garden for a period of six months, subject to planning permission and the approval of the Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee, or to refuse the application.

Proposals

12. It is recommended that the application to place the Robert Hooke Bell immediately outside the south gate of St Paul's Garden for a period of six months is approved, subject to planning permission.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

13. Public art and its role in enlivening the City streets features in the current Cultural Strategy and the new strategy to be presented at the Court of Common Council in October.

Implications

14. The MEMO project will fund the installation of the piece and the necessary insurance.
15. The City Gardens team will be responsible for cleansing of the installation, the cost of which will be contained within existing resources as the area is regularly cleaned as part of day to day operations. The bell will be drilled at the bottom to ensure that it does not fill up with rainwater.
16. Engineers & Highways are happy with the preferred location and issues related to delivery access and load-bearing have been resolved. Officers will arrange highways dispensation or delivery and the City Gardens team will provide protective boards for the footway. It has been confirmed that the installation will not impact on the Lord Mayor's Show.

Conclusion

17. It is recommended that the application be approved subject to planning permission.

Background Papers:

Application form submitted to the City Arts Initiative

Appendices:

Location map

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