



CHAPMAN/ GIBB DIGITISATION MAP

Report by Depute Chief Executive and Chief Officer for Education, Skills and Children's Services

PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the Report is to seek approval for the proposal to digitise and preserve the uniquely important Chapman/ Gibb map of Lewis which currently hangs in the stairwell of the Comhairle Offices, Sandwick Road.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Chapman/ Gibb map of Lewis is part of the collections of Leabharlann nan Eilean Siar. The Libraries Service recently worked in partnership with the National Library of Scotland to have its historical maps collection digitised and made available online. However, the Chapman/ Gibb map was omitted from the scope of this project, despite its historical significance, due to the logistical challenges it presents.
- 2.2 The Libraries Service has identified funding through the "Capturing Memories" project to support the removal of the map from its current location, conserve and prepare it for transfer to the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth for digitisation, with support from the Heritage Service, and to incorporate the digital version into the online maps resource hosted by the National Library of Scotland. The digital version would also be made available on the Libraries Service's digital collections website Ar n-àite. The original map would then be returned and stored permanently at Tasglann nan Eilean to ensure its permanent preservation.
- 2.3 At present the map is liable to deterioration due to light exposure and being in an inappropriate, non-stable environment. These factors are detrimental to its long-term preservation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Comhairle:
 - (a) approve the proposal to remove the map from its current location, in order to preserve and digitise it;
 - (b) note the historical significance of the Chapman/ Gibb map of Lewis and the advantages of making it accessible online in digital format; and
 - (c) note the proposal to transfer the original map to Tasglann nan Eilean for safe permanent storage after digitisation.

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Appendix:

Background Papers:

IMPLICATIONS

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

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	The costs associated for Art Technicians and on-site attendance from the National Library of Scotland conservator along with their travel, subsistence and specialist materials are in the region of £4,000.00. We are still awaiting quotes for scaffolding and transport to and from the National Library of Wales.
Legal	None
Staffing	None
Assets and Property	None
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	A risk assessment will be completed to provide assurance re the method of removal of the map from its present location to mitigate potential hazards. Risks to the map will be mitigated by following professional advice relating to the care of large historical documents.
Equalities	None
Corporate Strategy	This aligns with the ambitions of the Libraries and Heritage Services to make collections accessible digitally, the wider digitalisation strategy and the responsibility to care for original artefacts in perpetuity.
Environmental Impact	None
Consultation	The National Library of Scotland and National Library of Wales have been consulted on this proposal, as have colleagues in Procurement. Technical Services will also be consulted to ensure we follow correct guidance and best practice.

BACKGROUND

- 5.1 Leabharlann nan Eilean Siar has previously worked with the National Library of Scotland maps library to digitise its collection and bring this together with other maps held by NLS to create a [single online digital resource](#) of historically important maps of Stornoway and environs.
- 5.2 The National Library of Scotland is willing to continue to add further maps of historical importance to this resource if any become available.
- 5.3 Leabharlann nan Eilean Siar is in the process of digitising archive materials it holds. These resources will be available to the public through a specially-designed website called Ar n-àite. This website will host digital versions of the maps digitised by the National Library of Scotland, as well as other materials such as school logbooks, community newsletters, sound archives etc.
- 5.4 Due to its size the Chapman/ Gibb map cannot be scanned by the National Library of Scotland but the National Library of Wales is willing to undertake the digitisation and has the necessary professional expertise.

DETAIL

- 6.1 The map in question is a Plan of the Island of Lewis by Alexander Gibb, completed in 1817, but it is based on an earlier survey by James Chapman which has not survived so far as is known.

- 6.2 Gibb's coloured reduction of Chapman's map represents the earliest detailed survey of Lewis and as such it is historically significant, showing as it does the detail of land use including moors, woods, farms and farm boundaries, dykes and other information. Notes written on the map and a Table of Contents provide further important information pertaining to Lewis at this time.
- 6.3 The map is also uniquely important to the wider study of land surveying in Scotland.
- 6.4 In its current location it is impossible to study the map in detail, and its continued exposure to light will cause the inks to fade over time. It is also not in ideal environmental conditions for long-term preservation.
- 6.5 If digitised and made available online in the manner proposed, the map can be georeferenced, enabling map regression comparison with other cartographic resources.
- 6.6 The Libraries Service has been working in partnership with colleagues in the Heritage Service, the National Library of Scotland maps curator and conservator, and others, to resolve the logistical challenges of retrieving the map from its present position.
- 6.7 Leabharlann nan Eilean Siar has identified project funding which will be sufficient to meet the cost of retrieving the map from the wall, preparing it suitably for transportation, transferring it to the National Library of Wales for digitisation and returning it to Stornoway where it will then be retained in Tasglann nan Eilean.

CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Members are asked to approve the proposal to digitise and preserve the Chapman/ Gibb map of Lewis which currently hangs in the stairwell of the Comhairle Offices, Sandwick Road.