

Council support plans to list Low Port Centre in Linlithgow

Plans to list the Low Port Centre in Linlithgow due to its architectural significance and striking internal mural have been supported by West Lothian Council.

Council planners recommended that members of the council Executive back Historic Environment Scotland's (HES) proposals to list the building containing the mural on Tuesday 11 June 2024.

HES have advised the council that they are minded to Category B list the Low Port Centre, as it meets their criteria for 'buildings of special architectural or historic interest, which are major examples of a particular period, style or type'.

The Low Port centre, on Blackness Road, was opened by Lothian Region Council in 1988 as a community outdoor education centre with residential facilities.

The award-winning design of the building by distinguished post-war architectural practice Wheeler and Sproson aimed to mix art and architecture, with a bespoke public mural as a key part of the central stairwell.

Scottish artist James Cumming, who was regarded as one of the most talented and original artists practising in Scotland in the 20th century, was commissioned to produce the mural. His creation, *The Community: A Festival of Time*, depicts a theme

of timeless community life within a colourful town setting.

Low Port Centre was operated by both West Lothian Council and West Lothian Leisure after local government reorganisation in 1996. It is currently leased to St John's Church Linlithgow (SJCL) for a range of church and community-focused activities, after it was no longer required for the delivery of council services.

SJCL have created and registered an independent charity to oversee and manage activities, and have the option to acquire outright ownership of the centre under a community asset transfer when the lease expires in January 2026.

Offering his support Executive chair Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick, the council leader said: " This is a very worthwhile project here."

Local Lib Dem councillor Sally Pattle said: " I just want to say how happy I am at this news. The mural we all knew was hugely important we're so lucky to have it in Linlithgow, but I think it's great, the fact that we are also now going to protect the building because it is such a rare example of the municipal building that was built for purpose in Scotland. We are in a unique position in Linlithgow in the fact that it is in the middle of the town.

"Thanks for all the support that the council has given to this and I'm delighted that HES has come forward with the proposal to list the building, and protect the mural."

For the SNP Pauline Orr said: " I think this is an excellent opportunity to legislate protection for something that has been borne out of our lifetime."

The charity is required to use 'all reasonable endeavours' to retain and take steps to suitably protect the mural at all times during the two-year lease period, and for as long as they own, or occupy, the Low Port Centre.

The council will also include a conservation burden in any future conditions of sale that requires the mural to be protected by the building's future owners.

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter