



---

**REPORT TO: EDUCATION, CHILDREN'S AND LEISURE SERVICES  
COMMITTEE ON 6 OCTOBER 2021**

**SUBJECT: DICK BEQUEST STATUTORY FUND**

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND  
ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 To ask the Committee to consider the Council's position in relation to the Dick Bequest following the receipt of evidence that the original truster had links to the slave trade.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III D (21) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to Education grants.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Committee consider the evidence presented below and what action, if any, they may wish to take from the options contained in paragraphs 4.2 to 4.5, noting that the issues at paragraphs 4.4 and 4.5 would need to be remitted to Moray Council.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 James Dick (1743–1828) was born in Forres, Morayshire. He became a successful merchant in the West Indies and later in London. Following his death, he bequeathed £113,787 to encourage "learning and efficient teaching" among the parish schoolmasters of Elgin, Banff, and Aberdeen shires. There is a memorial to James Dick in Anderson's primary school in Forres.
- 3.2 This fund is now a statutory scheme known as the Dick Bequest. It was established by Statutory Instrument in 1979 and is a registered charity with OSCR number SC013641. Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2020 show the scheme has a capital balance of £1,638,099. The scheme is entirely reliant on income and investment returns from its share portfolio.

- 3.3 The Council has no direct control over the scheme, beyond appointing a Councillor as a Governor.
- 3.4 The scheme has 10 Governors who meet at least twice per year to assess grant applications and disburse funds in line with the statutory purposes:
- 5 elected by from the legal profession
  - from the University of Aberdeen
  - from Aberdeenshire.
  - 1 from Moray Council, currently Councillor Ross
- 3.5 The benefits to Moray under the Scheme are:
- equipment grants to schools (around £5,000 per annum)
  - further education grants for teachers (around £10,000 per annum).
- 3.6 Officers within the Council's Education department co-operate with the governors by allocating equipment grants and by promoting the fund to beneficiaries.
- 3.7 David Alston and Donald Morrison have recently published [research](#) which suggests James Dick was involved in slave trading in Jamaica and that some of his wealth came from slave trading. They have asked the Scottish Government to consider re-directing the funds within the Dick Bequest to benefit people in Jamaica.
- 3.8 Aberdeenshire Council have distanced themselves from the fund through a decision of their Leader and Head of Education which was reported in the Press and Journal on 1 June 2021.
- 3.9 The media have asked what the position of the Council is in relation to the trust. The EIS have asked their members to consider making an appropriate reference to the historical background on the statue in Anderson's Primary School.
- 3.10 Very few local authorities seem to have addressed the issue of the historical legacy of slavery in their areas however Glasgow City Council have taken the step of commissioning a major academic study into historical bequests linked to transatlantic slavery. This will include an audit of bequests and donations, street names and built heritage; scrutiny of records, public consultation and a resulting strategy.

#### **4. PROPOSALS**

- 4.1 The Committee is asked to consider whether it has sufficient evidence in relation to the Dick Bequest and if so, consider the following options:
- 4.2 The Council adopt a "do minimum" approach in relation to the Dick Bequest, similar to Aberdeenshire Council. This would mean:

- No active steps would be taken to refer to or promote the Scheme (although the Council would not be able to stop teachers applying directly to the Scheme for grants).
  - No requests would be made by the Council for equipment grants from the Scheme.
  - The Council would still be required to nominate a councillor to the Board of Governors
  - The Scheme would likely incur higher administration costs.
- 4.3 As a more active step the Council could consider lobbying the Scottish Government to wind up the Dick Bequest and follow the suggestion of Messrs Alston and Morrison that the Funds be re-directed to benefit people in Jamaica.
- 4.4 The actions above may prompt the Council to consider a wider position statement on the historical legacy of slavery more generally.
- 4.5 Having taken the steps above there may then be an expectation on the Council to consider links to slavery in relation to other assets within the Council's control:
- trust funds which the Council has involvement with.
  - memorials and monuments which the Council has responsibility for
  - buildings which the Council occupies.
  - street names
- 4.6 This has potential to be resource intensive and could not be accommodated within existing resources.

## **5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

### **(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))**

No direct links to the Corporate Plan have been identified.

### **(b) Policy and Legal**

The position is outlined in paragraphs 3.2 to 3.6 above

### **(c) Financial implications**

If the Council distanced themselves from the trust then there would be a modest loss in funding of equipment in schools.

If the Council wishes to consider links to slavery in relation to other assets within the Council's control, it would be necessary to secure additional resources either internally or externally to undertake this work, which would have a cost implication.

**(d) Risk Implications**

There are reputational risks associated with

**(e) Staffing Implications**

If the Council distanced themselves from the trust then there may be a reduction in funded training opportunities for teaching staff.

There are no staff resources currently available to be allocated to the investigation of links to slavery in relation to other assets within the Council's control.

**(f) Property**

No direct implications.

**(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**

Public recognition of the injustice of historical discrimination may help raise awareness of equalities issues and promote equalities more generally.

**(h) Consultations**

The Head of Education and Group Leaders have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

**5. CONCLUSION**

**5.1 There is a modest benefit to Schools and Teaching staff from funds distributed by the Dick Bequest scheme.**

**5.2 There is evidence that James Dick, the original trustee, was involved in slave trading.**

**5.3 The Committee is asked to consider this evidence and what action they wish to take.**

Author of Report: Alasdair McEachan, Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance.

Background Papers:

Ref: SPMAN-2045703626-87