



Hartlepool
Borough Council

OFFICER DECISION RECORD

Department: Adult and Community Based Services

Division:

Date of Decision / Issue
of Licence: 22/10/2025

Officer Making Decision: MRS J HARRISON

Subject / Description &
Reason for Decision:
(for publication)

Peter Knox, born in Hartlepool in 1942, is a celebrated contemporary fine artist whose works profoundly capture the cultural and industrial heritage of the North East of England. Growing up in a region defined by shipbuilding, steelworks, mining, and railway construction, Knox was deeply influenced by the sights, sounds, and stories of his hometown. His paintings serve as a visual documentation of this vanishing world, blending the gritty realism of industry with a deep affection for the community and landscape that shaped his childhood. This proposed acquisition is a portrait of Alex Hand, a saxophone player from Hartlepool who was an integral figure in the town's cultural life during the 1960s and 70s. Hand was leader of the Dance Band at the Queens Rink Dance Night every Saturday, where his music was central to Hartlepool's social scene. In contrast, he also performed experimental "free form jazz" at poetry readings in the Raglan Hotel, filling rooms with challenging new sounds that pushed beyond his dance hall performances. Hand was also co-founder of Iconolatre magazine, further embedding him in the cultural fabric of the town. His dual presence in both popular entertainment and avant-garde performance made him a key figure in Hartlepool's 1960s cultural renaissance.

Knox's decision to portray Hand reflects his ongoing engagement with the people and histories of Hartlepool. The painting adds a personal and cultural dimension to the museum's holdings, complementing Knox's industrial landscapes by celebrating the individuals who animated the town's artistic and social life. This work connects music, visual art, and local identity, offering opportunities for display not only within fine art contexts but also in exhibitions exploring Hartlepool's cultural history.

Peter Knox was a significant figure in Hartlepool's vibrant art scene during the 1960s. As a contemporary of the influential artist John Wilson McCracken, Knox played a crucial role in shaping the town's artistic identity. He was a member of the renowned Front Group, an avant-garde collective that championed new and experimental forms of art, placing Hartlepool firmly on the map of progressive British art. This portrait, by recording one of Hartlepool's cultural leaders, highlights Knox's ability to capture not only place and industry but also the personalities that contributed to the town's creative life. The painting thus strengthens the collection's ability to tell a fuller story of Hartlepool's cultural scene.

As a member of the Front Group, Knox's works carry both artistic and historical significance. His engagement with the subjects of Hartlepool life, whether industrial or cultural, offers a unique intersection of working-class heritage and avant-garde experimentation.

Relevance to Acquisitions policy / plan:

We will strengthen the existing collection through active collecting with an emphasis on topographical works relating to the Hartlepool area and works relating to Hartlepool artists.

Type of Decision:

Non Key

Nature of Delegation Being Exercised: Acquisition - the art collection is a Council asset and comes under the Councils Asset Management Plan. Under the plan, the acquisition process requires 'Acquisitions will be carried out in accordance with the principles of best value and other appropriate Council authority depending on the nature and quantum of the acquisition. Once agreement has been reached either the Assets Team or the instructing service directorate will prepare either an Officer Decision Record or a report to Finance and Policy Committee to obtain authority to proceed'.

Alternative Options Considered & Rejected: None. Either approve or reject.

Any Declared Register of Interest: No

Other Considerations:

OFFICER WITH THE DELEGATION

NAME: MRS J HARRISON
POSITION:

IN CONSULTATION WITH...

NAME: Pam Hargreaves
POSITION: Councillor



HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

ADULTS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DECISION RECORD

Date of Decision:	
Officer Making Request:	Angela Thomas
Officer Making Approval:	Jill Harrison, Director
Subject / Description & Reason for Decision:	<p>Purchase of a portrait of Alex Hand.</p> <p>This portrait by Peter Knox, a key figure in Hartlepool's 1960s art scene and member of the avant-garde Front Group, powerfully complements our existing holdings. While Knox's industrial landscapes document the region's working-class heritage, this work expands his narrative to include cultural life—specifically Alex Hand, a saxophonist central to Hartlepool's musical renaissance. Hand's dual role in popular dance bands and experimental jazz, alongside his co-founding of <i>Iconolatry</i> magazine, reflects the town's vibrant artistic identity. The painting bridges music, visual art, and local history, offering rich curatorial potential across fine art and cultural exhibitions. It aligns directly with our acquisitions policy to strengthen topographical and artist-related works from Hartlepool, enhancing our ability to tell a fuller, more nuanced story of the town's creative legacy.</p> <p>This portrait is offered for sale by the artist at a negotiated price of £300 which would be covered by the acquisitions budget.</p>
Type of Decision:	Non-key decision.
Alternative Options Considered & Rejected:	None, either accept or reject.
Any Declared Register of Interest	None.

Director – Jill Harrison	
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Chair of Adult & Community Based Services Committee – Cllr Pamela Hargreaves	
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