We were grateful for the opportunity given to us at last Thursday’s parliamentary committee meeting to share our views on the circumstances surrounding the fires at the Glasgow School of Art. The session covered a number of areas relating to the systemic failings in the management of the School which contributed to the tragic loss of the Mackintosh Building. There are additional concerns regarding the management of the cultural and heritage aspects of the School which we would also like to draw to the attention of the committee and which we believe require answers from the GSA management.

We consider that it would be in the public interest to learn more of how GSA has managed and prioritised the allocation of resources into its significant museum collections pre-2014 and how it has addressed the substantial loss of such an important cultural asset to Glasgow, Scotland and the wider international community. In particular:

1. **GSA has for many years received non-core SFC museum funding specifically targeted towards the heritage of the Mackintosh Building. This is currently set at £198K per year. We would like to know how GSA has allocated this substantial amount of funding both before and after 2014?**

   - Scotland’s most important university museums, including GSA, have for circa 20 years been recipients of this ‘museum’ funding. This funding is widely recognised as providing ‘additional support’ to the regular investment made by HEIs into their museum provision and across the sector has been utilised in various ways - to offset costs associated with the appointment of new staff, the extension and improvement of public access, and to enhance collection development by means of new acquisitions etc.

   - To the wider Mackintosh community it remains unclear as to how GSA has over the years distributed this substantial allowance for the wider benefit of its Mackintosh Building, museum collections and wider heritage.

   - We understand that a brief annual statement is presented to SFC on how the funds have been spent. How has the money been spent since 2014 and how does the School intend to spend this allocation in the coming years? It would be helpful to know more about this.

**NOTE:** it would be interesting to know how GSA’s spend on the museum and collections aspect of it business compares with other universities (e.g. GU spend on Hunterian?)
2. What proportion of profit generated by GSA Enterprises Ltd, mostly as a result of the School’s Mackintosh connection, is reinvested into supporting the GSA heritage?

- The GSA website states that profits from GSA Enterprises (GSAE) goes into supporting the “School’s wider activities”. Given that the majority of GSAE’s income is derived from maximising its Mackintosh connection, it would be better for GSAE to be more explicit in how its profit is reinvested. We believe that most paying visitors to the School would want to know that their own individual contribution was directed towards safeguarding the very heritage that they came to see and experience.

3. Why has GSA chosen to not to publish a full list of all collection items lost in the 2014 fire?

- To date GSA has not produced a publicly available itemised list of artworks lost in the fire – some of which were unique pieces. Our understanding is that the loss is in excess of 200 items. Although one assumes that this information would have been provided to necessitate the settling of an insurance claim, interested parties, including members of the Mackintosh Society and academics worldwide have approached GSA for this information and have routinely been directed to the School’s on-line museum and archive catalogue where this evidence is buried deep within individual catalogue entries. For those not familiar with cataloguing databases, this can be a time-consuming and frustrating process.

- We understand that it would have taken some time to establish which items had been lost as opposed to those that could be conserved. However, this information must now be available. We also understand that staff were instructed not to discuss the loss externally and to refer any enquiries to the communications team. As with the communication regarding the wider aspects of the fire, the true extent of the collection loss has been very tightly controlled by GSA. The narrative of 90% being saved was widely promoted to the press following the 2014 fire. The lack of transparency surrounding the loss is of concern.

- We are also aware that a small number of plaster casts that had survived the 2014 fire with only minor damage were in the Mackintosh Building at the time of the second fire however there has been no confirmation of these losses.

4. How has GSA invested resources into its museum heritage since the 2014 fire?

- GSA is already in receipt of a multi-million pound insurance pay-out for the loss of individual items cited above. Whilst it is known that some of this resource has been spent on new fixed term staff appointments to manage the recovery and restoration of items from the collection and archive, it is less clear what, if any, funds have been spent on rebuilding the collection and what future plans for this are.
• Mackintosh did not feature in the GSA’s research activity pre the 2014 fire (we understand that only 2 PhDs were undertaken in this area in the previous 30 years). A single curatorial post was in place since 1980s and this was externally funded until circa 2000. Why was there so little focus on this key aspect of the GSA’s culture and heritage?

• Since the fire resources have been directed to raising the ‘research profile’ of Mackintosh at GSA, at a time when so much of the collection (and building) has been destroyed. We would be interested to know whether funding for this new ‘research focus’ has been fully or partly met from the insurance pay-out and what proportion of the insurance settlement garnered from the lost collection (as opposed to the building) has been/will be made available to enhance the surviving collections.

We believe that addressing the above questions will provide much needed clarification and transparency which, coupled with the outstanding issues drawn from Thursday’s meeting, will hopefully deliver a rounded and complete assessment of GSA’s past, present and future commitment to its Mackintosh heritage.