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Portsmouth row erupts over £4,700 grant to save 'important' Southsea mural

THE future of an 'important' city mural could be under threat after a row over a £4,700 grant broke out between politicians.

By **Fiona Callingham**

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The artist behind the eye-catching Strand city map on the junction of Waverley Road and Clarendon Road, in Southsea, has applied for funding to maintain and repair the mural.

Mark Lewis wants to add signs and a bench and potentially create a new piece of art on a nearby shop wall.

If approved, the £4,795 grant would come from Portsmouth City Council's community infrastructure levy, paid into by developers.



Artist Mark Lewis has applied for funds to repair and maintain a popular mural on the junction of Waverley Road and Clarendon Road in Southsea. Picture: Sarah Standing (171120-8684)

Mark Lewis, who first painted the map on the 3,000 sq foot wall in 1997, said it required constant maintenance.

The 52-year-old said: 'I've asked the council for years for money but I've been covering the costs myself.

'If I don't get the money to do this it could fall into a state of disrepair.



Artist Mark Lewis has applied for funds to repair and maintain a popular mural on the junction of Waverley Road and Clarendon Road in Southsea.

'People love it and I think the councillors should show their support for the community.'

Lib Dem ward councillor Matt Winnington has backed the grant. The other two councillors for the area – Conservative councillors Luke Stubbs and Linda Symes – have opposed it.

Typically all three ward councillors need to approve the use of levy cash for a project to go ahead. As a result of the objections it will be considered at a council meeting instead.

Eastney and Craneswater ward member Cllr Stubbs said: 'A substantial grant was given for it to be created in the first place and people have been paying to appear on the mural.



Artist Mark Lewis has applied for funds to repair and maintain a popular mural on the junction of Waverley Road and Clarendon Road in Southsea. Picture: Sarah Standing (171120-8720)

'Public funds are scarce at the moment and I don't think it's a good use of the funds.'

However, Cllr Winnington, said he was 'disappointed' by his colleagues.

'Yes it was given money but that was over 20 years ago,' he said.

'It's an important piece of art for Portsmouth and we know that art is really positive for people's mental wellbeing and for the public realm.

'I would ask why the other councillors haven't put forward other ideas for the money.'

A public petition has been started to allocate the funds to the mural. The mural was damaged by a leaking pipe and redone in 2010.

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