

**MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at THE COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 6.00 pm on 15 MAY 2008**

Present:- Councillor K L Eden (Uttlesford Member); J Bullen and C Law
(Museum Society).

Officers
in attendance:- C Wingfield (Museum Curator) and R Procter (Democratic
Services Officer).

MM1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E C Abrahams and S V
Schneider, and from S Hollingworth, D Laing and A Watson.

MM2 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2008 were received, confirmed and
signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to an amendment requested via
e-mail by Mr E Planterose to the second paragraph of MM32, to replace the wording
after the first sentence with the following:

“Mr Planterose said that Mr Wallace had now moved from the area but he
understood he had identified a potential Chairman who had been the
Chairman of the Heritage Quest Trust Ltd, but whose name Mr Planterose
could not recall. The Chairman said the Charity Commission would be able to
advise. Mr Planterose said he would ask Mrs S Hollingworth, and in Mr
Wallace’s absence he would have to take on the role of the Society Chairman
although after the transfer to the Company at the next annual general meeting
he would resign.”

It was noted that Mr A Watson as Vice Chairman was now acting Chairman of the
Museum Society, and that the individual referred to had now been approached.

MM3 HERITAGE QUEST CENTRE PROJECT

The Curator gave a verbal report on fund raising matters. Unfortunately applications
to the three grant providers approached had been turned down. In particular, she
reported on feedback from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. The Foundation had
imposed new criteria on applicants, and these were now a requirement, despite
Museum officers taking care to lodge the application before these new criteria came
in.

She added that Susan Hollingworth and Sarah Kenyon had completed applications
for Viridor and Biffa, and these had been despatched.

Applications for a number of other grants had been sent, including the Curry Fund,
the Charles Hayward Foundation (for a maximum of £30K over two years), the
Foundation for Sport and the Arts, the Fidelity UK Foundation, and Garfield Weston.
It was noted that the award of the Lottery Grant would be likely to have a positive
impact on applications.

The Curator said that the remaining option was to apply to businesses, and she had
written to BAA Stansted seeking a meeting in the near future. She reminded the

meeting that BAA had in 2004 given £32K under the agreement with Uttlesford, but she would invite them to give more in view of the Lottery grant.

She would also approach Ridgeons again, following their generous support earlier in the year, to ask for funds to free up the landfill grants. The meeting discussed possible businesses which might donate.

There was brief speculation on future courses of action if difficulties in securing funding persisted. The Curator said she would keep the Lottery Fund informed of any slippage in the timetable.

MM4 SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM SOCIETY

The report circulated with the agenda had been read by all present and was therefore noted.

MM5 CURATOR'S REPORT

The Curator's report was considered. In reply to a question from Mrs J Bullen, the Curator advised that funds of £200K were still sought, and that £100K of this was requested from landfill grants, with businesses and foundations already mentioned to be approached for the remaining £100K. It was, however, acknowledged that businesses were entering difficult times, which would impact on this initiative.

MM6 EDUCATION OFFICER

The Curator said the Education Officer was officially retiring at the end of the week, but that she had already generously offered to return as a volunteer. This full-time post was now being advertised as "Learning Officer", to reflect the fact that the full role was not confined to assisting school visits. It was hoped that candidates with a suitable level of experience would come forward. There was discussion of the pay differential with other similar posts, as it was apparent that some were being advertised in the area for about £4K more than Uttlesford could offer.

The timetable for recruitment was considered, and it was noted that the earliest date by which an officer was likely to be in post was September. The individual would need to undertake a good deal of work fairly quickly in order to get up to speed, and consequently there was likely to be an impact on visitor numbers.

MM7 MUSEUM SERVICE AND INCOME GENERATION

The Curator referred the group to the request from the Council's Finance and Administration Committee for the report circulated with the agenda. The report set out data and considered options for means of generating additional income. She said she had recently attended a training event, Income Generation for Small Museums, at which she had gained reassurance that all viable opportunities for income generation were already being pursued. She concluded that all possible avenues had already been explored. Any further opportunities for income would require significant investment. Councillor Eden commended the report, and it was

RECOMMENDED to Finance and Administration Committee that

- 1) the Curator's report on income generation be noted as a comprehensive summary of present and future income opportunities for the Museum
- 2) the conclusion of the Museum Management Working Group be noted, that all appropriate and viable income generation opportunities for the Museum were already exploited.

MM8 **COLLECTIONS INSURANCE – EGYPTIAN PLATTER**

The Curator reported on the response received to a claim raised with AXA Insurance regarding the theft of the Egyptian platter last August. The value of the item had been claimed as £9K, and it was therefore disappointing that the insurer had offered only £3.5K. The authorisation of the Museum Society was necessary before such a low offer could be accepted. As the next scheduled meeting of the Society was not until July, it was agreed that the Curator would ask for an earlier executive meeting of the Society to be convened.

The possibility of appealing the insurer's offer was discussed. The Curator said that the platter had last been valued in the 1970s, and it was likely that it had been undervalued. She also advised that Egyptian items had gained in value over this period, possibly at a faster rate than some other antiquities.

The valuation of the collections generally was considered. It would be necessary at some point to undertake a complete revaluation of all the collections. A rolling valuation programme had started in 2006 with oil paintings, but had to be abandoned last year for various unavoidable reasons. The collections which were most urgently in need of valuation were the ceramics and glass collections, and arrangements for these to be undertaken were in hand.

It was noted that whilst it was difficult (and sometimes impossible) to replace like with like, it was nevertheless a condition of care that the collections be insured, and that the public were entitled to have lost or stolen items replaced with objects of similar value. In reply to a question from Mrs J Bullen, the Curator said that the chances of obtaining another Egyptian platter were remote, in view of restrictions which prevented the Museum competing at auctions on the open market, and that such a course of action would also incur additional costs such as VAT and the buyer's fee.

Councillor Eden said this was a sad incident, but concluded that, once the insurance payment was resolved, another item could be purchased.

MM9 **OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

Mrs J Bullen asked for an update on the question of the items to be donated by Mr Haylock, currently still in his barn. The Curator said this matter was in abeyance until the move to the Heritage Quest Centre. No further communication had been received from the National Trust regarding storage of the items.

The meeting ended at 6.50 pm.