

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Museum Management Working Group</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>10 November 2008</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Museum Service Fees and Charges</b>	
<b>Author:</b>	<b>Carolyn Wingfield, Curator</b>	Item for decision?

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## Summary

A decision by members is required on the level of charges for the Museum Service, to take effect from 1 April 2008. This report provides information for the Museum Management Work Group, before tabulated information on fees and charges is considered by Community Committee on 20 November. Account has been taken of the need to re-establish services to schools following the retirement of the previous Education Officer, the impact of the Heritage Quest Centre project and implications for access and visitor/user numbers. The report also considers opportunities for reviewing income from April 2010 in tandem with the opening of the Heritage Quest Centre and re-marketing of the Museum Service.

## Recommendations

1. Increase reproduction fees in line with inflation.
2. Retain other charges at current levels for 2009 -10, but to plan for increase in admission charges to Museum from April 2010 so that new publicity literature and signage can be planned and co-ordinated during 2009 in tandem with the Heritage Quest Centre project.
3. Agree admission charges equivalent to the Museum for the Heritage Quest Centre (opening anticipated early in 2010) and a 'double' ticket offer at a slight discount to encourage visitors to visit both facilities.

## Background Papers

Museum Service Charges for Education Services and Entry Fees, report to Community Committee, 13 March 2008

Museum Service and Income Generation, information for Museum Management Working Group, 15 May 2008

## Impact

Communication/Consultation	Audience Development Study (ABL 2005), observations and comments from visitors
Community Safety	No issues identified
Equalities	No specific issues, but service should be accessible to as wide an audience as possible, including those on low incomes

Finance	Expenditure of around £1,500 required to change publicity and signage if admission charge is increased.
Human Rights	No issues identified
Legal implications	None; Museum charges are discretionary
Sustainability	Increasing charges will increase income only if visitor/user numbers remain constant
Ward-specific impacts	Users of the service from all wards
Workforce/Workplace	No issues identified

## Situation

1. The table appended to this report lists the Museum Service's fees and charges:
  - School visits (and talks to adult groups)
  - Admission charges
  - Reproduction charges
  - Hire of premises for corporate or private functions

Other income is derived from the Donations Box (£ 781 in 2008-09) and sale of souvenirs (£ 8,121 in 2007-08) for which schoolchildren are the main market. Mark-up on souvenirs has already been increased by 10% in 2008, but sales overall have decreased as school visits have been affected by the Education Officer needing to use up annual leave and TOIL before her retirement and then the ensuing hiatus in services for schools. The new Learning Officer will be assisting the Visitor Services Officer with a review of souvenirs for sale early in 2009. In addition, much time and effort has been expended since 2005 in raising grants and donation towards long-term improvements to the Museum Service (Heritage Quest Centre project). Use is made of other small grants when the opportunity arises, but these are infrequent, small and generally for very specific projects or purchases, never for operational costs.
2. The report presented to Community Committee in March 2008, Museum Service Charges for Education Services and Entry Fees, analysed the Museum's current position and context, given that most other local authority museums in the area are free and others either provide free educational services to schools, or where they do charge, have significantly better facilities. Expectations of improved access to collections and services, from funding bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund as well as from the public, need to be balanced with the sustainability of the Service, so charges for taught sessions for schools and for talks to adult groups were increased from April

2009 from £2-00 to £2-50 per head (£40 minimum group rate). However the financial effects of this increase will not be fully realised until 2009-10 due to the retirement of the Education Officer in May 2008 and the hiatus in services until the new Learning officer (in post from September 2008) has been able to develop new sessions for schools and re-build the customer-base. It would therefore be difficult to justify any further increase in educational charges from 2009-2010, and to do so might risk accusations of exploiting schools for income disproportionately to other service users.

3. Admission charges could be considered for increase from £1-00 (adult) / 50p (discount rate) to £2-00 (£1 discount), and a similar doubling of season tickets from £3 to £6 (from £1-50 to £3-00 discount). However, as described in the report of 13 March 2008, some fall-off in visitor number is likely whenever admission charges increase and furthermore the cost of reprinting all publicity material and changing signage would probably cost around £1,500 or between half and two-thirds of the expected increase in income. Publicity material would then be changed again early in 2010 to reflect the opening of the Heritage Quest Centre and enhanced outreach programme. It would therefore be more efficient and cost-effective to agree the increase in admission charges to take effect from April 2010, but agree the rates now so that officers can incorporate them in new publicity literature and signage for both the Museum and Heritage Quest Centre as the project develops during 2009-10.
4. It is intended that admission charges to the Heritage Quest Centre for guided public tours will be the same as the admission charge for the Museum, and that visitors will be able to purchase a 'double ticket', for one visit to each building, at either site, to encourage them to visit both. As an incentive, a small discount could be offered of £3-50 (instead of £4-00) for an adult 'double' ticket or £1-50 (instead of £2-00) discount. Season tickets would be valid at both the Museum and Heritage Quest Centre.
5. Alternatively, to maximise visitor uptake at both sites, admission charges could be left at £1 / 50p for the Museum and Heritage Quest Centre, and consideration of any increases deferred until the Museum itself has been improved (Stage II of the Museum Service Forward Plan).
6. Reproduction fees (supplying images from the collections for commercial publications) raise a small amount of income on an occasional basis. These charges depend on the nature, print-run and distribution of the book, and also cover TV and film, unless it is a news item or primarily publicity for the Museum. Charges were last raised in line with inflation in 2007 and it is recommended that these are raised by approx 5% from April 2009.
7. Hiring of the Museum's galleries for corporate or private functions out-of-hours was introduced a few years ago. Despite issuing a brochure advertising the scheme to businesses and hosting the

launch of Saffron Walden Business Forum, the Museum has not received many corporate bookings, and there seems to be a very limited market in the area for this service. However, private bookings have been a little more frequent, although still little more than one per year: birthday parties (adults not children) and Sunday morning christening parties. The Museum is inevitably expensive to hire compared with function rooms in pubs or village / parish halls, as it is a 'prestige' venue and costs of stewarding of security purposes have to be covered, but kitchen facilities are very poor and limit catering to cold finger-food and drinks. It is therefore recommended that charges for hire remain unaltered but that marketing is improved via the Museum's website, by posters in the Museum and through the Museum Society's newsletter, *Museum Matters*, to see if a few more bookings can be raised.

8. Members are asked to note other opportunities for income generating activities which are planned or anticipated in future a small selling exhibition by craft potters is being negotiated for 2010, and the Heritage Quest Centre project will be developing new loan list for schools which should become available from early that same year. The Museum Service Forward Plan Stage II (improvements to Museum and Castle site) looks at longer-term opportunities, referred to in the paper *Museum Service and Income Generation* provided for Museum Management Working Group in May 2008. Details of new charges arising from the activities of the Heritage Quest Centre project will be brought to Committee for approval as they arise.

## Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
<b>Fail to meet income targets because of hidden costs and users are deterred by higher charges</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Medium</b>	Plan increase in admission charges for April 2010 so that hidden costs (changing publicity and signage) can be absorbed in planned changes to marketing of Museum Service at opening of Heritage Quest Centre
<b>Apparent conflict with plans to increase accessibility of collections may confuse public and funding organisations</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Medium</b>	Recommendations should be sustainable by most users, but care must be taken not inhibit access to collections and services, especially for schools and vulnerable groups. HLF to be advised of increases.

## **Disposal of Eight Oil Paintings from the collections of Saffron Walden Museum**

### **1 Summary**

- 1.1 Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd and the Museum Management Working group are asked to consider and approve the deaccessioning and appropriate means of disposal for eight oil paintings, according to the Museum's Acquisition & Disposal Policy. The pictures have insufficient relevance to the collections or artistic merit to justify retention, especially as all are in poor condition and would be relatively costly to conserve for little gain.

### **2 Background**

- 2.1 Oil paintings have been acquired randomly throughout the Museum's history, mostly in the nineteenth century, by donation or occasionally by purchase. While some have specific local associations (views, people or local artists) there is also a small number of miscellaneous paintings which have been acquired by chance rather than through any focused policy. The Museum has never seriously tried create a 'fine art' picture collection, nor has it had the resources or gallery space to do so. Apart from some portraits on display in the Museum, and a few paintings on loan, most of the oil paintings have remained in store and are unlikely to be displayed in the foreseeable future. Many of the paintings have little or no information on provenance, and when the collection was catalogued on computer some years ago, temporary accession numbers had to be allocated to those which had no traceable number in the Accession registers (numbers such as 31,284 etc)
- 2.2 In 2006 two events provided an opportunity to reappraise the oil painting collection. First, inclusion of the Museum's oil painting collection in the Public Catalogue Foundation's volume for Essex led to examination and research of paintings and a digital photographic record being made and published. Secondly, an independent expert was commissioned to undertake a valuation of the oil paintings for insurance purposes, and also to check the identity and description of the paintings. This exercise confirmed that there were no 'hidden masterpieces' or pictures of special interest, and the Curator and staff consequently felt that they could now recommend the disposal of certain oil paintings with confidence.

### **3 The Paintings for Deaccession and Disposal**

- 3.1 The oil paintings recommended for disposal are:

1921.15	Ulysses and Polyphemus, anon copy after JMW Turner Framed
1921.17	Flight into Egypt, copy by Banell after Claude-Lorraine Framed
1921.20	St Peter Repenting, Spanish school after Jusepe Ribera Framed
31271	Portrait of a woman in black dress. Mid 19 <sup>th</sup> century Unframed
31284	Skyscape with windmill Unframed

- 31285            Landscape with trees  
Unframed
- 31286            Landscape with horsemen  
Unframed
- 31293            Portrait of a St Bernard dog, after Landseer  
Unframed

3.2 Full descriptions with notes on condition and insurance value are enclosed on a separate sheet. The first three paintings were part of a group of seven pictures (accession numbers 1921.15 – 21) given to the Museum in 1921 by Lewis Fry ‘in memory of the late Francis Gibson’ but otherwise have no known local connection. It has not been possible to find any information on the provenance of the other five paintings, but they have evidently been in the Museum for a good many years, were not purchased with grant-aid and therefore the presumption is that the Museum has title and may dispose of them.

#### **4 Reasons for Deaccession and Disposal**

- 4.1 The recommendation to dispose is based on two of the reasons given in section 4.4 of the Acquisition & Disposal Policy
  - a Items that are too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of further use for the purposes of the collections, or where the condition of the items would require more conservation work than their significance and usefulness merits.
  - b Disposal of duplicate or unprovenanced items that have no discernible role or relevance within the collection, or could fulfil a much greater role if deaccessioned and transferred to another use or institution.

#### **5 Insurance valuations and conservation costs**

- 5.1 The insurance valuations (2006) have been added to the table for information but it should be noted that insurance values are generally higher than any likely sale price and that for the three framed pictures, the value reflects the frames as much as the painting itself. In view of the very poor condition of the pictures and frames, it is probable that the cost of conserving them and returning them to displayable condition would outweigh any notional sale value, and costs of transport, fees etc would also have to be met.

#### **6 Method of disposal**

- 6.1 Once the decision to deaccession the paintings (i.e. remove them from the collection) has been taken, the Museum should initially advertise their disposal in the *Museums Journal*, and offer them as an unconditional gift to any accredited museum or art gallery which may wish to acquire them. Two months from the date of publication of the notice will be allowed for response.
- 6.2 In the event that no museum or gallery wishes to acquire the paintings – which seems likely – an alternative means of disposal would be to offer the pictures by unconditional gift to recognised art conservation institutions for trainee picture and frame conservators to practice on. Research by the Conservation Officer has established that there are likely to be institutions willing to acquire pictures for this purpose (e.g. Hamilton Kerr Institute).
- 6.3 In theory sale could be considered, subject to clearance with appropriate professional bodies and to all proceeds being applied to the Museum Society’s Acquisition & Display Fund for future enhancement of the collections.

- 6.4 A full record of each painting and its disposal will be kept in the Museum and the accession register annotated accordingly.

## **7 Recommendations**

- a The eight paintings listed above are to be deaccessioned and disposed of.
- b Preference will be for disposal by unconditional gift to another museum or gallery, accredited institutions receiving priority, or if unwanted by any museum or gallery, to conservation institutions to assist training of painting and frame conservators.
- c Any paintings which cannot be disposed of by the above means to be destroyed and disposed of, unless a local dealer can be found who would be prepared to take them for a payment to the Acquisition & Display Fund.

Carolyn Wingfield, Curator                      17 October 2008  
Museum Management Working Group

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Framed
- 1921.18 Flight into Egypt, copy by Banell after Claude-Lorraine  
Framed
- 1921.20 St Peter Repenting, Spanish school after Jusepe Ribera  
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- 31271 Portrait of a woman in black dress. Mid 19<sup>th</sup> century  
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- 31284 Skyscape with windmill  
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Carolyn Wingfield, Curator

17 October 2008