

**Museum Management Working Group
Meeting 13th April 2016
Museum Society Chairman's Report**

The latest exhibition 'The Ocean World' was previewed on 19th February, and is well worth a visit if you have not yet been. The Chairman thanked Sarah Kenyon for the success of this latest exhibition. The fossils are most interesting, particularly the crab, see just how old this is!

The major event of this period was the opening of the Shirehill Store, two days ago, on 11th April. Our store volunteers were very busy in the period up to Christmas and all but a few large items are now safely in residence in the new store. You are well aware what a large ongoing project this has been and I am pleased that you will have been able to see what has been achieved. The Society has been fortunate to have such an enthusiastic and hard working group of people both packing and moving and then unpacking hundreds of items. The new store is most impressive and many items in the collections have seen the light of day for the first time in many years - some have even found their way into displays.

I would like to record the Society's thanks to two former Chairmen of the MMWG, namely David Morson and Keith Eden; despite their different political views, they have both led the way in achieving the completion of this new facility. The Society and the Council have been in partnership since the mid- 1970s during which time I have, as the Society Solicitor, then Vice-Chairman and finally Chairman, worked closely with Council officers in the continuing development of the Museum. I would like to thank Adrian Webb and Richard Auty for all their work in the planning and construction of the new store and Nicola Whitman for her efficient management of the building project. The completion of the first three stages of the project, planning, construction and fitting out and moving in are a significant milestone in the history of the Museum. There is now the final task of making use of the improved access to objects and making the material available to interested groups. There is the urgent need to up-date the records of the objects - the museum records currently shows the object is Newport! A small Lottery application will be needed to fund temporary staff for this work. Richard Priestley and I have recently attended a Museums in Essex meeting and had the opportunity to discuss an outline of future plans with Kate Brown a Development Manager with HLF.

The Development Committee is still considering the final draft of a Design Brief for the re-development of the museum buildings. Meanwhile we have had an interesting paper from Jonathan Bryant with suggestions for the development of both the Castle and Museum and linking this with the Fry Art Gallery. Details of our proposals will be made available for your comments later this year. It is also good to see that the hedge around the Castle has now gone; hopefully it will not be long before we can get inside the Keep again.

Tony Watson.
3rd April 2016