

**SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM/UTTLESFORD MUSEUM SERVICE  
RESOURCE CENTRE PROJECT TEAM held at 2.00 pm in the MUSEUM  
SCHOOL ROOM on 17 FEBRUARY 2006**

Present:- Councillor D J Morson (Chairman).  
Councillor A R Row, Diane Burridge, Maureen Evans,  
Sarah Kenyon, Peter Snow and Carolyn Wingfield (Uttlesford  
District Council) and David Haylock and Tony Watson (Saffron  
Walden Museum Society).

Also present by invitation:- Martin Pratt of PHT Consultants.

**1 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from David Demery and David Laing.

**2 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 January 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following corrections:-

Minute 3 (i) – the second paragraph should read “David Haylock said he had been in contact with an acquaintance of Jimmy Goldsmith who would investigate whether any funds were available”.

Minute 3 (ii) – the reference in the first line to David Haylock should read “David Laing”.

Minute 3 (ii) – the reference in the final sentence to the National Trust should read “English Heritage”.

Minute 4 – the second sentence in the first paragraph should read “it was agreed the Society would apply for registration and would also apply for an entrust grant”.

Minute 4 – the reference in the second paragraph to “landfill tax” should read “charitable trust”.

Minute 4 – the reference in the fourth paragraph to Claude Duffield should read “Clare Duffield”.

Minute 4 – in the fifth paragraph, the reference to Call my Bluff on 18 March should read “14 January”. A further fundraising event would take place on 18 March.

## **BUSINESS ARISING**

### **Minute 3 (i) – Fundraising**

Councillor Morson reported that he had, as yet, been unable to make arrangements for the four Essex County Councillors representing Uttlesford to meet together to discuss fundraising initiatives.

### **Minute 4 – Fundraising and Consultation**

Diane Burridge reported that Michael Perry seemed to be of the opinion that charitable trust status for the Heritage Quest Centre might not be appropriate. She would report back to the next meeting with the results of further discussions on this subject.

Carolyn Wingfield clarified the Museum's capacity to seek grants for educational and scientific purposes. It was noted that planning permission had now been granted for the Heritage Quest Centre and a forward plan would be prepared.

Councillor Row congratulated everyone concerned on the Call my Bluff event held in January to raise funds for the Resource Centre.

## **FORWARD PLAN**

### **(a) PHT Consultants to outline feasibility study on income generation**

Carolyn Wingfield introduced Martin Pratt of PHT Consultants and explained the background to the decision to appoint consultants to seek to maximise the opportunities for revenue at the Museum site.

Martin Pratt explained the purpose of the consultation study and the role and background of his company. He expected to be able to produce his final report by the end of March or the beginning of April. He saw his brief as looking for ways for the Museum to maximise retailing and other income generating activities on the Museum site, including the Castle. This might involve finding ways to exploit more effectively the attractive setting of the Museum and Castle grounds.

Some of the ideas being explored were:-

- Relocate the Tourist Information Centre from the Town Centre to act as a gateway to the Museum.
- Increase the size of the shop and incorporate a catering facility, either in the Museum or in a relocated TIC.
- Look for opportunities to license Museum objects.
- Examine the possibility of extending onto the Museum building (most likely on the east side) to provide more storage and exhibition space (part of the Forward Plan, but not in PHT's remit).

Mr Pratt said that the Museum building was cramped and the capacity to increase the number of visitors and generate more income was quite limited. In relation to the possible extension of the Museum, an evaluation of the architectural options would be carried out and reported back. There were obvious limitations because of the sloping nature of the site.

A further option was to incorporate the schoolroom into the changes being made by relocating the TIC there and possibly a catering facility as well.

Councillor Row said that he did not agree with the possible relocation of the TIC to the Museum. The present location was a prime spot in the town centre and was ideal for the purpose it served.

The Chairman agreed that the case was not clear-cut and that councillors were presently divided on this issue. The Museum was not visibly well located and he considered that it was important to look at alternative signage arrangements that would help to direct more visitors to the Museum site. This could be included as part of a package incorporating a town tourist trail. Members must be prepared to consider this as an opportunity to re-brand the Museum service which might include the possibility of finding a new name for the Museum (and possibly for the nearby car park on The Common as well).

Members of the Project Team then spent some time considering ways of making the Museum more visible, including more imaginative uses for the Castle grounds. Tony Watson commented that the Museum Society was funding a feasibility study on future building development and was waiting to be provided with a brief as to what would be required.

David Haylock said that the Museum Society should maintain an open mind about what could be done on the main Museum site and Tony Watson agreed that further advice was needed on the best use of the space available.

The Chairman summed up the discussion by agreeing that a flexible approach should be maintained as to future uses on the site and that a further date should now be settled for the consultants' presentation. It was agreed that the presentation would be incorporated into the next meeting of the Project Team and that this would take place at 2.00 pm on Wednesday 5 April 2006.

**(b) Meeting with Debbie Priddy of English Heritage**

It was noted that this meeting would be held at 3.00 pm on 3 March 2006 as a starting point for negotiations about the use of the Museum site. Barbara Bosworth and David Demery had both been invited to attend and it was agreed to circulate details to all members of the Project Team.

Carolyn Wingfield reported the outcome of various grant applications and progress in pursuing other grant opportunities. She said that she would have to find the time to contact other groups, such as the Getty Foundation.

Sarah Kenyon suggested that some administrative support would be useful in this area and it was agreed that a formal request for help would be submitted to Diane Burridge.

Donations had presently reached £52,000, including a sum of £32,000 from BAA and £10,000 from the Museum Society. In addition, a sum of £60,000 had been earmarked by the Council for this project. It was noted that a further fundraising event on the theme "A Travel Anthology" would be held at the Friends' Meeting House on 18 March 2006.

The Chairman noted that a donation from Henham Parish Council had now been received and he hoped that other parish councils would also support the Heritage Centre Project.

## 6 **PROJECT PLANNING AND TIMETABLE**

Carolyn Wingfield suggested that the Project Team should now firm up the timetable for the submission of an application for Heritage Lottery Grant Funding. An application could be submitted once the sum of £400,000 was in place and it was hoped that this position would be reached by autumn 2006.

To enable an assessment to be made of the financial viability of the scheme by June or July of this year, it was agreed that all potential target donors should be formally approached by no later than the end of March. The assessment would then be able to examine how any financial shortfall could be met.

The Curator referred also to the timetable for Museum accreditation during the period from March to July this year and said that the work would have to be accommodated within this time frame.

It was recognised that this timetable would be likely to impose severe strains on the Museum's staff during the first half of the year. The aim would be to put a forward plan before the Community Committee at its June meeting. This would require a plan to be drafted ready to submit to the Museum Management Task Group by that date.

It was acknowledged that the question of charitable trust status would have to be resolved within the near future and it was understood that officers were considering a possible alternative arrangement. Maureen Evans referred to the potential route to obtain more money in Essex and it was reported that Richard Wallace would be approaching the Essex Community Fund later this month.

## 7 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Councillor Row asked for further information about the decision to commission the study by PHT Consultants. The Chairman explained that this had emerged from the decision of the former Resources Committee to provide money for a study into the long-term sustainability of the Museum service. Carolyn Wingfield gave a brief explanation of the process by which PHT

Consultants were appointed. Members of the Project Team agreed that the most important priority at the present time was the need to concentrate on the Heritage Quest Centre and it was important that other matters did not become a distraction.

Carolyn Wingfield said that the BBC had just finished filming a feature on the Museum which would be broadcast on the Inside Out programme on 6 March this year. The feature was intended to be a behind the scenes view of activities at the Museum including family activities.

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#### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting would coincide with the proposed presentation by PHT Consultants at 2.00 pm on Wednesday 5 April 2006.

It was agreed that the Chairman would meet with Michael Perry and Tony Watson next Thursday 23 February 2006 to discuss the proposed charitable trust arrangement.

The meeting ended at 3.50 pm.