

**Meeting of the SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM RESOURCE CENTRE
PROJECT TEAM held on 21 JANUARY 2008 AT 2.00 pm at the Museum
School Room, Saffron Walden**

Present: Councillor K Eden – Chairman.
Councillors D J Morson and S V Schneider (Uttlesford
members); David Demery; David Laing, Richard Wallace,
Tony Watson (Museum Society)

Officers present: Toby Cowper, Maureen Evans, Sarah Kenyon,
Rebecca Procter, Carolyn Wingfield

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lemon and from David Haylock.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2007 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND APPLICATION

(i) Update of case officer's and consultant's visit on 3 January

Carolyn Wingfield reported that Sylvia Collier had now replaced Sandra Hirons as the Lottery Fund case officer, following a re-structuring. A meeting to assess the application had taken place, which was followed by a series of questions and responses. She said that she hoped the outstanding replies sought during this process would be obtained at today's meeting. Most of the enquiries related to details, such as the percentage of objects to be documented on the website, and it was therefore encouraging that fundamental aspects of the application were not being questioned.

Carolyn Wingfield presented a table of comparative targets for minimum and maximum estimated numbers of the groups it was intended to attract. It was agreed that only "ballpark" figures could be given. Further information was also sought on matching funding and on the new articles and memorandum of the Museum Society. The question also arose as to whether the District Council would be prepared to be a joint applicant and grantee in the case of an award, in view of the Heritage Quest Trust Ltd having withdrawn from the application. The Chairman affirmed that a District Council committee decision would be required. Catherine Nicholson had confirmed that the Museum Society would need to write to Full Council, but in the meantime we should proceed on the assumption that the application would indeed be treated as a joint application.

Carolyn Wingfield then went on to report on a further query regarding staffing costs in relation to the architect retained for the project. There is an expectation that the Council would fund this element, as the grant cannot fund core staff costs (Architect's costs for the project are £11,000 so this would mean reducing HLF grant by 57.5% of £11,000 – about £6,000). The matter would need to be raised at Community Committee, and although it is not on the agenda for the meeting on 24 January, Councillor Eden suggested that the Chairman of Community be urged to consider the issue as urgent business. Councillor Schneider said that an alternative would be to fund the post from donations and fundraising. The question of whether the MRC could fund a Council employee was discussed further, and Councillor Morson suggested that Alison Martin be approached for her advice. David Demery pointed out that there is a precedent in that he had been paid via his Council salary for his role in drawing up plans for the application. Carolyn Wingfield noted that in previous discussions £11K remained for funding specialist consultation studies, and which it had been agreed with Sara Chapman could be used to pay the architect (referred to in minutes last year). It was agreed that this fund would therefore be used.

(ii) Query from Lottery Fund on levels of administrative support

Carolyn Wingfield then referred to a request for information about levels of administrative support to be provided by the Council, in particular regarding an adequate balance between curatorial and administrative duties. Toby Cowper has been providing advice on accounts aspects, but if another officer from within the Council could be identified to provide a half day's additional support during busy periods, this would be useful.

Whilst staffing details had been provided in the project plan, the focus on administrative support may stem from the fact that this application was on the cusp of being a "Stage 2 project", ie projects over £1m, which would normally have a dedicated project manager. It was agreed that if the bid were to be successful, it was likely that the District Council would identify the necessary facility. As the staffing situation was currently under review, it was agreed that the Chairman and Councillor Schneider would refer this need to the Council. In the meantime, Carolyn Wingfield would assure the case officer as far as possible that preparations would be made for administrative support to be available when the demand for it arose. It was noted that Sylvia Collier had been the case officer for the work at Bridge End Gardens, and had been very constructive.

4 SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM SOCIETY CONSTITUTION

David Laing said that at the special meeting on 4 January 2008 the Society had agreed to apply to become a registered company. The application forms had been despatched to Companies House. Legal advice having been obtained, an application was also to be sent to the Charities Commission. David Laing and Tony Watson would finalise the detail of this application after the present meeting.

FUNDRAISING

(i) Grant applications

Carolyn Wingfield presented a schedule of fundraising to complete matching funding for 2007 – 2008. There is the potential to raise £320,000, a greater sum than the £240,000 needed to complete matching funding. This margin is deliberate so as to minimise the possibility of a shortfall if any element should fail to materialise in full.

(ii) Fundraising Event on 29 February

Maureen Evans said that she and Richard Wallace had compiled a “rich list” of local people to be invited to an evening of drinks and canapés at St Marks College. A straightforward request for donations would be made. Members of the Committee would be asked to host the event. Patrons Lord Petre and Lord Braybrooke would also act as hosts, with other patrons Sir Alan Haslehurst MP, Carenza Lewis and the High Sheriff Andrew Streeter all attending.

Councillor Schneider revealed that a £2,500 donation had been made by David Ridgeon. This had not yet been received and she would therefore make enquiries to ensure it was forthcoming. Maureen Evans commented that gifts in kind from Ridgeons would be useful, and invitations to other members of the family should be issued. In reply to a question from Councillor Morson, Maureen Evans advised that invitees had been drawn from a different group to those invited to the launch event. Carolyn Wingfield noted that the Museum Society was generously funding the event with £750.

CONTINGENCY PLANS

David Demery asked the Committee to treat the following information as commercially sensitive, and not to be discussed outside the Committee. He explained that the project was to be located on a prominent site, which was now to be developed by Granite, as planning permission had recently been granted in respect of all the land to the back and the front of the site. The apex would be given over principally to car parking, which would make the Museum’s site even more prominent. The civic amenity site would be re-located under these plans, with access provided to the commercial development. David Demery had discussed timescales with Granite to ensure there would be continual access to the Museum development. During discussions it was suggested that if the Museum would agree to move to a less prominent position, there might be a financial benefit – possibly going so far as to construct the facility. David Demery noted that this would not have the same distinction of prominence and materials as the current plan. It would also be likely that Granite would retain ownership of the land. He concluded that such a contingency plan was useful, but that if it were to be considered then great care would need to be taken.

7 FORWARD PLAN STAGE II (MUSEUM AND CASTLE)

Carolyn Wingfield said that there was nothing further to report at this stage, but that recent developments regarding the TIC could have implications for the Museum development.

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Carolyn Wingfield said that she was working on a report to the Finance and Administration Committee on Councillor Chambers' advice regarding the post of Education Officer, which if not immediately filled on the present Education Officer's retirement in May 2008, due to the present circumstances, would have implications for visitor numbers and income generation. Any significant delay in recruitment would also have to be reported to the Lottery case officer, as the application had been made on the assumption that the Museum Service's full permanent staff team would be maintained.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that meetings should take place bi-monthly on the third Monday in the month. The date of the next meeting to be Friday 28 March 2008 at 2 pm, and thereafter as follows:

Monday 19 May at 2 pm
Monday 21 July at 2 pm
Monday 15 September at 2 pm
Monday 17 November at 2 pm