

Meeting of the SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM RESOURCE CENTRE PROJECT TEAM held on 28 MARCH 2008 AT 2.00 pm at the Museum School Room, Saffron Walden

Present: Councillor K L Eden – Chairman
Councillor R M Lemon (Uttlesford member); David Demery; David Haylock, David Laing, Tony Watson (Museum Society)

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

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Maureen Evans, and Councillors Chambers, Morson and Schneider.

2 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2008 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Carolyn Wingfield said that £1,600 had been donated at the fund-raising event, less than had been hoped. Of this, £1,000 was given by Lord Braybrooke and £100 by Sir Alan Haselhurst.

3 HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND APPLICATION AND MATCHING FUNDING

The Chairman congratulated all members of the group, and in particular, Carolyn Wingfield, on the Lottery grant. Carolyn Wingfield said that the exact amount awarded by the HLF was £976,500.00. Regarding publicity, local newspapers had made direct contact with the Lottery Fund, which had sent out a press release sooner than had been expected. There had been fairly extensive publicity in the local media, including some short radio interviews.

Regarding communication with the Lottery Fund, a standard letter of notification had been received (together with a template for a press release). Carolyn Wingfield had sent confirmation of acceptance, and at Tony Watson's request said she would send a copy of that notice to the Museum Society.

ACTION: Carolyn Wingfield to send to Tony Watson a copy of the notice of acceptance of the Lottery Grant.

Regarding next steps, it would be necessary to arrange for co-ordination of logos between the Council, the Museum Society and the Lottery Fund for the purposes of publicity and acknowledgement of the grant. Work could not commence on the project until authorisation to do so had been received. Matching funding was yet to be raised, and a possible start date of June 2008 was therefore dependent on achieving the target for such funding.

The Project Team considered a schedule prepared by Carolyn Wingfield and Sarah Kenyon, setting out an original target of £240K, and identifying potential sources of matching funding. A claim for Gift Aid was to be included after 31 March. There

was discussion of the implications for the possible start date of the project, in view of the lengthy timetable for the Biffa application. Carolyn Wingfield said that a view would have to be taken as the application progressed. Sarah Kenyon said that the application would be submitted prior to a change in the procedure, which should help to expedite the process.

Carolyn Wingfield suggested that local businesses should be approached for any third party input required to release landfill tax credit grants from Viridor and Biffa. In reply to a question from David Laing, she said that money already received could not be put towards matching funding for technical reasons, as cheques for such amounts would be required from the Museum Society. The Chairman said it was likely that a way round this difficulty could be found, if necessary.

Carolyn Wingfield said that additional sources would be investigated if any application were unsuccessful. In the event of a shortfall, it was important to ensure local businesses and media were made aware of the continued pressure to find matching funding from local sources, as this was vital to secure the Lottery funding. The Chairman noted that there were four main potential donors, and that a shortfall could therefore be significant.

Tony Watson said it was more important than ever to keep up momentum now that the grant had been received. He suggested that members of the Museum Society renew approaches to those invited to the fund-raising event. This course of action was agreed, and Maureen Evans would be asked to supply a note of invitees.

ACTION:

- 1 Officers to provide members of the Museum Society with a list of those invited to the fundraising event.
- 2 Members of the Museum Society to renew approaches by telephone or in person, in order to follow up possibilities for matching funding.

There were a number of constitutional changes required in connection with the transfer of land to the Saffron Walden Museum Society Limited. These included the assignment to the company of the lease the Society held with Barclays Bank Trust Company, and the transfer of the collection. Carolyn Wingfield circulated a draft report to be submitted to Uttlesford District Council. The report sought approval for the land for the Heritage Quest Centre to be transferred as a gift to the Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd instead of to the Heritage Quest Trust Ltd as originally agreed, and requested that use of the site to deposit road sweepings cease.

Councillor Lemon said he would choose the Museum Fund for the Chairman's charity if elected to that post. He sought ideas for fundraising, such as quizzes or dinners. The Chairman thanked Councillor Lemon. Suggestions were made for a quiz based on strange and unusual objects from the collections, and for an intergenerational "knock-out" quiz.

David Demery said certain preparations could be started despite the fact that firm commitment would not be possible until June. The following action was agreed.

ACTION: Preparations for the project should be made where it was reasonable to do so, and provided no binding agreements were entered into at this stage.

4 **SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM SOCIETY – CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES**

David Laing was extremely pleased by the success of the bid, but expressed disappointment that whilst the press release issued by the Lottery Fund had mentioned the Museum Society, the newspapers had not done so.

He said that the new company was incorporated on 11 January 2008, and that it had been registered with the Charity Commission on 14 March. The first meeting of the directors was to be on the first Tuesday of April. The outcome of the gifting of the land was now awaited. The transfer of all assets owned by the Museum Society would be addressed, and he trusted this would be a straightforward process.

5 **TIMETABLE**

Carolyn Wingfield said that it would be necessary to review the timetable for the project on a monthly basis in order to assess progress on matching funding and legal issues. There was discussion of the potential need to take risks as this project would entail a degree of anticipation, although any risks would need to be underwritten.

6 **FORWARD PLAN STAGE II**

Carolyn Wingfield said the viability of the Heritage Quest Project opened the way for the Forward Plan, and that once all the collections were transferred it would be possible to consider long-term improvements for the Museum and Castle.

In reply to a question from the Chairman, Carolyn Wingfield and David Demery said that work to the Heritage Quest Centre could possibly start in November 2008. There would then follow a building programme of at least six months, a fitting-out period, and a transfer of the collections, plus sorting and auditing. On this basis, the Centre could therefore become operational by the end of 2009.

In reply to questions, Carolyn Wingfield said the Museum and Castle project would not be another Lottery Fund project, as it would not meet the criteria. It would be a major project, which would involve a thorough revision of the commercial front of house, although this was some years away. Priorities for an extension to the eastern side were a multi-purpose room for education, activities and functions; a new special exhibitions gallery, improved office space for staff, and new toilets. The existing special exhibitions gallery could be released for use as a shop, reception area and seating area. There would be landscaping, a link to the Castle, and work to conserve the Castle ruins, which would attract English Heritage money.

The Chairman said that it would be useful to lay foundations for this project by thinking ahead as much as possible, and by encouraging people to participate well in advance, particularly at a time when the town was growing bigger.

Tony Watson said the Museum Society had already allocated funds to look into feasibility for this project, which would take place in early 2009. He said that some public consultation on the castle site had already been done. Carolyn Wingfield proposed that the group should revise the forward plan later in the year.

ACTION: It was agreed that officers would provide notes of key milestones by way of a summary, to be attached to the agenda for the next meeting.

The Chairman said that the Town Council was looking at a range of land swapping options with various bodies to address sport and art options. This would provide an opportunity to start discussions for the project.

David Laing said the Society had intended to put aside funds for the feasibility study, but wished to record that there had been an impact arising from the funding of the Education Officer post. The Chairman acknowledged the comment. He said that the Council had now approved the proposal in relation to the Education Officer at its meeting last night.

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DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting to be Monday 19 May at 2 pm in the Museum School Room.