

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

Present: Councillor R M Lemon – Chairman
Councillor C Smith (Uttlesford District Council Member); Mr D Haylock, Mr D Laing and Mr A Watson (Museum Society); Mr D Demery (Architect)

Uttlesford District
Council Officers present: Toby Cowper (Capital Accountant), Maureen Evans (Visitor Services Officer), Sarah Kenyon (Nature Sciences Officer), Rebecca Procter (Democratic Services Officer), Carolyn Wingfield (Curator)

MRC1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Eden, Morson and Schneider.

MRC2 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2008 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following change at paragraph 4 of item 4: 'British and Foreign Bible Society' to be altered to 'British and Foreign School Society'.

MRC3 HERITAGE QUEST CENTRE FUNDING AND START DATE

The meeting considered the report of the Curator, which had been circulated previously. She said it was now necessary to establish a clear picture of the starting options, and the means by which planning permission could be kept 'live'. She referred to an indication from the Heritage Lottery Fund that it would be prepared to give permission to start without all the partnership funding secured if there was a back-up plan for underwriting any shortfall that might arise. This 'fast track' option would minimise the problem of inflation. Recommendations would need to be taken from this meeting for discussion with the Council's Strategic Management Board and with Saffron Walden Museum Society, and further work as necessary, before a report could be tabled for MMWG and Community Committee, and dependent on the funding position.

The Curator went on to emphasise that, from the point of view of the District Council, it would be necessary to secure all funding. One possibility was a proposal (which if appropriate would be considered by the Museum Society at its forthcoming meeting) that the Museum Society underwrite an amount up to £100,000.

The Curator summarised the current situation regarding the transfer of the land. A recommendation to gift the land would be considered by Full Council at its meeting on 22 July.

Earliest start dates would depend on whether the recommendation could be submitted to the committee cycle in September or November.

(Councillor Smith joined the meeting.)

The Curator gave an update on matching funding. She reported that a potential amount of £150,000 from landfill grants could not be considered to be secured until third party contributors had been found. Contributors must not be connected with the project, but could be individuals or organisations such as businesses or charities. The requirement was that contributions of 10% plus a registration fee (in total £5,102) in respect of each grant of £50,000 should be paid direct to the landfill operator. It was agreed that finding such contributors was a challenge, and various options were being followed up.

Taking into account funding offered by the Curry Fund and the Charles Hayward Foundation, the remaining amount to raise was £125,000, in addition to securing the two landfill grants of £50,000 already offered by Viridor as described above. The best case scenario would be to achieve enough funding to reduce the shortfall to £100,000 and then to ask the Museum Society to underwrite this amount. In these circumstances there could be an opportunity to start the project, and accordingly it was necessary to look ahead to this possibility.

Councillor Lemon referred to the forthcoming meeting of Full Council at which the recommendation to transfer the land was to be discussed. He noted that the land would in time be leased back to the Council and that this would be at a peppercorn rent. He referred to ongoing costs mentioned in the report to Council, which had given rise to some concern amongst Members at a pre-meeting briefing, and advised that officers would need to seek further discussions with the Chief Executive on how these should be met.

In reply to a question from the Architect, the Curator said that the funds provided for the project could not be regarded as divisible between elements such as building and staffing costs. In any event, it was necessary to have staff in post at the start of the project in order to commence work on moving the collection, and these were three year posts.

The Architect advised there was little prospect that the changes in the economy would improve the competitiveness of tenders. The project entailed enhanced requirements in view of its sustainability specifications, and it was advisable to have sufficient funding to provide a 'cushion'.

Councillor Lemon said this was a sensible precaution, and asked who would meet the costs of building control fees and the Architect's costs. The Curator said there was a budget for consultant's fees which had been earmarked to cover the Architect's fees, and that queries had been raised regarding building control fees. It had been agreed that the District Council would meet the Architect's fees of £11,000 from the budget indicated, but that a response was awaited on the remaining £6,000 of building control fees. It was noted that this element of funding should be clarified.

The Architect gave a verbal update on the situation regarding planning permission. A further application and fee for planning permission would be required in December, unless work was started. It was now necessary to establish what work would comprise an effective start. He advised that it would be sufficient to put in an access road and start the car parking works. The Architect said there was an opportunity to commence such works with the contractor company used by Granite Developments, which was already on site. Making a start before the expiry of planning permission would be in everybody's interest. Building control would also be required if such

work were to commence. Costs of between £6,000 and £7,000 should be sufficient to enable a start.

A proposal having been put forward and seconded, it was

AGREED that a recommendation be made to the Saffron Walden Museum Society, the Museum Management Working Group and Community Committee (the recommendation having first been agreed by the preceding bodies, and discussed with the Heritage Lottery Fund) that

- (i) The Architect and Officers be authorised to make arrangements for work to be commenced on the Heritage Quest Centre site (to be limited to the extent necessary to avoid a re-application for planning permission);
- (ii) that funds of up to £7,000 be made available for this purpose;
- (iii) that such work comprise putting in an access road and laying a sub-base for the car park for the Heritage Quest Centre.

There was further discussion of possible options for releasing the funding from the landfill grants. Various individuals were being approached and the Curator said that talks with BAA had been delayed. A proposal was put forward and seconded, and it was

AGREED to put a request to the Saffron Walden Museum Society to underwrite unsecured funding to a maximum of £100,000.

In view of the need to move the project forward, it was further

AGREED that officers should discuss with the District Council's Strategic Management Board the process to be recommended to Community Committee for submitting the Permission to Start form to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

MRC4 **SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM SOCIETY LTD**

Mr Watson said there was nothing further to add since the last occasion. He said that the transfer of assets to Saffron Walden Museum Society was due to take place on 8 August.

MRC5 **TIMETABLE**

The Curator said that whilst there was a scheduled meeting of the Museum Management Working Group on 31 July, it might be necessary to convene another meeting at the end of the summer to put forward recommendations to Community Committee, which would meet next on 18 September. Provisional proposals would need to be communicated to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

MRC6 **FORWARD PLAN**

The Curator said there was nothing further to report until the Heritage Quest Centre project was in place. Councillor Lemon said there was much enthusiasm amongst Members for the second phase.

Mr Laing said that at some point the Society would need to know the basis on which the Heritage Quest Centre would be transferred back from the District Council, as

this could affect a future audit. Councillor Lemon suggested this question be discussed with the Council's Solicitor.

MRC7 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting to be Monday 15 September at 2 pm.

The meeting ended at 3.05 pm.