

**Meeting of the SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM RESOURCE CENTRE
PROJECT TEAM held on 14 MAY 2009 at 2.00 pm in the School Room,
Saffron Walden Museum**

Present: Councillors K L Eden (Chairman) and D J Morson (Uttlesford District Council Members); Mr D Haylock, Mr D Laing, Mr P Salvidge and Mr A Watson (Museum Society Ltd).

Officers present: Maureen Evans (Visitor Services Officer), Sarah Kenyon (Nature Sciences Officer), Rebecca Procter (Democratic Services Officer), Carolyn Wingfield (Curator), Phil Hunt (Engineering and Safety Officer).

MRC1 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chambers, Lemon and Schneider; and from R Auty and T Cowper.

MRC2 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2009 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

MRC3 HERITAGE QUEST CENTRE PROGRESS REPORT

The Curator gave an overview of extensive work undertaken since the last meeting. Meetings had taken place with the architects, quantity surveyors, structural engineers and electrical/mechanical engineers. Jake Roos had provided much advice on sustainability issues. Unfortunately there was now significant concern over unexpected site access problems. No further progress could be made until these problems were resolved. The Curator circulated updated plans and a financial summary. She explained the reasons for several changes to certain aspects of the plans. She highlighted the following areas:

- Staircase - in order to comply with recent fire regulations, safety doors would now enclose the staircase;
- Kitchenette – would be reduced in size, to make more space for WCs in compliance with access regulations;
- Lift – would now be a 13 person lift to allow carers to enter with people in wheelchairs, and to facilitate moving of collections;
- Plant room – only external access was needed, as it would be more secure and more readily accessible for meter reading;
- Hemp crete – would not now be used, as there were sustainability issues;

- Heating – air sourced, rather than ground sourced, heating was being explored, due to concerns by the water companies regarding contamination of water supplies by bore holes;
- Security – remote monitoring would be used;
- Side elevation glazing – the first floor would not have floor-to-ceiling glazing;
- Bonding – the bonding on the polished concrete blocks was shown as stack bonding, but the cheaper stretcher bonding would probably be used;
- Energy sources - an application had been submitted to CSEP for funding for an air-sourced heat pump and photovoltaic array.

The updated financial summary was circulated and considered. In terms of funding secured, there was a modest surplus of £19,000, out of which the original architect fees of £11,000 were now committed to cover additional professional costs. There was a small increase over budget at present arising from compliance with 'green' issues, fire and building regulations, as well as some mechanical and electrical costs. There were some areas where costs could be reduced, such as dispensing with electric car park gates. The Curator said she proposed to go out to tender on the Quantity Surveyor's quotation, and that prevailing market conditions were likely to enable the quotation to be reduced significantly. In response to a question by the Chairman, she confirmed that the budget was feasible.

The Curator drew attention to the contingency sum, originally agreed with the Lottery Fund to be £135,168. Following an agreed draw-down for architects' fees, a sum of 100,754 remained. Whilst some costs might be reduced, it was likely that the entire sum would be needed.

MRC4

ACCESS TO HERITAGE QUEST CENTRE SITE

The Engineering and Safety Officer explained the circumstances around the current lack of vehicular access to the site. He concluded that, whilst all parties were working hard to resolve the difficulty, there remained a legal right of access over the original route. If there was no progress by the end of the month, he proposed this route be used on a temporary basis. Discussions, which seemed promising, were being held with County Highways on preferred options, such as a route across the old civic amenity site.

The Curator said the Director of Central Services had indicated that the Council would require the matter to be resolved by 31 July.

The impact of any delay on costs was mentioned. It was not possible to go out to tender until resolution of this matter. Work on the car parks had been halted, so as to avoid the risk of duplicating work as a consequence of a new access route. Staff appointments could be affected, as posts had already been advertised with a view to conducting interviews in June, with staff being in post by September at the latest. If the access problem was not resolved,

appointments could be delayed, with implications for additional recruitment costs. Contracts could only be agreed once the site access position was finalised. There was, for the moment, no option other than to take things one day at a time, and HR advice would be sought as necessary.

The Chairman concluded if the access issue was not resolved by July, very significant problems could result.

The Engineering and Safety Officer said he was hopeful the matter would be settled by then. He said an amendment to planning permission would be required if access was agreed which differed from that originally proposed. Tony Watson said he was concerned in that case that the Museum Society Ltd and the Council should be compensated for further costs, under a bond in the contract with the developer. The Chairman said he would seek the advice of the Assistant Chief Executive of the Council on this point.

MRC5 LEGAL MATTERS

It was noted that Tony Watson and David Laing would be considering the detail of ownership of the site.

MRC6 PRELIMINARY PHASE

The Council had approved tender procedures, and a list of suitable contractors. It was not possible to set a timetable until the access issue had been determined.

MRC7 PROJECT STAFF APPOINTMENTS

The Curator said main points had been covered in earlier discussion (Minute MRC4 above). Following publication of an advertisement, which covered all three posts in order to keep costs to a minimum, she had received several enquiries. The closing date for applications was 22 May.

MRC8 LONG TERM TIMETABLE

The Curator said the initial timetable agreed with the Lottery was dependent on the resolution of the site access. It had been envisaged that contractors would start work in August 2009, with the building opening in 2010. Three year appointments were to start in 2009.

The Chairman asked that any revised timetable be issued to all members of the Project Team as soon as possible.

MRC9 FORWARD PLAN STAGE II – WALDEN CASTLE

The Curator said English Heritage had made contact as Walden Castle was on the Monuments at Risk register. A site inspection had been arranged for tomorrow. Following elimination of the ivy, there was a possibility further

conservation work would be required, in which case funding options would need to be explored with English Heritage.

MRC10

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was set for Thursday June 25 2009 at 2.00 pm.

The meeting ended at 3.05 pm.