



Uttlesford District Council

Chief Executive: Peter Holt

Museum Management Working Group

Date: Wednesday, 1st December, 2021

Time: 6.00 pm

Venue: Zoom - <https://zoom.us/>

Chair: Councillor G Sell

Members: Councillors A Armstrong, R Freeman, N Gregory and B Light
K Eden, R Priestley, P Salvidge, C Sharpe and T Watson (Museum Society)

AGENDA

1 Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

To receive any apologies for absence and declarations of interest.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

3 - 5

To consider the minutes of the previous meeting.

3 Report to approve a new Forward Plan 2021/22 – 2025/26 for Saffron Walden Museum

6 - 27

To consider the new Forward Plan 2021/22 – 2025/26 for Saffron Walden Museum.

For information about this meeting please contact Democratic Services

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Agenda Item 2

MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at ZOOM, on WEDNESDAY 20 OCTOBER 2021 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillor G Sell (Chair)
Councillors A Armstrong, R Freeman and B Light

Officers in attendance: R Auty (Assistant Director - Corporate Services), C Edwards (Democratic Services Officer) and C Wingfield (Curator - Saffron Walden Museum)

Also Present: K Eden, R Priestley, C Sharpe and T Watson (Museum Society).

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor N Gregory and P Salvidge (Museum Society).

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 14th July 2021 were approved as an accurate record.

3 MUSEUM SOCIETY CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Museum Society Chairman said that this was his last meeting as the Chair. He hoped that Keith Eden would be elected as his successor at the upcoming Annual General Meeting.

The Chair said that the Council would write officially to thank him for all his hard work over the 13 years he had been Chairman and that there would be an official event next spring to say thank you.

4 MUSEUM CURATOR'S REPORT FOR Q2 JULY- SEPTEMBER 2021

The Curator said that she had heard from the National Lottery Heritage Fund who had invited the Museum to send a formal application for funding.

She presented her quarterly report and highlighted the following: -

- There had been nearly 450 volunteer hours this quarter and training was on going.
- There were some problems with the heating and boiler at the Museum, but this had been fixed to a satisfactory level and would hopefully continue to work until it was replaced in the future.
- There had been an all-day booking for the castle grounds for a spring wedding next year, subject to the agreement of Historic England.

- The Lost Language of Nature Project continued, and in addition the Museum had been approached by Cultural Engine, who had offered grant money for a possible artist commission to run alongside this project.
- The Museum would be hosting a couple of the Cultural Engine workshops for the Local Plan.
- Events included Snapping the Stiletto and resident artist Heidi Sharp.
- There had been a joint application with Epping Forest for a grant which related to the Anglo-Ethiopian collection, the result was awaited.
- The DNA analysis of archaeological human remains found locally would be reported on more fully in the next quarter.
- Visitor Services
 - There had been 1,663 visitors this quarter which was approximately 50% of pre-covid numbers.
 - Income from shop sales was at a similar pre-covid level, meaning that spend per head had increased. This was most likely due to the new card system, and the better stocking and re-displaying in the shop.
 - The castle grounds had been put to good use with 'crafts at the castle.'
 - Loan boxes had performed well, and school bookings were increasing.
 - In half term the Museum would extend their opening times to Tuesday through to Friday in the week. Going forward the Museum would open to the general public Wednesday through to Friday with Tuesday's set aside for school groups and prebooked activities.

In response to questions from the Chair the Curator said: -

- The 'crafts at the castle' would become a regular feature in the summer.
- There was a policy in respect of human remains which would be circulated. The remains were locked away and were excavated under licence from the Ministry of Justice. The DNA information would be used for medical research and DNA sampling through the Crick Institute.
- The seminars regarding 'our colonial past' did have implications for the Museum and the district but the items in the collections were not seized through military campaigns and were collected within the general colonial framework.
- The Artist in Residence had been successful, it had been a grant funded project which enabled a professional artist to work on the premises.

The Assistant Director - Corporate Services said the Chief Executive would be touring the Museum in the next week or so.

5

MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Chairman of the Development Committee congratulated the Curator for her work on the initial application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. He said that there were challenges ahead to produce precise details of what was needed, and attention would need to be paid to the comments by the Lottery Fund that some of the costs appeared tight.

6 **DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING.**

An extra meeting would take place on Wednesday 1st December to consider a Revised Forward Plan for the Museum Service, in preparation for Cabinet on the 11th January 2022.

The next meeting would take place on Wednesday 26th January at 6.00pm.

The meeting ended at 6.45pm

Agenda Item 3

Committee:	Museum Management Working Group	Date:	1 December 2021
Title:	Saffron Walden Museum Forward Plan 2022 - 2026		
Report Author	Carolyn Wingfield, Curator cwingfield@uttlesford.gov.uk		

Summary

1. This report accompanies the Forward Plan 2022-26 for Saffron Walden Museum which sets out proposals to improve the Museum and its long-term sustainability. It is subject to funding being raised from external sources and by Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd. Approval of the Forward Plan is necessary before the Museum's next Arts Council England Accreditation review and further applications for National Lottery funding in 2022.

Recommendations

2. Museum Management Working Group is asked to recommend the Forward Plan to Cabinet for approval.

Financial Implications

3. There are no financial implications directly resulting from the approval of the Museum's Forward Plan. The development project outlined in the Forward Plan will be financed by external grants and funds raised by Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd. The plans will only proceed when successful grant applications are made to the National Lottery Heritage Fund and other organisations.
4. Failure to keep the Forward Plan up-to-date could impact on the Museum's eligibility for Accredited status with Arts Council England, which could in turn impact on eligibility for funding from the National Lottery and other sources.

Background Papers

5. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

Forward Plan 2022-26 (circulated with this report)

Options for Saffron Walden Museum Final Report Fourth Street, June 2020

Saffron Walden Museum Audience Development Study
Julia Holberry Associates December 2020

Impact

6.

Communication/Consultation	Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd and its Museum Development Committee have been consulted and involved in the production of this Forward Plan. The Forward Plan has been informed by the findings and recommendations of the Audience Development Study by Julia Holberry Associates, which involved widespread consultation across the district.
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	The development proposals set out in the Forward Plan aim to make the Museum more sustainable by increasing income, number and range of users of the service and community support.
Ward-specific impacts	None.
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

7. Saffron Walden Museum Interim Forward Plan 2021-22 set out the Museum's proposed course of action to develop the Museum building, displays and services in order to become more sustainable and maximise the public benefit of its collections, services and the historic site which it occupies with Walden Castle. The preparatory work, a Resilient Heritage Project titled 'Preparing for Transformation' was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund 2019-21 and was completed successfully, despite the Covid pandemic. This project has provided considered and detailed reports from consultants (referred to in the Background Papers) and the process has helped the Museum to develop its plans and fund-raising strategy with Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd. The Society has responsibility under the Museum Management Agreement for raising matching funding for Museum projects.
8. The new Forward Plan 2022-26 continues this process, which now focuses on the Museum's intention to apply to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF)

for a major two-stage Heritage Grant. The Museum has recently obtained permission from the NLHF to apply for a Stage 1 Development Heritage Grant in 2022.

9. The Forward Plan requires formal Cabinet approval and MMWG, a working group of the Cabinet, has the responsibility of reviewing the Forward Plan on Cabinet's behalf and making an appropriate recommendation.
10. Development plans will only proceed if and when sufficient funding is raised from the NLHF and other sources. Approval of the Forward Plan does not commit the Council to any expenditure.
11. There will be much more detailed work on plans, costs and fund-raising for the development project over the next two years, and the timetable may also change depending on funding applications and other circumstances. Therefore the Forward Plan will be reviewed and updated annually.

Risk Analysis

12.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Without a clear strategic plan to improve visitor figures, income and community involvement, and modernise facilities and displays, the Museum will gradually decline and become less sustainable in the long-run.	3	4	The Forward Plan addresses this with a development plan for the Museum, dependent on applications to the National Lottery Heritage Fund and other sources.
Museum does not have an up-to-date and approved Forward Plan for its next Arts Council Accreditation Review (anticipated 2022), resulting in down-grading of its Accredited status and eligibility for external funding	3	3	Approval of the Forward Plan 2022-26 will resolve this.
Potential funding organisations may not support the Museum if it does not have a clearly stated strategic plan, backed by the Council	3	3	Approval of the Forward Plan 2022-26 will resolve this.

and Museum Society.			
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- 1 = Little or no risk or impact
- 2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.
- 3 = Significant risk or impact – action required
- 4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.

Saffron Walden Museum



Museum Service Forward Plan 2022-26

Content

Introduction	3
Executive Summary	3
1 Statement of Purpose and Mission for Development 2022-2026	4
2 Background: A Brief History of the Museum & Review of the Previous Forward Plan	5
3 Consultation and Analysis: the Museum's current situation	10
4 Key Aims and Objectives for development plans 2022-26	12
5 Resources, Funding Strategy and Risk Management	13
6 Timetable for Development Project	18
7 Review of Forward Plan	18

Name of museum: *Saffron Walden Museum*

Name of governing body:

Uttlesford District Council & Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd

Date on which this policy was approved by Museum Management Working Group for recommendation to Cabinet:

[for MMWG to consider on 1 December 2021]

Date on which this policy was approved by Cabinet of Uttlesford District Council:

[for Cabinet on 11 January 2022]

Policy review procedure:

The Forward Plan will be reviewed regularly to reflect progress with Museum's development plans and associated fund-raising, including major grant applications to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Date at which this policy is due for review:

December 2026

Introduction

In 2019 the Museum embarked on a thorough review funded by a Resilient Heritage grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). This project prepared the way for a major development scheme, by providing an Options Appraisal & Feasibility Study (Fourth Street, 2020) for the Museum site, building and presentation of the collections, and an Audience Development Plan (Julia Holberry Associates, 2020). It concluded with advice and mentoring from a fund-raising consultant Caroline Taylor, and the production of an outline fund-raising strategy. Due to the Covid pandemic, the Museum was closed to the public from March 2020 till May 2021 and the timetable for completing the Resilient Heritage project was extended until May 2021. The Museum Development Committee, which is a committee of the Museum Society set up to advise the Council's Museum Management Working Group, considered the findings of the consultants' reports and drafted a development scheme to address the Museum's priorities of maximising public engagement and income and sustainability at an achievable cost.

In September 2021 an Expression of Interest was submitted to the NLHF for a proposed two-stage major Heritage Grant. In October the Museum was given permission to proceed to a Stage 1 Development Grant Application in 2022, subject to discussions with NLHF officers scheduled for December 2021.

The current Forward Plan 2021-26 sets out how the Museum anticipates proceeding with its development plans through the next 5 years. As grant applications, plans and costings are developed, alongside a substantial fund-raising campaign, so the Forward Plan will require revision and addition of more precise information at regular intervals, though the overall strategic goal remains.

Executive Summary

1. Saffron Walden Museum has completed a Resilient Heritage project (2019-21) funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, to research and investigate the potential for transforming the Museum into a more dynamic and sustainable museum for 21st century audiences. This has provided a feasibility study & options appraisal with detailed costings, an audience development study and advice on fund-raising.
2. The Museum now looks to put this into action, through a development project 2022-26, *Transforming Saffron Walden Museum for the 21st Century*.
3. The project's mission is
To engage a larger and more diverse audience with Saffron Walden Museum's outstanding collections of local and worldwide significance, to benefit the local community, visitors and global users, and to improve the Museum's sustainability.
4. The key aims will be to make Saffron Walden Museum
 1. A museum which everyone knows and where everyone is welcome.
 2. A museum where people are excited and inspired by outstanding collections.
 3. A museum which treasures learning and reaches beyond the building.

4. A museum which conserves its architectural heritage, as one of the oldest purpose-built local museums, while meeting modern requirements in a manner compatible with its historic environment on the Walden Castle site.
 5. A museum which is sustainable and with an enhanced diversity of income streams and community support
5. The capital scheme will include an extension to the east of the Museum to provide space for learning, activities and community use and a special exhibitions gallery, and complete redisplay of the collections to bring stories of people and places to the fore. Other elements include an improved visitor reception and shop, refreshment offer for visitors and more efficient working areas behind the scenes and overhaul of the building and utilities in line with energy efficiency and climate change goals.
 6. The activity programme will focus on outreach to Uttlesford communities, especially those more distant from Saffron Walden, and low-income families. The activity plan for the Museum and Castle site will seek to attract a greater diversity of visitors and community uses.
 7. The development plan is dependent on successful applications for major grants to the NLHF and other funding organisations, and local fund-raising through Saffron Walden Museum Society (registered charity 1123209). The scheme is currently costed at around £4.4m and will proceed through an initial Development Stage, with a Stage 1 Development Grant application to the NLHF in 2022. Subject to award of the grants and fund-raising, it is hoped that Stage 2 Delivery Grant will be submitted in 2024 and the capital works will take place 2025-26.
 8. The development aims to increase the Museum's income and financial sustainability in the long-term, and enhance the role of the collections, historic Museum building and Castle site in promoting a sense of place and community wellbeing.

1 Statement of Purpose and Key Aims

The Museum Service's aim as the public museum service for Uttlesford district is

To give people inspiration and a sense of place in Uttlesford district / north-west Essex, through exploration of our wide-ranging collections and the histories they represent

The Mission of our development project / Forward Plan 2022 – 26

“Transforming Saffron Walden Museum for the 21st Century”

To engage a larger and more diverse audience with Saffron Walden Museum's outstanding collections of local and worldwide significance, to benefit the local community, visitors and global users, and to improve the Museum's sustainability.

The Aims through which the Museum will achieve its mission

Our aim is to make Saffron Walden Museum

1. A museum which everyone knows and where everyone is welcome.
2. A museum where people are excited and inspired by outstanding collections.

3. A museum which treasures learning and reaches beyond the building.
4. A museum which conserves its architectural heritage, as one of the oldest purpose-built local museums, while meeting modern requirements in a manner compatible with its historic environment on the Walden Castle site.
5. A museum which is sustainable and with an enhanced diversity of income streams and community support

The Values which will inform our approach include (but are not confined to)

Valuing Heritage and People - premises fit for purpose, excellence of care and presentation, visitors' and users' needs addressed, workforce (paid and voluntary) supported and able to develop skills and knowledge

Sustainability – of the Museum, Environment, Financial, Community support, Wellbeing

Diversity and Connectivity – of Collections and their stories, Audience + Workforce; Access physical + intellectual; Biodiversity + use of site for many activities

Ambition – proactive approach; free from unhelpful constraints; new thinking and ways of working (NB ambition does not have to mean 'expensive' – we can be ambitious to make big differences with modest resources)

2 Background: A Brief History of the Museum and a Review of the Previous Forward Plan

2.1 Brief History of the Museum

a) Origins

The Museum was founded by Saffron Walden Natural History Society and opened in 1835 in the Museum building, which is among the earliest purpose-built local museums and is a grade II listed building. It belongs to the earliest generation of local museums and from the beginning its collections reflected the wide-ranging ambitions of its original trustees and benefactors to 'bring the world to Walden' and showcase the diversity of the natural and human world, as well as collections of local origin from north-west Essex and the surrounding region. The collections were curated by Society members until the appointment of the first salaried curator in 1880.

b) Collections

Today, the Museum has a dual focus in its collections: to present the human history and natural environment of north-west Essex (Uttlesford district) and to present important specific non-local collections which are a legacy of its founders' vision – principally world cultures, ceramics & glass and Egyptology, and some significant non-local and non-British specimens in the natural science collections. These collections are estimated at over 170,000 objects and specimens minimum; the archaeology collections are increasing extensively due to planning and development in the district.

c) Site and Buildings

The site on which the Museum is located is a scheduled ancient monument, being the former bailey area of Walden Castle, of which the ruined Norman keep survives nearby. The Museum stands on a strip of land along the north side of the site which is owned by Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd but leased to Uttlesford District Council. The Castle

and surrounding grass area are owned and managed separately by Uttlesford District Council. The tennis courts opposite the Museum are on land owned by Audley End Estate but leased to the Castle Hill Tennis Club.

The **Castle keep**, constructed around 1140, has recently benefitted from an extensive conservation programme funded by the Council and Historic England. Since June 2020 the keep has been open to the public and the Museum has taken responsibility for daily opening and closing and for managing bookings for use of the site for other public and private events subject to Scheduled Monument Consent and Licensing). The site hosted Fete de la Musique in June 2021 and a small outdoor party for a primary school in July. The Museum will promote the Castle site as far as its limited marketing resources allow, and further opportunities will come with development plans and associated funding.

Other buildings on site which belong to the Museum are the single-storey **Museum Street Schoolroom** building by the gateway onto Museum Street, and a Workshop in a small fenced yard north of the Castle. The former Museum Schoolroom, which used to house a conservation laboratory, small teaching and meeting room and a storeroom for collections, has been leased out commercially since 2016 to provide income for the Museum budget. It is currently leased to the Fry Art Gallery Society while their main gallery off Castle Street is undergoing extension and refurbishment.

The **Museum Workshop** is an old prefabricated garage used for storing tools, paints and materials; showcases for temporary exhibitions and two chest freezers for conservation and natural history deadstock. This building is becoming dilapidated and with the adjoining fenced compound (former oil tank compound) and self-sown sycamore trees, this area is an eyesore since the Castle and its surrounds have been cleared and improved.

As with many museums, the collections outgrew the storage space available in the Museum building many decades ago, the problem exacerbated in recent times by the growth in the volume of archaeological finds and records from planning and development. For many years the Museum used the Town Hall attics and the stable block at Audley End House for storage of collections, including horse-drawn vehicles. In the early 1990s these premises had to be vacated, so a small unit at the Council's Newport Depot was fitted out as an interim storage facility. In 2008, the Museum was awarded a major grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to construct a resource centre on a site off Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden to store collections in a building which would also provide for a measure of public access and improve facilities for working on the collections. When multiple complications with the site led to this project being abandoned, the Museum Society and Council were nevertheless able to retain enough of the monies raised to provide a new purpose-built store on the Council's Depot site at Shirehill, Saffron Walden.

The **Shirehill Store**, as the new off-site store is known, was completed in July 2014 and fitted out in 2014-15. The collections from the Newport store together with some from the Museum and former Schoolroom, were packed and moved between late 2015 and early 2017. The new store occupies land leased by Uttlesford District Council to Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd for 999 years; the Museum Society owns the building, and it is leased to Uttlesford District Council to operate as part of the Museum service, thus putting all the museum buildings under the same lease agreement between the Museum Society and Council. Most importantly, it provides a quality storage facility with improved access and care for the collections and a greatly improved working environment for staff, volunteers and all who come by appointment to use the collections. It has provided a relatively

isolated and safe working environment for some staff during the Covid pandemic and could act as a temporary base for curatorial staff if the Museum has to close during redevelopment.

d) Governance and staffing

Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd is the direct successor of Saffron Walden Natural History Society and is a registered charity. It owns the Museum buildings and the collections, and ran the Museum Service with the aid of various grants until the 1970s when the newly-formed Uttlesford District Council took over responsibility for running the Museum Service, with the buildings and collections on lease to the Council. Under the current management agreement for the Service, the Council is responsible for providing staff and revenue budgets, while the Society uses its charitable status to help raise funds for capital projects. The Museum Society applies interest from invested funds to purchases and other special projects for the collections.

The core staff team is approximately 6 full-time equivalents: Front-of-House & Admin Officer (16 hours per week), 4 full-time professional posts (Curator, Collections Officer (Human History); Natural Sciences Officer; Learning & Outreach Officer) and Security Officer (4 days per week). For Weekend and Bank Holiday staffing there are two permanent Visitor Services Assistant posts and a small team of casual-contract Museum Assistants, supplemented on Saturdays by a rota for curatorial staff and a Saturday Assistant to cover the Welcome Desk. There are 40 - 50 volunteers, operating the Welcome Desk (all days except Saturdays) and helping with collections and administrative tasks, and with learning activities and events. Museum Society directors and officers also give their time and expertise voluntarily.

e) Covid Pandemic 2020-21 (Museum closed March 2020 – May 2021)

The Covid pandemic provided the impetus and staff time to install a cashless payment system, comprising a touchscreen till, card reader and barcode scanner. Numerous complications and the time required to train and mentor a large and diverse team of volunteers and weekend staff, to use it in a consistent manner was considerable and highlighted the weaknesses in the current front-of-house resources, which will need to be enhanced in tandem with the visitor facilities and shop as part of the development plan, if the Museum is to generate more income.

The Covid pandemic and continuing precautions have intensified the need for provision of adequate space in the Museum, for public purposes especially a separate, ventilated room for learning and activities, and for work areas and meeting space behind the scenes. Other options which have been explored include on-line booking and payment for admission and activities through Art Tickets, notably 'click and collect' activity packs which have replaced the traditional but crowded 'craft table' activities. Schools and other large pre-booked groups and activities now have their own dedicated weekday – Tuesday - to visit without general visitors in the building while the general public can visit Wednesday- Saturday and Sunday / Bank Holiday afternoons.

2.2 Review of 2020-21 Key Aims from Previous Forward Plan

1. **Complete NLHF Resilient Heritage project to scope Museum Development plans and produce a long-term Forward Plan by end of 2020.** Though delayed a little by the Covid pandemic, the Options Appraisal & Feasibility Study was completed in June 2020 and the Audience Development Report in January 2021.

2. **Assess staffing capacity for documentation & digitisation of collections and for delivery of the Museum Development project, and potential external funding for any additional hours or posts (fixed term) required.** Some progress has been made and projects identified in the Documentation Plan, and some staff were able to make use of the Covid pandemic to undertake editing of previous records and cataloguing of collection backlogs. For some staff, it has been very difficult to reserve or prioritise the uninterrupted time needed, and this will have to be addressed in the Development phase of the forthcoming development project.

a) Documentation achieved or currently in progress:

- Social history objects, maps, documents, prints & Drawings at Shirehill store, basic catalogue entries on Modes database and locations records checked and updated
- Geology gallery documentation project (supported by the Museum Society)
- Geology stored collection (high priority). Audit & development of basic info on Modes is in progress, interrupted by Covid pandemic and IT provision following system updates. Not yet resumed, working with IT to remedy.
- Natural history photographic archive (high priority). Existing catalogue almost entirely digitised (represents approx. 1/3 of total archive). Ongoing to work to categorise and catalogue remainder of archive. Subsequent project required to digitise priority areas of the archive.
- Natural History birds' eggs collections: 377 records completed (November 2021), more to be added.
- Archaeology gallery (high priority) – work started in 2021, progress affected by multiple demands on staff time and access to cases outside visitor hours.
- Archaeology site archives – basic records on Modes, work started but sporadic.
- Storage Location edits (all collections) following the move of collections to Shirehill in 2016, this work has been ongoing and is still to be completed in some areas (mainly archaeology).

b) Documentation and Collections Management Priorities from 2022 onwards:

- New and recent acquisitions backlog, high priority for all areas.
- Natural history: birds' eggs & Insects named collections.
- Social history: complete cataloguing of maps.
- Move the costume collection from the Museum to Shirehill for better storage.
- Firearms could then be moved to the old costume store .
- Revisit cataloguing the ceramics and glass store at the Museum (previously part completed by volunteers in 2018-19).
- World Cultures store cataloguing & review re. historic loans.
- Social history and other human history at Shirehill need to be selectively digitised (images).

- Archaeology: small finds, moving contents of metals store from Museum to Shirehill, combined with audit and update of catalogue records and digitising; needs additional staff support.
- Archaeological treasure acquisitions: Modes catalogue with digital images attached.
- All subjects: continue cataloguing, digitising and reviewing the items on display in the existing galleries, with priority for exhibits likely to be re-displayed in future.

3. **Work with the Museum Society on a fund-raising strategy.** This was the final phase of Resilient Heritage project, completed in May 2021 with a draft strategy and the option of three days' additional assistance from the fund-raising consultant. The basis has been laid for the Museum Society to plan and launch a fund-raising campaign once our project reaches the Development stage.

4. **Pursue plans to develop the Museum and site as a 'heritage hub'** with particular regard to improving audiences and their engagement with the heritage and the long-term sustainability of the museum service. Following completion of the Resilient Heritage project, an Expression of Interest was filed with the NLHF in September 2021 for a major two-stage Heritage Grant application, with project title ***Transforming Saffron Walden Museum for the 21st Century***. In October the Museum received permission to apply for a Stage 1 Development Grant in 2022, subject to discussions with NHLF officers in December 2021. Their advice may lead to adjustment in our plans, which will be reflected in future revisions of this Forward Plan/ Preliminary discussions have been held with Historic England and will continue, to ensure that our development proposals meet Scheduled Monument and Listed Building requirements.

5. **Increase income and accounting for transactions and stock-taking, by introducing an EPOS till with card payment facility and on-line booking for activities and events**, to capture income from visitors or would-be visitors who do not carry cash. Since the Covid pandemic, Museum activities and events are now bookable through Art Tickets, the free on-line service provided by the Art Fund. Art Tickets has also been used for booking admission tickets on-line. The installation of a cashless payments system (EPOS till, card reader and barcode scanner) has been a major project during the Covid pandemic and continues to absorb much time and energy in training, mentoring and trouble-shooting issues with the large number of volunteers and weekend / casual staff who operate the Welcome Desk. Early signs are that the introduction of card payments has enable the Museum to capture more sales of souvenirs however, as 'spend per head' has increased, despite actual visitor numbers not yet returning to pre-Covid levels (November 2021).

6. **Improve knowledge and interpretation of the Castle site and its use by visitors and the local community.** The Castle was opened to the public in June 2021, which coincided with the publication by Saffron Walden's Heritage Development Group of a new leaflet *Medieval Walden* and short film which featured the Castle and Museum (Museum staff being much involved in this project). The Museum is now responsible for opening and closing the Castle keep Tuesdays – Sundays and managing bookings for other community and private events on the site. The Museum's new marketing strategy (produced winter 2021/22) and subsequent publicity will promote the site as an outdoor venue, to help the Council maintain the Castle keep and ground in excellent condition. The additional possibility of pursuing some archaeological investigation with community involvement, beyond whatever is required for building works, will be investigated at the Development stage subject to project budgets and Scheduled Monument Consent. It

would be possible to treat this as a separate community project at a future date if it cannot be accommodated in the main development project.

3 Consultation and Analysis: the Museum's current situation

This section summarises the main challenges and opportunities facing the Museum Service. It draws on the findings of the Museum's Resilient Heritage project *Preparing for Transformation* (funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund). Further details and information are in the reports produced by consultants employed by this project:

Options for Saffron Walden Museum (Fourth Street, June 2020)

Audience Development Study (Julia Holberry Associates, December 2020)

3.1 A Brief Appraisal of the Museum Service (SWOT)

The Audience Development Study (Julia Holberry Associates, December 2020) identified the following Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats from a public perspective. These indicate the barriers to overcome and the opportunities to seize with the development project. Museum comments have been added where amendments or additional points (not perhaps obvious to the public) are considered necessary.

Strengths

- The quality of the staff and volunteers
- Location – two minutes from the town centre
- The quality, size and breadth of the collections
- The natural history collections are excellent
- The geology collections are fantastic
- Ethnographic collections draw in a wider audience
- It is unusual to have such a high quality collection in a small district
- Strong and interesting stories to tell
- Nooks and crannies of the displays
- Sense of discovery and a reason to come back
- Provision for children
- Schools service
- Excellent lecture series (Museum comment: Museum Society's lecture programme)
- Object identification service
- Open all year round

Weaknesses

- Staff capacity
- Location – tucked away and yet so near to the town centre
- Reception area gives a poor first impression
- Retail presentation is poor
- Lacks a compelling reason to visit
- No wow factor
- Outdated and traditional displays
- Gloomy, cramped display areas
- There is nothing to draw you in
- Lacks a strong narrative

Museum Service Forward Plan 2022-2026

- Displays lack interaction
- Too much text
- Poor lighting
- Labelling is small and hard to read
- Display cabinets overwhelm the objects
- Not enough for adults to do
- Not enough change of display content
- Poor marketing
- Poor signage in the town centre
- Lack of awareness by local people
- Lack of online access to collections
- Poor internet connections in the Museum and IT infrastructure (Museum comment: improved in 2021 with new wi-fi, free automatic connection for public)

Opportunities

- Museum acting as a hub to strengthen the identity of Uttlesford
- Saffron Walden people seem to have a passion for history
- Stressing the regional and national importance of the collections
- Putting the collections online
- Using the castle and its grounds
- More changing exhibitions
- Outreach programmes for the community and schools
- Linking the displays to current issues e.g. environment, politics
- Selling local products
- Linking to businesses in the town and the Business Improvement District
- Working with other museums and heritage attractions in the town and across Essex
- Embracing social media, improving the website (Museum comment: already active on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram)
- Partnerships for joint publicity, combined website, combined education programmes with some other local groups and organisations (e.g. Fairycroft House filmmakers, Saffron Screen, Gibson Library, Fry Art Gallery)

To which the Museum would add:

- Heritage amenity: Museum building grade II listed, historic interest as an early purpose-built museum (constructed 1834) – presentation and interpretation of the building's history could be used to greater advantage (highlighted by Fourth Street consultancy in their Feasibility Study & Options Appraisal work)

Threats

- Financial sustainability in the light of dwindling local authority funds
- Staff capacity
- Current configuration of space is not fit for purpose
- Declining visitor numbers
- Poor marketing and people being unaware of the offer
- Lack of networking and integration with the town.

To which the Museum would add:

- Lack of dedicated space for teaching, activities and meetings restricts all kinds of activities, income-generating services and community engagement

- Special exhibitions gallery is small and awkwardly situated between the foyer and ground floor Great Hall gallery, making it impossible to close off while exhibitions are changed; exhibitions could be more ambitious in a better space.
- Multiple problems with behind-the-scenes space: cramped storage, offices and work spaces, ageing décor and equipment, which hampers efficient working and reduces scope for volunteer involvement.
- Improvements needed to modernise heating and lighting, reduce carbon footprint and energy-efficiency and control, for benefit of the climate, people and collections.

3.2 Uttlesford District Council Corporate Plan

'making Uttlesford the best place to live, work and play'

The Museum's development plans will support the Council's current Corporate Plan in a number of areas, principally as follows:

- **Putting Residents First** - *deliver cost-effective and efficient services within the council's means.* Changes to the Museum building will allow more efficient operation, curb energy costs in line with the climate change agenda and promote sustainability and cost-effectiveness of the service by increasing usage and income.
- **Active Place-Maker for our towns and villages** – *increase tourist spend, promote healthy lifestyles in diverse and inclusive communities.* The redisplay of the collections and outreach work will develop local stories focused on people and places, with more co-curation involving local residents and communities.
- **Progressive Custodian of our Rural Environment** - *encourage positive planning that values and protects our heritage; work with others to increase access to the heritage and history of our district; adopt policies to meet new environmental national guidelines; conserve natural resources.* The Museum and Castle will be better promoted and used as a local historic landmark and tourist destination.
- **Champion for our district** - *support our students, schools and libraries, deliver programmes to support our aging population.* The Museum's development plan will improve its facilities and extend its outreach to support learning for all ages, and sustain links with other educational and cultural organisations in the district.

4 Key Aims and Objectives for development plans 2022-2026

4.1 Objectives

To engage a larger and more diverse audience with Saffron Walden Museum's outstanding collections of local and worldwide significance, to benefit the local community, visitors and global users, and to improve the Museum's sustainability

To fulfil the mission statement (above) for our development project, a series of main objectives have been identified under each of our five Key Aims. This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list and modifications may be made as plans are developed 2022-26, but they

are not expected to change substantially. Some objectives may contribute to more than one Key Aim, just as audience engagement, income and sustainability are all interlinked.

1	A museum that everyone knows and where everyone is welcome.
	Objectives
1.1	Improving visitor experience through better reception, shop and front-of house interface, with volunteering opportunities complementing and extending staffing.
1.2	Improving physical, sensory and intellectual access for a diversity of people and their needs: this includes facilities such as WCs and improving presentation and interpretation of the site and displayed collections
1.3	Review the redeveloped Museum’s ‘brand’, marketing, and communications strategy, and evaluation of visitors and their experience.
1.4	Refreshment offer on site. A low-risk, sustainable option is sought, using locally-sourced produce and recyclable materials as far as possible, and bringing a greater diversity of people to the site. Options to be assessed include partnerships and community-based organisations.
1.5	Develop opportunities for the local community involvement: (e.g. more co-curated displays)
1.6	Staff and volunteer training to support all aspects of customer care, promote workforce diversity, improve carbon literacy and use of digital media.
2	A museum where people are excited and inspired by outstanding collections
	Objectives
2.1	Redisplay of collections, allowing different disciplines to be brought together to tell stories in new ways, to engage with more people. ‘Connected world’ theme will be starting point, encompassing our collections’ local and worldwide scope. Stories of people and places will be strengthened and developed with focus groups and co-curation.
2.2	Interpretation of buildings and site – unique example of 1835 purpose-built museum, Castle site and interpretation of site’s history
2.3	New dedicated Special Exhibitions gallery, meeting GIS (Government Indemnity Scheme) requirements to enable high-profile loans and facilitate a more ambitious temporary exhibition programme to attract more visitors and repeat visits
3	A museum which treasures learning and reaches beyond the building
	Objectives

3.1	Provide facilities (learning suite in extension, views and access direct to Castle site) to facilitate on-site learning, formal and informal, for all ages and interests, and activities by other community groups
3.2	Re-open with activity and learning programmes for all ages to encourage more people to explore collections
3.3	Make collections searchable on-line and provide more digital opportunities for remote users to engage with the collections (building on the Learning Hub website launched in February 2021)
3.4	Outreach activity programme, targeting parts of the district more remote from Saffron Walden
3.5	Improved digital offer with new website, enhanced content and training for more staff and volunteers to be involved with digital outreach (social media, on-line publications)
	Supports / links with:
1.3	New Marketing & communications strategy <i>with budget and staff resource to support it</i>
4	A museum which conserves its architectural heritage, as one of the oldest purpose-built local museums, while meeting modern requirements in a manner compatible with its historic environment on the Walden Castle site
4.1	Better introductory presentation and explanation of the Museum's history, its founders' intentions and the origins of the collections
4.2	Development to respect and enhance appreciation of the historic building, removing later partitions and old displays to create bigger, more flexible spaces and views
4.3	Upgraded utilities (heating, lighting, environmental monitoring and control) to reduce carbon footprint and energy consumption, and provide a stable and comfortable environment for people and collections, to address the climate change emergency and museum best practice.
	Supports / links with:
1.2	Improving physical, sensory and intellectual access
5	A museum which is sustainable and with an enhanced diversity of income streams and community support
	Objectives
5.1	Target visitor increase of 50% to 18,000 pa, rising to 20,000 pa as new activity plan

	<p>and marketing strategy become embedded.</p> <p>Target user increase (people we engage with on and offsite, and through other communication methods) to 22,000 pa rising to 25,000 pa</p> <p>Target to broaden diversity of visitors and users: focus on attracting more low income families and visitors / users from parts of Uttlesford district more distant from Saffron Walden.</p>
5.2	New larger shop and merchandise opportunities supporting collections-linked themes and visitors' 'museum experience' and local producers/artists.
5.3	Enhanced income streams from hire of premises: learning & activity suite; Museum galleries for private and corporate events; Castle and grounds for outdoor events
5.4	Promote environmental sustainability and wellbeing of people and nature through use of collections, site and by example in reducing environmental impact, and develop the use of the Castle site for biodiversity awareness, in line with the recommendations of the Walden Castel Masterplan 2014 (Purcell, for Uttlesford District Council and Historic England)
5.5	Enhanced facilities for promoting community use and private hire of Museum premises and of the Castle and grounds

4.2 Capital programme required to achieve aims and objectives

The options presented by the Fourth Street consultancy for the Museum building and presentation of the collections, covered a range of schemes with associated costs of up to £9 million. The development options have been selected and adapted to create an achievable scheme within the £5 million total project limit (capital and activity costs combined) set by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, while delivering the essential changes needed to transform the Museum into a vibrant, sustainable heritage resource and destination.

The capital scheme prioritises changes which will make the biggest difference to audience engagement, community support and realistic income streams, so that cost/benefit will be relatively high and the level of risk will be low. Its main features are:

- Remodel the foyer and adjacent galleries to create a welcoming reception for visitors with refreshment area, shop and visitor orientation, and renovate the small kitchen to support catering requirements for in-house refreshments and events
- Build a single-storey extension at the east end of the Museum, with views and access towards the Castle, to house a Learning & Activity suite for Museum and community use or hire, and a special exhibitions gallery behind. There will be a new plant room on a semi basement to replace the Museum's current aged gas-fuelled heating system with a more environmentally-friendly system.
- Clear out the galleries and re-display the exceptional collections, local and worldwide, and their stories for 21st-century audiences, with a new LED lighting scheme throughout
- Rebuild the dilapidated lean-to room on the north side of the Museum as an enlarged workshop incorporating various materials and equipment storage.

- Remodel working space for staff, volunteers and researchers to provide better access to collections resources and other behind-the-scenes work.
- Improve the on-site presentation of the Museum and Castle site as a local and regional heritage destination through improved signage, lighting etc.
- Use the site to promote awareness of biodiversity and environmental issues, such as chalk grassland habitat, in keeping with the Walden Castle Conservation Management Plan 2014.

4.3 Activity programme required to achieve aims and objectives

The activity programme will start during the capital works when it is anticipated that the Museum will be closed for a period. The activity programme will launch in earnest when the Museum re-opens and continue with a tapering level of grant support, after which it is expected that new income streams and community support will maintain the enhanced level of activities and community engagement.

The Activity programme will be guided by the Audience Development Study and include:

- Outreach and participation in community events around the district during Museum closure, targeting areas distant from Saffron Walden where possible
- Enhanced offer to schools and all ages for formal and informal learning activities, in the Learning & Activity suite
- Develop a wider range of uses for indoor and outdoor space, e.g. yoga classes, other community activities, exploring biodiversity in the grounds
- More ambitious programme of special exhibitions and events

5 Resources, Funding Strategy and Risk Management

5.1 Overview: principles for the development project

The development project for Saffron Walden Museum is based on the following principles

- Anticipated 'no growth' for the Museum's net budget during or after the development project (other than essential adjustments caused by external factors such as pay awards, changes to National Insurance, insurance premiums, or work required for statutory or contractual reasons e.g. health & safety, maintenance of utilities).
- Risk Management will be incorporated into project planning at all key stages, as a NLHF and Council requirement.
- Any additional operating costs incurred by the development project (e.g. more cleaning hours, uplift to front-of-house, administrative and curatorial staffing) will need to be met from (a) increased income streams and (b) savings resulting from investment in more energy-efficient heating, lighting and equipment.
- The funding of the development project will rely on successful applications to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for a significant two-stage Heritage Grant

(Stage 1 Development phase and Stage 2 Delivery phase) and also raising matching funding from a variety of other sources.

- Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd, (registered charity 1123209) is responsible for raising the matching funding, as set out in the Museum Management Agreement with Uttlesford District Council.
- After the project, there will be a continuing role for the Museum Society in fund-raising to supplement the Museum's small operational budget for exhibitions, collections development and care and other projects within the Society's remit.

The development options have been selected and edited to create an achievable scheme within the £5 million total project costs limit set by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, including allowance for inflation and 10% contingency.

5.2 Outline Budget for the Development

The current outline estimate (November 2022) is slightly under £3.8m net, with a potential total of £4.357m when a 5% allowance for inflation and 10% contingency are added. All costs exclude VAT. Capital costs are based on the very thorough report and costing by Fourth Street, using their cost estimates for 2023.

Breakdown of current estimates:

Capital works	£ 2,683,900
Capital Fees	£ 957,500
Staff (full recovery costs) & consultants	£ 70,000
Activity Costs	<u>£ 59,500</u>
Sub Total	£ 3,770,900
Inflation 5%	£ 189,045
Contingency 10%	<u>£ 396,995</u>
Total	£ 4,356,940 (rounded up to £4,357 m above)

These costs will be challenged and developed during the Development Phase of the project (expected 2022-23, subject to a successful Development Grant application to NLHF in 2022).

5.3 Funding the Development Project

The outline funding plan (November 2022) is as follows. The fund-raising strategy will be developed with the Museum Society's Fund-Raising Committee in 2022.

Grants request to NHLF (70% of project costs)	£3,050,000
Museum Society funds already in hand (nearly 12%)	£ 500,000
To raise from other trusts, foundations, donors, appeals	<u>£ 807,000</u>
	£4.357,000

The £500,000 contribution from Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd are assets from the sale of the former Curator's House in Castle Street, and enable the project to meet the NLHF minimum requirement of a 10 % contribution from the outset, which will assist approaches to other potential funding organisations. The Museum will also ask the Council for assistance in identifying any external streams of funding (e.g. Cultural Infrastructure Levy) for which the Museum development might be eligible.

5.4 Maintaining the Museum after the Development Project

Forecasts of operating costs and expected income will be produced for the Museum as part of the project planning and grant applications at Development stage, and incorporated when this Forward Plan is reviewed. As stated in 5.1, the aim of developing a sustainable Museum will require income and savings generated to cover any additional costs.

6 Timetable for Development Project

At this early stage, the timetable is provisional and dependent on further discussions with NHF officers and on the success of grant applications and fund-raising, which cannot be guaranteed.

March 2022 Stage 1 Development Grant application to NLHF. If successful, this will be followed by development work and fundraising for up to 2 years, leading to

2023/24 Stage 2 Delivery Grant application to NLHF. If successful, this will be followed by

2024/25 Capital works, with outreach activities (Museum closed)

2025/26 Re-opening and Activity programme

7 Review of Forward Plan

This Forward Plan will require updating in tandem with the development of the project. It will be reviewed on a regular basis as progress with the development project dictates, and will require a thorough revision in December 2026.