



Uttlesford District Council

Chief Executive: Peter Holt

Museum Management Working Group

Date: Wednesday, 13th July, 2022

Time: 6.00 pm

Venue: Zoom

Chairman: Councillor G Sell

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

AGENDA PART 1

Open to Public and Press

1 Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

To receive any apologies for absence and declarations of interest.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

4 - 6

To consider the minutes of the previous meeting.

3 Museum Society Chair's report (verbal)

To consider the Museum Society Chair's report (verbal).

4 Museum Curator's report

7 - 9

To consider the Curator's quarterly report.

5 Any other items which the Chair considers to be urgent

To receive any items that the Chair considers to be urgent

6 Format of Future Meetings

To discuss whether future meetings are in person or continue remotely.

7 Date & Time of next meeting.

To consider the date and time of the next meeting.

For information about this meeting please contact Democratic Services

Telephone: 01799 510410, 510369, 510467 or 510548

Email: Committee@uttlesford.gov.uk

General Enquiries

Council Offices, London Road, Saffron Walden, CB11 4ER

Telephone: 01799 510510

Fax: 01799 510550

Email: uconnect@uttlesford.gov.uk

Website: www.uttlesford.gov.uk

Agenda Item 2

MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at Zoom on WEDNESDAY, 27 APRIL 2022 at 6.00 pm

Present: T Watson – Museum Society (Chair)
Councillor R Freeman, K Eden (Chair of the Museum Society),
C Sharpe (Museum Society).

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

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Armstrong, Gregory, Light and Sell and Richard Priestley from the Museum Society. In the absence of Councillor Sell, it was agreed that Tony Watson would stand in as Chair for this meeting.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 26th January 2022 were approved as an accurate record.

3 MUSEUM SOCIETY CHAIR'S REPORT

The Museum Society Chair thanked the Curator, her team and volunteers for all their hard work on the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) bid.

He said that they were strengthening the Museum Society board with the announcement of a new president yesterday and a new Director, Douglas Kent, who had experience in the historical building sector.

He said that the process of finding a new Treasurer was in progress.

He said that once confirmation had been received from the NLHF in September they would start the process of finding a director to manage the fund-raising task.

MUSEUM CURATOR'S REPORT FOR QUARTER 4 - JANUARY TO MARCH 2022

The Curator presented her report and highlighted the following: -

- The Stage 1 Development Grant Application for the NLHF was due to be submitted by 26 May. This was a complicated application process and a substantial amount of time was being spent on the production of the bid. Once it had been submitted there would be a 3 month wait until the decision was made whether to award the grant.
- Part of the work for the NLHF bid was looking at environmental sustainability and carbon literacy which would also form part of the Museum's Service Plan. A number of these measures would be dependent on the capital development going ahead. The Museum's procedures were being evaluated and there had been some public consultation with visitors about what potential exhibition subjects around climate change could be included and would be of interest.
- The current projects at the Museum included the Lost Language of Nature and the new World Cultures project.
- A grant of £5k had been awarded from Cultural Engine for a community led art installation which would extend the outreach of the Lost Language of Nature project.
- The pilot for the efficient monitoring of the environment of the collections store at Shirehill had worked well and the Museum Society had agreed to fund an extra three units. There had been problems with the new Wi-Fi in the Museum building which had slowed progress for the same environmental monitoring system to be introduced throughout.
- The new exhibition 'All Fired Up' went ahead after it was delayed due to Covid.
- User figures for this quarter had exceeded the target with over 3,000 service users. The year 2021/22 had a total of 8,627 service users.
- The learning services were performing well in terms of engagement and income.
- Small adult workshops had taken place, including the Bronze and Bubbles Workshop. These had been extremely popular and would be useful for the winter months if Covid numbers started to rise again.
- Income from sales continued to be good with the sale of books, souvenirs and donations providing a gross 91p per person figure.
- Donations had improved since the option to use payment cards through the till system had been introduced.

5 **MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE UPDATE**

The next meeting of the Committee would be in early June to consider how to respond to the September decision and the possible risk of the funding not being given.

The Curator said there was a critical meeting on site next week with the Pre-application Planning Advice Case Officer who had been allocated from Uttlesford District Council's Planning department. The meeting would also include two Officers from Essex County Council's Place Services team who would provide specialist advice on archaeology and historic buildings for planning purposes and the Inspector of Ancient Monuments from Historic England. The meeting would seek advice and views on how to proceed with both the inside and outside of the Museum. She said that the results of this meeting would be included in the bid documentation.

She said that letters of support were being collated, with only six in total being allowed in the bid documentation.

She said that the Museum would put forward a convincing case to the NLHF but that quite a few projects got an initial rejection, with an invitation to submit further details on certain aspects of the project. She said that she hoped the bid would be accepted the first time.

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

The next meeting was agreed for Wednesday 13th July at 6.00pm.

The meeting ended at 6.30pm

1 Museum Management and Staff

1.1 Management

This quarter has seen a busy Easter holiday period in April, with a new special exhibition *All Fired Up!* followed by a relatively quiet May and June, with the exception of the Platinum Jubilee Bank Holiday.

Museum Development project

Much staff time was devoted to preparation of the Stage 1 Development Grant Application for the National Lottery Heritage Fund, due for submission at the end of May. Discussions were held with NLHF officers to two issues: firstly, the impact of current rates of inflation and supply issues with the building industry, and the affect of this on capital costs; and secondly, the additional Heritage Impact Assessments which the Museum was recently advised to commission as a result of pre-application planning advice from Historic England and Essex County Council Place Services. Discussions with the NLHF led to the postponement of the grant application so that we can mitigate the financial and planning risks to the project by undertaking the HIAs before the Development stage and re-assess the capital costs in the light of the HIAs and recent inflation. It will help us to formulate options to deal with any potential problems identified with costs or planning issues on such a historically-sensitive site.

Staff, Volunteers and Work Experience

We welcome the appointment of Museum Assistant (casual contract) Tom Holloway to a permanent Visitor Services Assistant post. Our Volunteers' Tea Party was held on 28 June to thank our team of volunteers, and provide an opportunity for socialising, updates from Museum staff and a reminder of fire drill and alarm signals.

2 Buildings and Site

Museum Building

The Council's interim Property Surveyor Graham Shipps is pressing ahead with plans to renew the Museum's aged and failing boilers before the winter, with a system appropriate for our historic building. A routine Fire Safety inspection has been undertaken at the Museum and we understand there are no significant issues.

Castle and Museum Site

In liaison with Grounds Maintenance, we arranged for large areas of the Castle grass area to be left unmown this spring, but with broad paths cut for access across the site and between areas, and the Castle keep and events area kept cut. This has allowed wild flowering plants naturally present on the site to flourish and an initial botanical survey at the end of June identified two potentially rare species. We plan further surveys to assess the habitat potential for the site for environmental learning and activities, and further measures to encourage biodiversity.

Shirehill Store

The repairs on the lift have been completed and it is functioning again.

3 Collections and Research

Acquisitions, collections, enquiries and research continue steadily and will be itemised in the full Quarterly report.

Greater in Spirit, Larger in Outlook

Epping Forest District Museum in Waltham Abbey and Saffron Walden Museum have received an Arts Council National Lottery project grant of £100,000 to work in partnership on their world culture collections. The aim of the project is to ensure the museums and their collections reflect their diverse communities by working directly with cultural groups to research different objects and tell their stories. Both museums are looking to work with relevant community and cultural groups linked to these collections which will lead to a major temporary exhibition and events in 2023. We've recently recruited the two project roles, Community and Collections Connectors.

Loan Out

A reticule bag related to the abolition of the slave trade will go on temporary display in Saffron Walden Library as part of a Black Lives in Uttlesford display, which we hope will move to the museum's Your Stories section later this year. This loan out represents an ongoing relationship with Saffron Walden Library and the Gibson Library to share collections knowledge and display each others collections.

4 Displays and Visitor Services

Temporary exhibition **All Fired Up: a history of firefighting in Essex** with the Essex Fire Museum ran from April to June. Unfortunately the private view and the Museum Society's related talk were cancelled due to Covid. Mick Ford from Essex Fire Museum's talk has now been rescheduled until September. Despite the private view being cancelled the exhibition launched to the public on Sat 3 April. This included a minute's silence for former Saffron Walden station chief David Curtis, which was attended by Saffron Walden Fire Brigade and David Curtis' family. His son, Paul Curtis is the current station chief, and met with us frequently about the history of the brigade in the run up to the exhibition. The launch event was also attended by Chris Phillipson, the last remaining Saffron Walden firefighter who had attended the Rose & Crown fire in 1969 and Paul Wood, author of *From Station Officer Drane*, about the Rose & Crown fire. Paul Start, a private collector brought a display along of fire brigade equipment and memorabilia, which he showed in the grounds of the museum.

Object of the Month has continued online and in the Saffron Walden Flyer:

April	Charred key fob, Rose & Crown Fire, Boxing Day 1969 (All Fired Up exhibition)	Human History JO
May	Butterfly specimens of species to see in May	Natural Sciences SK
June	Hen harrier (Lost Language of Nature Project)	Natural Sciences JL

Your Stories: (Collections Officer, Human History)

April - May	Snapping the Stiletto, Schools art project
June	Platinum Jubilee

Visitor Services

Visitors total this quarter : 1,534 general public not including schools

Category	April	May	June	Total
Child Admission	237	69	114	420
Adult Admission	415	279	314	1008
Free Admission	48	23	35	106
Sub Total (excl schools)	700	371	463	1534

Income from Admissions, Shop and Donations

Income Category	April	May	June	Total (£)
Admission	884.00	558.00	652.25	2,094.25
Shop - Books	52.36	44.44	30.46	127.26
Shop - Souvenirs	492.36	513.11	220.18	1,225.65
Donations	2.75	2.00	51.99	56.74
Sub Total:	1,431.47	1,117.55	954.88	3,503.90

Saffron Walden Museum Website

	Visits	Unique Visitors
April	11,502	5,104
May	7,672	4,444
June	8,630	3,874
TOTAL for Q1	27,804	13,422

5 Education, Events and Outreach

Learning & Outreach

Income from Learning and Outreach this quarter totals **£943**

April – loans boxes £90 and Activities £385

May – Schools sessions £312 (3 schools) including a 'Viking Day' for 60 pupils

June – Loan boxes £78 and Activities £78

Events on-site (in Museum and grounds and at Shire Hill Store)

The main events this quarter were Easter holiday activities, a Platinum Jubilee Activity Pack and on Saturday 4 June a partnership event with Saffron Walden Town Council who organised the live outdoor screening of the Buckingham Palace Jubilee Concert in the Museum & Castle grounds. Around 300 attended and 199 concert-goers came into the Museum where special Jubilee displays were on show: a sample of the Queen's Coronation dress; a straw plait crown made in Coronation year by a Wimbish thatcher, and a selection of pre- and post- decimal currency from the Queen's reign.