



# Uttlesford District Council

Chief Executive: Peter Holt

## Museum Management Working Group

**Date:** Wednesday, 12th April, 2023

**Time:** 6.00 pm

**Venue:** Zoom

**Chair:** Councillor G Sell

**Members:** Councillors A Armstrong, R Freeman, N Gregory and B Light  
K Eden, D Kent, R Priestley, 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**

5 - 7

To consider the minutes of the previous meeting.

**3 Museum Society Chair's report (verbal)**

To consider the Museum Society Chair's report.

**4 Museum Curator's report**

8 - 11

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 Date and time of next meeting.**

To consider the date and time of the next meeting.

**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, 18 JANUARY 2023 at 6.00 pm**

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

Museum Society: D Kent, R Priestley, C Sharpe and T Watson

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

The Members formally expressed their condolences to Keith Eden on the very sad news of the death of his wife.

### **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gregory, Keith Eden and Adrian Webb.

### **2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2022 were approved as an accurate record.

### **3 MUSEUM CURATOR'S REPORT**

The Curator presented her report for quarter 3, October to December 2022, and she highlighted the following: -

- User figures for this quarter were very encouraging, totalling 3,678 against a notional target of 2,200. The Curator said that the figures were boosted by the Tudor events at Great Hallingbury, which were supported by the Museum in the form of an exhibition and brought in an estimated 800 people. The Curator said that 1,200 users were due to the school loans boxes. The other visitor figures, although similar to the same quarter last year, were affected by the Museum being closed for a week due to icy weather.
- It had been a difficult quarter due to multiple problems with computer, phone and printer connectivity, at both the Museum and Shirehill store as well as on going heating problems.
- The Museum had not been able to get Historical Building consent to make changes to the front cellar in order to accommodate a modern combination/condensing boiler. She said a short-term solution had been put in place, but the development plans needed to deliver a longer-term solution, with a purpose built plant room that provided a more economical and environmentally friendly heating system.

- Work had progressed to change and improve the website, and after extensive quotations the Museum Society Board had agreed on a particular website designer. There was approximately £5k worth of work to be carried out funded by the Museum Society Board, with the option of more extensive changes to the website with the lottery funding.
- There were a number of projects underway, including the next stage of the Lost Language of Nature project and continued work with Epping on the World Cultures project. The Bone Black exhibition had opened as a private view.
- Income figures were over £3,200 from admissions and souvenirs.

The Chair asked about the current status of the lottery funding. The Curator said that the expression of interest had a one year time limit and would therefore need to be resubmitted. She said that further progress relied on getting the various surveys completed, the laser and photometric survey of the museum was essential as there were no existing comprehensive plans of the Museum. The Historic England requirements to contract a historical building specialist and an archaeologist to carry out a heritage impact assessment could be combined with the design and access statement.

In response to a question from the Chair regarding funding for the surveys, the Curator said that the funding required would come from the Museum Society and would be in the region of £10k to £20k. She said that more specific prices would come from the formal quotations once they had been received and hopefully the surveys would be completed by the middle of the year. She said that the third stage would involve getting a cost consultant who specialises in historic buildings to go over the costs again, especially in relation to inflationary costs within the bid. She said that the stage one grant application would hopefully be completed later this year, and once this was successful further work would start in early 2024.

Councillor Freeman said that if the Museum intended to replace the boiler, it would be worth considering using a different fuel. He suggested that wood was considered, as it provided a constant temperature and was a local fuel. The Curator said that it was helpful to have knowledge of alternatives and this would be considered.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Curator said that the Museum was now reasonably warm, especially the galleries and public areas. She said the main problem was not being able to fine tune the temperature, it was either on or off and there was a concern that some areas of the collections were too dry.

Councillor Light asked about the costume gallery radiator which was not working. The Curator said that the gallery could not be closed as it was a through route, but because of this it did also benefit from heat circulating from other areas. The Curator said that there was some old iron pipework which further complicated the heating situation this could only be replaced when the building was emptied for the new development.

In response to a question from Councillor Light, the Curator said that the replacement roof on the lean to would be a flat roof. She said that this was a medium-term measure to stop the ingress of water. The roof had some asbestos but this could be removed safely. She said that the roof would then be strong enough to act as a platform for maintenance to use ladders, in order to sort out the gutter and down pipe problems in the building, which could not be accessed in any other way. This would be moved forward as quickly as possible.

Councillor Freeman reminded Officers that the flood lights mesh needed to be cleaned of grass debris. The Curator said that the keys to the padlocks were in the Museum and she would ask grounds maintenance to deal with the issue.

#### 4 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that the next meeting would be moved to Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> April because of the elections at the beginning of May, it was understood that the Curators report would be an interim report and would not have all the figures available from that quarter.

*The meeting ended at 6.37pm*

# Agenda Item 4

SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM

INTERIM QUARTERLY STATEMENT

Q 1

January – March 2023

## **1 Museum Management and Staff**

### **1.1 Management**

This quarter, much work has gone into planning the exhibition, activity and events programme for the year ahead, as well as delivering half-term activities and installing a new exhibition *Feeding the Family* at the end of March. There has been good progress with the digital strategy regarding the website.

#### **Museum Development project**

Legal advice has finally been obtained on the contract to issue with the surveys we need to commission and the first of these, the metric survey, is expected to go out for quotation in late April. This will be followed for quotation by the combined Historic Impact Assessment / Design & Access Statement which Historic England require for our development project.

#### **Website and Digital Strategy**

The Collections Officer (Human History) has participated in a Culture 24 Digital Transformation course run through SHARE Museums East of England and obtained a £1,000 grant towards the costs of redesigning the Museum's website (total cost £5,000 with the Museum Society providing the other £4,000). TELA was commissioned to undertake the work of transferring the website to an updated platform and refreshing its design, to make it easier for staff to manage and edit content and present a more up-to-date, engaging on-line presence for visitors. This work will be completed early in 2023/24.

## **2 Buildings and Site**

### **Museum Building**

Plans are under discussion with the Council's Estates Manager for replacement of the leaking roof to the rear lean-to, which would also facilitate better maintenance of the gutters, downpipes and hoppers on that north-facing aspect of the building.

### **Castle and Museum Site**

We await an on-site meeting in April with a structural engineer from Historic England, to determine when the Castle might be open to the public again. Meanwhile the Estates Manager has secured improvements to the safety fencing and the Museum is planning a number of events and activities this summer on the grass area, which is not affected. These include partnership working with Saffron Walden Town Council for outdoor live screenings over the Coronation weekend 6-7 May.

### Shirehill Store

Problems with the dedicated phone line link to the monitoring station has caused much time to be spent by the Security Officer, Curator and IT colleagues debating solutions proposed by the alarm company and providing access for engineers. Meanwhile an electricity meter has been installed to enable independent monitoring of the store's electricity consumption, a necessity now that the neighbouring Council depot building is to be leased to tenants after Easter.

The humidifier in the Natural Sciences store has failed and will need to be replaced as soon as a suitable replacement and funding can be identified.

## 3 Collections and Research

Work has continued transferring the archaeological metalwork collection to the Shirehill store. Current projects *Greater in Spirit, Larger in Outlook* (world cultures) and *Lost Language of Nature* continue and will be reported more fully in the quarterly report.

## 4 Displays and Visitor Services

### Temporary Exhibitions

***Bone Black: A brief history of colours*** continued its successful run in the Special Exhibitions gallery. The Sensory Table of interactive features (things to touch, smell or listen to) was popular with a wide range of visitors.

At the end of March, a new exhibition was installed in time for the Easter holidays. ***Feeding the Family – a history of dining from Roman times to the present day*** was curated by the Collections Officer (Human History) and the Curator, and opened to the public on Saturday 1 April after a well-attended private view on 31 March, where food prepared by volunteers from historic recipes allowed guests to have a taste of the past, quite literally. The Museum has partnered Uttlesford Food Bank, whose work is featured in the exhibition. The Museum exhibition has also linked with the Gibson Library, which has been showing some of its historic recipe books. *Feeding the Family* runs until 9 July.

It will be followed by the Museum's (and possibly the district's) first ever open-call judged art exhibition ***Uttlesford Open 2023***, for which anybody living or working in Uttlesford or within a 20-mile radius of Saffron Walden, is invited to submit works of art on the theme 'Sense of Place'. Organised by the Learning & Outreach officer, the call for this exhibition has now been publicised, to give potential entrants time to select or prepare a work or two for submission by the closing date in late May. This exhibition will generate some income from entry fees and commission on any works sold. The Museum is working with the Council's principal Urban Designer, to link with public consultation work on planning and sense of place.

**Meteorites mini-display**

A temporary display of loaned meteorites and information panels was installed in the Great Hall to accompany the Museum's cast of the Ashdon meteorite, to celebrate the centenary of the meteorite fall on 9 March 1923.

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

Jan	Hare and hounds – Romano-British brooch	Curator
Feb	Eider duck	Natural Sciences Officer
Mar	Ashdon Meteorite cast 1923.3 for 100 year anniversary of the fall 9.3.2023	Natural Sciences Officer

**Curiosity Corner : (Learning & Outreach Officer)**

February	Spring Bulbs
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**Your Stories: (Collections Officer, Human History)**

Jan - Feb	Black History in Uttlesford (Saffron Walden Library)
Mar	Lost Language of Nature (Natural Sciences Officer)

**Visitor Services**

Visitor and Shop figures were not available in time for the circulation of this interim report (4 April) but are expected to maintain the performance of previous quarters and enable the Museum to meet its total users target comfortably.

**Saffron Walden Museum Website**

	Visits	Unique Visitors
Jan	5,482	3,929
Feb	6,097	3,954
March	8,360	6,633
<b>TOTAL for Q4</b>	<b>19,939</b>	<b>14,516</b>

**Social Media and Email Newsletter**

Twitter	Followers: 2,293
Facebook	Followers: 1,600
Instagram	Followers: 1,181
Email Newsletter	Followers: 1,576



## 5 Education, Events and Outreach

### Learning & Outreach

Income from Learning and Outreach this quarter, including February half-term activities, totals **£1,293.20** with 578 users.

### Events highlights

February half-term family craft activities, Rainbow Mobile and Colour Wheel, were enjoyed by 85 children and contributed £204 income. For adults, a specialist life casting workshop, led by the Learning & Outreach Officer, had 4 participants and raised £260 income.

The Museum was delighted to host the Women in Business Uttlesford Reception, *Ambitious Women in Essex* on 1 March, in collaboration with Uttlesford District Council and Essex County Council colleagues.

The Museum has continued a full programme of liaison, partnership working and support with numerous local, county and regional organisations, on current and future projects and activities.