

Agenda Item No. 3(a)

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MEETING OF CABINET MEMBER – HEALTH AND COMMUNITIES

23 August 2016

Report of the Strategic Director - Economy, Transport and Communities

IMPROVEMENTS AT BUXTON MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

(1) **Purpose of Report** To inform the Cabinet Member of progress with the Heritage Lottery Funded (HLF) redevelopment of Buxton Museum and Art Gallery (BMAG); the award of additional funding from the Wolfson Foundation; to request permission to spend this funding; and to seek agreement to close BMAG from 5 September 2016 to undertake improvement works.

(2) **Information and Analysis** At the meeting with the Cabinet Member on 10 February 2015, it was agreed that BMAG could pursue the redevelopment of the galleries and the development of a digital platform to improve public access to the collections and the records following the award of funding from the HLF (Minute No. 14/15 refers).

During 2015, a team of staff was recruited to provide project and collections development and front of house support. Following a tendering process, Rex Proctor and Partners of Bradford were appointed as the project managers and cost evaluators for the capital project. Redman Designs of Ilkley were appointed to undertake the gallery design and Innovate Educate to undertake the education development and the evaluation. Other specialists have been appointed, e.g. to develop the digital project, a workshop co-ordinator and an artist in residence. The HLF has also appointed a digital mentor and a project mentor.

In January 2016, the museum staff, supported by 20 volunteers, including members of the Friends of BMAG, relocated the old displays. These have been placed in storage boxes in the Project Space, the main art gallery, where collections work continues, staff can talk to the visitors about the project, and activities and events can be hosted.

The museum's key audiences, families and knowledge seekers, are participating fully in the activity programme. The workshop co-ordinator has run 12 events attracting 544 participants; a further 39 events are planned;

including 14 Meet the Experts events alongside the Buxton Festival. Innovate Educate is working with schools developing a range of activities that meet the National Curriculum.

The museum continues to pursue relationships with partners to ensure that the digital project benefits as wide an audience as possible. The museum has met several specialists to review the collections, and has shared interesting finds, such as the Hindlow Cave Lions, on a lively social media programme. The museum is also negotiating a series of significant loans to the museum from amongst others, the British Museum.

Once the exhibits had been removed, Property Services were commissioned to remove the structures of the old exhibition. This revealed the original fabric of the galleries. Surveyors have assessed the building condition and works needed, and the designers have been able to develop the new gallery fit out with a clear idea of the gallery space. The fit out contract has been put out to tender. It is anticipated that this contract will be awarded in autumn 2016. Fit out of the new galleries will commence as soon as possible after this and it is anticipated this will be completed by April 2017.

Property Services is dealing with improvements to access at the museum. A key condition of the HLF grant was to improve the access to the galleries.

The museum continues to pursue additional funds. An application to the Wolfson Foundation which supports the capital development of museums, in this case for the Public Engagement with Science, has proved successful, with a grant of £150,000 being offered. This supplements other awards from Arts Council England (ACE) towards meeting the Government Indemnity Standard and the Paul Mellon Fund for the digital development of the collections relating to the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site.

To enable much of the required building work to take place, it is proposed that BMAG closes from 5 September 2016. Although the museum will be closed, staff will still ensure the museum has a high profile social media presence. Museum staff will remain in the building working on a range of tasks relating to improvements to the collections. All appropriate health and safety protocols will be followed while the museum is closed and staff are present.

During the closure, the museum also intends to make improvements to the foyer to provide civic and retail space (retaining the public access computers), and new exhibitions.

(3) Financial Considerations The project has been awarded a grant of £868,100 from the HLF. A further £150,000 has been awarded by the Wolfson Foundation and £20,000 from ACE. The museum continues to pursue further sources of funding.

At the Cabinet meeting on 3 May 2016, Cabinet approved £231,000 from the Capital Contingency budget to fund access improvements at Buxton Museum and Art Gallery (Minute No. 135/16 refers).

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: legal, prevention of crime and disorder, equality and diversity, human resources, environmental, health, property, social value and transport considerations.

(4) **Key Decision** No.

(5) **Call-In** Is it required that call-in be waived in respect of the decisions proposed in the report? No.

(6) **Background Papers** Held on file within the Economy, Transport and Communities Department. Officer contact details – Don Gibbs, extension 36572.

(7) **OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS** That the Cabinet Member:

7.1 Notes the progress on the project.

7.2 Agrees that the Wolfson Foundation grant of £150,000 be accepted.

7.3 Agrees that the Buxton Museum and Art Gallery closes from 5 September 2016 to enable building improvements to commence.

Mike Ashworth
Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Communities