

Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 6 October 2022

Report of the (Acting) Director of Education, Culture and Skills

Part I

Electoral Division affected:
Fleetwood East; Fleetwood
West & Cleveleys West;

Corporate Priorities:
Supporting economic growth;

Fleetwood Maritime Museum - Boat Storage

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Brief Summary

The Cabinet Working Group on Museums considered the future of two historic vessels owned by the county council and currently on loan to the Fleetwood Museum Trust. The Museum Trust has developed a project proposal for the long-term preservation of the vessels and has requested financial and in-kind support from the county council.

Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to agree funding of £43,690 during 2022/23 and the provision of in-kind support from the county council's Conservation and Collections Team to support a bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the development of a conservation management plan over three years for both vessels which will also deliver skills training to apprentices and supervised volunteers.

Detail

Fleetwood Maritime Museum was operated by the county council between 1992 and 2018. Following the decision to withdraw funding from the museums, the Museum closed its doors to the public on 30 September 2016. A process to find alternative operators for the closed museum resulted in the Fleetwood Museum Trust (financially supported by Fleetwood Town Council) being identified as the preferred applicant to whom the museum could be transferred.



The county council and the Fleetwood Museum Trust went into detailed negotiations during 2017 and a report was presented to the Cabinet in March 2018 and the museum was transferred to Fleetwood Maritime Museum Trust on 31 March 2018.

The transfer process involved two elements:

1. The building; and
2. The collection

The Building

The building is owned by Wyre Borough Council and is leased to the county council. Wyre Borough Council agreed for the assignment of the building lease from the county council to the Fleetwood Museum Trust. If the Fleetwood Museum Trust were to cease, the lease would not revert back to the county council but, because the lease is a pre-1996 lease, the county council would still be contractually bound to perform the covenants in the lease (including repair covenants). Therefore, Wyre Borough Council could potentially enforce the repair covenant (as well as the other covenants) against the county council in the event that the Fleetwood Museum Trust were in breach.

In addition, the county council paid £120,000 to the Fleetwood Museum Trust in March 2018, which was the amount of outstanding building repairs required and which was generally equivalent to the payment that would have been made to Wyre Borough Council if the county council had surrendered the lease. This money had been spent on repairing and improving the fabric of the building as was described to members of the Cabinet Working Group for Museums on a recent visit to the Museum.

The Collection

The Museum contains a unique collection of items built up over a number of decades including two vessels, which are stored behind the museum building. The deep-sea fishing trawler (the "Harriet") and the inshore fishing vessel (the "Judy") are both on the National Register of Historic Ships alongside other iconic vessels such as H.M.S. Victory. The collections belong to the county council and a loan agreement protects the county council's interest in the collections should the Fleetwood Museum Trust fail in the future.

As part of the museum transfer, a 5-year Collections Agreement was developed and agreed between the county council and the Fleetwood Museum Trust and came into effect in March 2018. This means that both boats remain in the ownership of the county council.

Without the involvement of the Fleetwood Museum Trust, the responsibility and full cost of preserving the vessels would fall to the county council.



Boat storage proposal from Fleetwood Museum Trust

Members of the Fleetwood Museum Trust attended a meeting of the Cabinet Working Group for Museums on 2 March 2022 and presented a proposal to improve the storage of the two boats at the rear of the museum building.

The project involves extending the existing boat shed covering the "Harriet", extending it to cover the Judy and replace cladding to make the boat-shed weather-proof.

Alongside protecting the vessels from the elements, the principal activity will be developing a conservation management plan for both vessels and deliver skills training to apprentices and supervised volunteers.

Fleetwood Museum Trust will apply to National Lottery Heritage Fund for up to £225,150 with £99,690 match funding from Fleetwood Museum Trust (£46,000) and the county council (£43,690).

If the funding bid was unsuccessful, the funding from the Fleetwood Museum Trust and the county council would be used to form a shed over the "Judy" in her current location. The "Judy" is only under a tarpaulin cover and is in danger of irreparable damage from being exposed to the elements.

In addition to a capital contribution from the county council, the county council's Conservation and Collections Team will be involved in supporting the conservation management plan in two phases over 3 years.

The first phase would cover the supervision and assistance in the moving of the "Judy" twice and recovering her.

Once the initial phase to move the "Judy" twice and alter the covering has been completed, the second phase would be to work with volunteers to develop a cohort of individuals with the skills to help with the preventative care of the ships would need to be undertaken.

Staff would need to work with suitable boat builders and maritime heritage specialists to create a bespoke series of activities to train these individuals in a programme of basic conservation skills. This should also include a range of health and safety information and course. This course would be divided into theoretical sessions followed by practical application of information learnt. The course would be delivered over 8 - 10 weeks, for 2 - 3 days per week.

Fleetwood Museum Trust would be responsible for all health and safety elements relating to this use of volunteers.

Once developed, the full course would be required to be delivered at least twice to selected groups of volunteers of no more than 8 - 10 individuals.

Consultations

N/A



Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

As the vessels are on the National Register of Historic Ships, the "Harriet" and "Judy" will need to be preserved. Both vessels are in an advanced state of decay and Fleetwood Museum Trust is proposing to make a bid for National Lottery Heritage Funds that would secure the future of the vessels for many years to come.

Without this project, the responsibility and full cost of preserving the vessels will fall to the county council.

Implications of the national standards for museums

The county council is obliged to comply with a number of nationally agreed heritage standards with regard to how museum collections are cared for and interpreted. This includes any collections which are on loan to other organisations where the liability always remains with the lender.

With regard to the maintenance and care of the vessels, Harriet and Judy are on loan to Fleetwood Museum Trust and the two key standards are:

- Arts Council England Museum Accreditation Standard

This nationally agreed standard lays out the specific requirements of how we care for the items in our care and how accessible the collections are both physically and digitally.

Arts Council England Accreditation also is a springboard allowing access to a wide range of grant funded opportunities such as the Esmee Fairburn Trust and the Wolfson Foundation.

- The Register of Historic Ships

Both Harriet and Judy are included in the Register of Historic Ships, which includes ships and vessels of national importance. As such, the owners of vessels are obliged to undertake their care to agreed conservation standards. But they also benefit from the potential ability to spring additional funding from specific grant funders.

National Historic Ships UK is a government funded, independent organisation which gives objective advice to UK governments and local authorities, funding bodies, and the historic ships sector on all matters relating to historic vessels in the UK. National Historic Ships UK carries a wide remit, looking not only at the immediate issues concerning historic vessels in the UK, but also addressing questions relating to the support infrastructure for historic ships, their potential for contributing in the wider economic, social and community context, and maintaining a watch list of vessels abroad with potential UK significance



The present arrangement with Fleetwood Museum Trust has the additional benefit of providing a location for these ships to be on display to the public. A successful conclusion of the Fleetwood Museum Trust project over the coming three years would also provide an opportunity to place more vessels on display.

This project, working to upskill local individuals in the care and conservation of these vessels will have additional benefits in ensuring that the county council can comply with the benchmarked standards of both Arts Council England (ACE) Accreditation and National Historic Ships as well increasing accessibility to museum collections.

Financial

The requested in-kind support (c£56,000) is provided over a three-year period and the time allocated to this work would result in a loss of external income (that this time could otherwise have generated on fee paying work). The cash grant of £43,000 in addition to any detrimental impact on income will be managed within the team or wider service revenue budget.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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None

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A

