



REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE ON 10 MARCH 2020

SUBJECT: MUSEUMS SERVICE UPDATE

BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND FINANCE)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 The Committee is asked to note the work of the Museums Service and to seek approval for the recommendations.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section II of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to long-term financial plans.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee-

- (i) the achievements of the Museums Service contained in the Annual report 2019/20;**
- (ii) the details of care for the collection, maintenance plan for the museum and store and any other arrangements, which will be in place during closure;**
- (iii) the details of the Culture Radar reports and if supported agree to;**
 - provide support for the development of a Moray Heritage Forum and;**
 - provide support for the transitional period for the Museums Services in the form of in kind and financial contributions of £10,000 over two financial years 2020/21 and 2021/22, which can be met from existing services budget; and**
- (iv) the developments of operational agreements with organisations prior to any potential Community Asset Transfers of the services.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On 26 September 2018 (para 6 of the minute refers) as part of the budget preparations the council authorised public consultations on a proposal to either transfer the Museum service into a trust or close it with effect from 2020/21. The saving approved for consultation in September was ultimately approved at the Council meeting on 27 February 2019 (para 4 of the minute refers).
- 3.2 As the development work creating options for operation to ensure a sustainable future for the service had encountered numerous difficulties and delays, it was agreed at this committee on 29 October 2019 (para 17 (1) of the minute refers) to implement the standing decision to close the Museums service from April 2020. The Annual report for 2019/20 is included as **APPENDIX I.**
- 3.3 **Closure arrangements** – As outlined in previous reports the Museums services collection contains over 50,000 objects with some of recognised national and international importance. It includes Hugh Falconer's collection, which significantly contributed to our understanding of natural history and evolution today. Other outstanding objects include fossils, taxidermy, preserved flora and fauna specimens. Other items are a range of local history objects, which are of more local importance.
- 3.4 For the care for the collection, all the delicate materials from the Museum have been removed and stored in the Museums store. Museums Galleries Scotland kindly provided additional advice on the care of some of the collection, along with other expert advice at no cost to the Council. Professional services have been contracted via the Conservation Register for regular visits to the Museum and store to ensure that the collection is safe and cared for. High Life Highland Conservation Service have been appointed, with a Museum's Curator contracted over the next 2 years to monitor the collection on a regular basis with annual reviews.
- 3.5 Loan arrangements – The museums service has long-term loan arrangements with other organisations and all have been contacted regarding the closure of the service.
- 3.6 National Museums Scotland (NMS) – The Altyre fossil fish along with some other fossils have been on loan from NMS since 1970s and arrangements for their permanent return have been made.
- 3.7 The Anson Collection consists of paintings, diaries, letters and library with some public restrictions to access. Part of the collection was bequeathed by Anson and the remaining collection is on long-term loan from the Apostleship of the Sea agreement and the Abbott of Nunraw. Confirmation has been received that the loaned collection will remain with us.
- 3.8 Several enquiries by local Heritage groups have been followed up with regards to borrowing items of local interest and for those, where suitable conditions for displays and storage are in place, loan agreements have been

entered into. They are for the Cullen, Findochty and Buckie Heritage Centres, in addition to the existing loan by the Forres Heritage Trust at the Tolbooth.

- 3.9 Museums Services Maintenance and Care plan for the Museum and Store during closure is included as **APPENDIX II**. It outlines the details and frequencies of site visits and monitoring arrangements, which are in place from April 2020 onwards.
- 3.10 **Future** - Part of the development work to support any transfer of the Museums service is the work of the Discover Moray's Great Places project. In particular the strand of exploring income generation and developing new partnership models such as a new Moray wide Heritage / Cultural Trust.
- 3.11 As previously reported to this committee on 29 October 2019 (para 17 (1) of the minute refers), the company Culture Radar had been appointed to carry out this work and their final report 'A sustainable future for Heritage & Culture in Moray' has been uploaded to CMIS as an additional document along with the agenda for today's meeting.
- 3.12 Culture Radar conducted regional consultations and interviews across Moray through phone, Skype, face-to-face meetings and via regional events including:
- Moray Fundraising Seminar, 1 Oct 2019
 - Moray's Great Places Heritage & Culture Symposium, 15 Nov 2019
 - Moray's Heritage Connections AGM, 28 Oct 2019
- In addition over 18 Heritage sector individuals and organisations took part in face-to-face meetings or group surveys with contributions from 11 regional and national sector stakeholders. The final draft report was presented at public consultation event, 9 December 2019 with over 30 organisations present.
- 3.13 It was concluded that there is a demonstrable need for an over-arching operating model to present a shared and inclusive vision for the heritage community in Moray. The key recommendations of the report 'A sustainable future for Heritage & Culture in Moray' are:

1. **Strategic recognition for heritage:** The current and potential contribution that heritage (in all its forms) does and can make to a successful Moray to be recognised by the Moray Economic Partnership and be 'written in' to the Moray Economic Strategy. This is essential if the sector is to access the investment and support it needs for sustainability and growth that will benefit Moray long term.

2. **Groundwork:** In the short term, essential development work is needed to bridge the gap between where the community currently is in terms of skills, capacity and partnership working and where it needs to be to confidently select an appropriate operating model.

3. **Partnership development:** It is essential Moray's heritage community is at the heart of this change process – a first step will be to establish a skilled, expert Forum to collaborate with partners and stakeholders in the execution of the Route Map.

4. Dialogue with Moray Council: Although the Council is closing its Museum Service from April 2020, dialogue needs to be maintained between the Forum's work around a new operating model and the Council, while it conducts its own feasibility and transition planning for the Falconer Museum.

5. Delivery of a Route Map for change: A step-by-step Route Map has been designed to help the heritage community begin to bridge the gaps identified and move forwards. It is planned that the Route Map should be delivered between 2020 and 2022 achieving change, preparing the sector for a new operating model, and delivering the following development Milestones:

- Establish Moray Heritage Forum
- National Lottery Heritage Fund Application
- Strategic Framework Development Project
- Research Investment Partnerships
- Operating Model

- 3.14 As part of the ongoing dialogues and consultation events, a significant interest has been shown by individuals and organisations to be part of a future Moray Heritage and potentially Culture Forum. It is proposed that another organisation will be the lead applicant for this development with the Council continuing to provide in-kind support for the work. Informal discussions have taken place with potential funders and the overall cost for delivering the recommendations of the report of creating 'A sustainable future for Heritage & Culture in Moray' is in the region of £160,000.
- 3.15 On completion of the Discover Moray's Great Places project and full evaluation of all activities by April/May 2020, a separate report will be presented to Council and the Moray Economic Partnership with a meeting planned with interested parties in due course.
- 3.16 Linked to the report as outlined in the above paragraphs, is the summary Museums report for Moray Council. This has been uploaded to CMIS as an additional document along with the agenda for today's meeting. It outlines the proposal for the transition period of closure to identifying and testing operating models for a sustainable future.
- 3.17 The reports highlights that the Future Falconer needs to be multifaceted in its operations and also explores the underused Museums stores & lab facility to its advantages.
- 3.18 During the research and development work, the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) Orkney Archaeology Institute expressed a professional interest in the Museum and its Collection (archaeo-zoology) for research purposes and as part of their development strategy to establish a mainland offshoot for their largely Orkney-based department.
- 3.19 Also the local charity T-Exchange, a registered Makerspace established eight years ago, expressed an interest in the Museums and store lab facilities. They are specialising in a range of technologies including Raspberry Pi, Arduino micro-controllers, 3D printers and Robotics. The main charitable objective being the promotion of STEM Education, particularly targeted

towards the young people of Moray. Supporting a wide range of local events and engagements with schools, they are particularly interested in housing their extensive collections of tools, components and lathes. Also needing to provide a welcoming place for their members to meet up to design, manufacture and build displays for a range of events. However as it is a small charity with very limited funds, their proposal would need to be considered in the wider remit of the transition project.

- 3.20 Discussions with potential partners and Museums Galleries Scotland led also to the conclusion that part of the next steps of the transitional proposal needs to be the option of exploring the developments of operational agreements with organisations prior to any potential Community Asset Transfers of the building.
- 3.21 The transitional period will run parallel to the route map of the Heritage Forum over two years with the following key milestone stages:
1. Council lead funding application to National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) with support from Museums Galleries Scotland. It includes building relationship with the UHI Archaeology Institute, which expressed an interest in scoping for future development of the Future Falconer and its Lab as part of a feasibility study or assessment within a NLHF project.
 2. It includes ongoing dialogue with new Moray Heritage Forum to evidence community / sector support for application.
 3. If successful it will lead to commissioning of Business plan with options appraisal and impact assessment.
 4. On completion, it will lead to commissioning
 - Capital – condition surveys (Museum and Store) transforming the use of a historic building; efficiencies through capital re-development for positive environmental impact
 - Collections – assessment, implications of business plan and recommendations new Falconer Collection configuration
 - Long-term sustainability – economic development and environmental impacts assessment of business and operating model; audience and income projections
 - Audiences & marketing: Audience development and marketing plan commissioned to assess, identify and quantify potential audience profile, potential audience development partnerships, opportunities for social inclusion and community engagement
 - Governance – options for transfer or winding down it includes ongoing dialogue with the Moray Heritage Forum
 5. On completion it will establish operating models, including identification of options and potential hosts.
 6. It will lead to future organisational and resilience planning including:
 - Governance: Skills audit and trustee recruitment strategy / process.
 - Operations: Business plan dictates organisational structure, skills requirements and competencies (including volunteers)
 - Partnerships: Identified against business plan ambitions, need and alignment for mutual benefit
 - Fundraising and income: Financial projections and budgeting; financial management systems and processes for heritage venue with commercial, retail and online trading.

7. Followed by business plan revision informed by stages 2 to 4
 8. Creating a fundraising strategy informed by outcomes from stages 1, 2, 3 and 4, and aligned to business plan, marketing and audience profile; fundraising and investment partnerships identified; commercial trading income (offline and online) activities assessed.
- 3.22 Informal discussions have taken place with potential funders and the overall cost for the transitional project proposal is an estimated budget of £55,000 with a request to provide £10,000 of match funding over two financial years, which can be met from existing running cost budget with prudent management. As the Council has the responsibility of care of the Museums Services collection, it is proposed to be the lead applicant for funding requests and to provide in kind support for facilitating the transitional period and managing any commissioning of works.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The Museums Service, its activities and proposal meet's the key social, environmental and economic priorities of the Corporate Plan, 10 Year Plan and Moray Economic Strategy, which all have a growing, diverse and sustainable economy as a top priority. The activities are also closely aligned to the Moray Cultural Strategy – We Make Moray with the priorities to empower communities to establish sustainable cultural activities.

(b) Policy and Legal

Alexander Falconer left the Museum and its artefacts to the Provost of the Burgh for the benefit of Forres in 1897. The Falconer Trust undertook the care and running of the museum and by disposition in 1977 the Council undertook to run the museum with all ex officio posts of the Trust being taken by Council Officials with the exception of the Minister as the Trust did not have the ability or funds to continue its operation.

In 1996 the Trust disposed of the museum to the Council with a registered agreement that binds the Council to manage, administer and finance the museum and preserve the name “the Falconer Museum” (note this does not require the Council to open the museum). At this point the Trust was made up of Council Officials (Members) and the Minister of St Laurence Church and at this point no longer had any assets.

Following recommendations of External Auditors in 2017, the Council sought to rationalise Trusts which no longer had assets. The Falconer Trust fell into this category having conveyed all assets to the Council in 1996 and was accordingly wound up with the agreement of OSCR.

Some former Trustees and Friends of the Falconer Museum have disputed this position, however it is now a matter of fact, which could

only be challenged through the courts and judicial review and that process is now out of time. Any further comments on these issues simply deflect from the real issue of finding a long term funding solution for the Museum service.

(c) Financial implications

Council approved the budget for 2019/20 on 27 February 2019 (para 4 of the Minute refers). As part of the budget review the decision was confirmed to close the museums services in March 2020 or transfer to another organisation. The savings will be on the Museums Service budget for staff and related operational costs of £87,000. The budget of £28,000 for any cost associated with buildings and care of the collection will remain throughout the closure or until a transfer or operational agreement with another organisation has been achieved. The estimated cost for High Life Highland Conservation Service over two financial years 2020/21 and 2021/22 is £1,500. As outlined in para 3.22, the request for the total of £10,000 of match funding is split over the same two financial years. With prudent management these costs can be accommodated from the existing running cost budget.

As previously reported, recent survey report highlighted that £64,000 worth of roof and stonework is required to be carried out to the Museums building within the next 3 years. These will continue to get worse and timescales will be dependent on weather conditions over the next few years. It will be monitored as part of the Museums Services Maintenance and Care Plan.

As previously reported the Falconer Museum has received a range of grant funding over the years, most of them have been primarily used for events and exhibitions. We have received confirmation that for the major investment of £353,000 for refurbishment and outreach staff by Heritage Lottery Fund in 2004, that there are no further liabilities or grant conditions in place.

(d) Risk Implications

There are no risk implications arising from this report.

(e) Staffing Implications

The scheduled closure of the Museums Service will take effect from April 2020. A number of the staff group have been redeployed through the Transform process and a separate confidential report is being presented at this Committee seeking consideration of Voluntary Severance applications. In addition to this, there are also two further members of staff for whom we have been unable to source alternative employment and who have been issued with their redundancy notice.

As the Economic Growth and Regeneration section does not have the staff capacity to take up any work from the Museums services, with the closure it will not be possible to deal with any future collection enquiries, researches and / or providing ongoing support or access for the Friends of the Falconer Museum as the collection would be stored without further

referencing or digitisation. This may be possible in the event of a transfer or operational agreement with another organisation.

To reflect prioritisation of limited resources, staff support for managing the transitional proposal as outlined in para 3.16 onwards including support for developing a Moray Heritage and possible Cultural Forum, can be accommodated within existing staff resources.

(f) Property

The Museums service has 2 properties - the Falconer Museum and a separate store. As previously outlined a recent survey report of the Museum identified repair works required to the roof and stone work, which have to be undertaken within 3 years or earlier depending on weather conditions.

Whilst the Museums Service is closed in addition to the identified repair works, a Museums Services Maintenance and Care plan has been drawn up as outlined in **APPENDIX II** of this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

There are no equality issues associated with this report.

(h) Consultations

The Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), the Head of Economic Growth and Development, the Chief Financial Officer, the Human Resources Manager, the Legal Services Manager, the Equal Opportunities Officer, the Head of Housing and Property, the Senior Building Surveyor and Tracey Sutherland (Committee Services Officer) have been consulted and comments received have been incorporated into the report.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Museums Service staff and volunteers have provided continuous high quality accredited services including outreach work for schools and community groups, supporting partnerships and providing a 5 star visitor attraction alongside the local Tourist Information service in Forres.**
- 5.2 The recently completed work by the Discover Moray's Great Places Partnership provides a route map for work to create a sustainable future for the Heritage and Cultural Sectors in Moray. Coupled to it is a detailed plan for the transition period of the closure of the Council's Museums Services to explore, test and validate potential future operating models, subject to being successful in securing funding.**
- 5.3 Against the backdrop of severe public funding cut backs, the Council has been committed to find solutions to support the Heritage and Cultural sectors through wherever possible in kind contributions and to endeavour to find a sustainable future for its Museums collection.**

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Background Papers: Proposals, correspondence and reports on file in
Economic Growth and Regeneration section
Ref: