



Ryedale District Council

REPORT TO: POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE
DATE: 2nd October 2008
REPORTING OFFICER: Economy and Community Manager, Jos Holmes
SUBJECT: The Harrison Collection at Ryedale Folk Museum
WARDS AFFECTED: Dales, but with wider implications for Ryedale.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of Ryedale Folk Museum's plans for development of the Museum, in order to house the Harrison Collection and secure its future, and to seek a financial contribution from RDC towards the same.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That Members endorse the project to house the Harrison Collection at the Ryedale Folk Museum, with a view to approving an allocation of £250,000 towards the Harrison Project during setting of the Council's capital programme.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Ryedale Folk Museum (RFM) is a charitable educational trust that has operated since 1964 and holds a collection that includes archaeology, domestic and social history objects, ranging in size from a flint to a manor house. RFM also preserves natural heritage including a cornflower meadow, wetlands area and orchard of regional cultivars. It is governed by trustees and has 9 paid staff and an impressive ongoing relationship with about 150 volunteers. It is open 11 months of the year and a 2006 'Audiences Yorkshire' survey found an extremely high level of visitor satisfaction. RFM enjoys a strong relationship with Ryedale District Council as a regularly funded organisation.
- 3.2 RFM has been offered a bequest of over 10,000 artefacts worth in excess of £1 million, although of irreplaceable value in social terms. This collection, amassed over 50 years by two Ryedale residents, Edward and Richard Harrison, was the subject of "Inside Out" on BBC1 where Eric Knowles (Antiques Roadshow) described it as a "breathtaking collection" and "jaw-dropping stuff". It is currently un-catalogued and inappropriately stored, leaving it vulnerable to deterioration and damage, and requires a large space for storage and display which is currently unavailable at the museum.
- 3.3 The Harrison Collection has been assessed by heritage professionals who concluded that "There are around 800 or 900 objects that are of major national significance, many unique, and the rest one of only a handful of known examples...The collection compares with and can stand alongside any major national museum collection." The Harrison's want the
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collection to stay in Ryedale for public benefit, and work is progressing to transfer the ownership of the collection to the Folk Museum, which will be completed by March 2009. It is a truly eclectic, eccentric collection and very much in the spirit and tradition of the early collectors whose work is the basis of our major museums today.

- 3.4 It is imperative that the collection is kept intact and in Ryedale; Eric Knowles expressed his surprise that the collection had not been offered to a national museum. This will only be possible if RFM can raise the required funds within an acceptable timescale and the museum is asking for help from a variety of sources.

4 POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 The project would contribute towards the following themes from the Imagine Ryedale Sustainable Community Strategy:

- Vibrant Communities: availability of activities, and facilities in which to enjoy them; the diversity of skills, experience and abilities of people within communities; exposure to external influences and broadening horizons; access to opportunities to learn and have fun; creating a positive environment in which ideas and diversity can flourish.
- Strong, safe communities: to improve the quality of life for people in Ryedale
- Landscape and Environment: energy efficiency and use of resources; maintaining the diversity of landscapes and habitat, encouraging biodiversity; promoting nature conservation and enjoyment of the countryside
- Developing opportunities: a strong economic infrastructure; access to local facilities; activities for young people; community activities; access to learning and skills training

4.2 It also contributes to:

- North Yorkshire Culture: Special Places, Special People, Heritage Landscapes: Creating international heritage attractions through developing excellence
- Yorkshire Forward – a Strategic Framework for the Visitor Economy (Yorkshire Forward 2005): Increase the value of tourism earnings by 5% per-annum; achieve growth in the visitor economy consistent with the principles of sustainable development; achieve increases in visitor satisfaction by improving quality of place and quality of product
- Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Economic Strategy 2006 – 2015: The region will deliver high quality physical development that supports urban and rural renaissance, helps our environmental goals, and builds on the distinctive assets of our cities and towns.

5 REPORT

5.1 Housing the Harrison Collection at the museum would make a new, coherent collection available to the public for the first time, preserve it for future generations and keep it in Ryedale. It will ensure that local heritage is not lost to a national institution whilst enhancing the profile of RFM and Ryedale nationally. The museum's future viability will be assured by increasing visitor numbers and its ability to deliver its educational mission will be greatly enhanced.

5.2 RFM plans to house the Harrison's collection on the site currently occupied by The Barn Hotel. The main building will be converted to a new gallery space and will also house an archive and library that will be a centre for children and life long learners and researchers. The original streetscape will be reinstated.

- 5.2 An iconic new build is also to be created as a Learning Space. This is a sustainable building using a cruck-frame and thatch situated in a reed bed, which will be harvested yearly for minor repairs.
- 5.3 The development will cost around 2.3 million pounds and will create a world-class attraction that captures the essence of Ryedale. The development will increase full time equivalent (fte) posts at the museum from 9fte to 13fte; increase visitor numbers to the museum by 14 000 in the first year rising to a total of 80,000 by year 5 (currently receive 40,000); increase visitor spend at the museum (tickets and retail sales) from £5 per head to £10 per head; increase volunteer opportunities from 150 to 250; double the numbers of participants in informal and formal learning; increase access to local archive material; allow access to the Harrison Collection and increase access to the museum; increase RFM's resilience to bad weather and increase numbers participating in museum outreach activities.
- 5.4 The plan is achievable and well-developed. RFM has been working on it for 2 years with officer support from RDC and strong community foundations have already been laid. Significant community consultation has been undertaken which will minimise difficulties at the implementation stage and work has been undertaken to minimise technical difficulties and to maximise the capacity of the project to move quickly once funding is in place, including close communication with the Chief Planning Officer of NYMPA.
- 5.5 The main funder (Heritage Lottery Fund) has indicated strong support and agreed a truncated timetable to reflect the strong developmental work that has already been undertaken. HLF have significant requirements regarding best practice in project planning, environmental sustainability and project viability – by creating these foundations for the Stage 1 application to HLF the museum addresses the issues which would be a concern to RDC. The Stage 1 application for circa £1 million was submitted on 5th September.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 RFM has identified a number of funding sources including Heritage Lottery Fund (£999,000), Clore Duffield (£300,000), Yorkshire Forward RDPE (£100,000) and initiated a strong fund-raising campaign supported by Baroness Morris of Yardley. RDC is being asked to provide just over 9% of the total cost of the project and, because development costs form part of the bid to HLF, no monies will be required from RDC until all funding is in place. Initial development costs of around £50,000 have been borne by the museum.
- 6.2 The Heritage Lottery Fund is to be the main funder and ongoing discussions indicate a high chance of success with this bid. The project has been flagged as best practice to other applicants.
- 6.3 The visitor projections are deliberately conservative to reflect current economic conditions - although it should be noted that research suggests that sites such as RFM continue to perform relatively robustly during economic downturns – and even with this cautious estimate the development will secure the financial security of the museum in the long term.
- 6.4 The museum has strong relationships with several of the Trusts & Foundations which are potentially significant funders. This enhances the probability of achieving adequate external funding but the Charity Bank have also agreed to provide a loan if required by a shortfall or contingency.

- 6.5 Financial support from RDC will significantly enhance the museum's ability to attract other funders. A capital bid has been made for £250,000 and this will be considered alongside other bids for support from the Council's capital programme.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The bequest of the Harrison Collection to the Folk Museum is a unique and exceptional opportunity that RFM is well placed to exploit to its full potential. This project can do much to expand the appeal of Ryedale to visitors, with associated benefits for the Ryedale economy. The backing of RDC would significantly increase the museum's ability to attract external funding and Members are requested to strongly support this project, with a view to contributing £250,000 to the project via setting of the capital programme.

Background Papers:

- Copies of supplementary materials - A1 – Risk table, A2 – Harrison Project Development Plan available in Members Room.
- The plans will be displayed in Council Chamber for inspection before the meeting.

Officer Contact: Please contact Jos Holmes, Economy and Community Manager, if you require any further information on the contents of this report. The officer can be contacted at Ryedale House, 01653 600666 ext 240 or via jos.holmes@ryedale.gov.uk