

Overview & Scrutiny

Committee

29 July 2009

National Angling Museum Task and Finish Group – Report

(Report of the National Angling Museum Task and Finish Group)

1. Summary of Proposals

The National Angling Museum Task and Finish Group reviewed the potential to establish a Museum in the Borough dedicated to promoting the town's fishing tackle heritage. The Group have concluded that further information is required to assess the viability of establishing a National Angling Museum in the Borough. As this additional information will take time to gather the Group are suggesting that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should reassess the viability of the project at a meeting in 2010 following receipt of that information.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is asked to **RESOLVE** that

- 1) the Group's request that Officers stage a temporary fishing tackle exhibition, incorporating an angling competition, in 2010 in order to demonstrate the level of interest in an Angling Museum be noted;
- 2) Officers' intention to discuss with the Regional Manager for the Heritage Lottery Fund the feasibility of securing funding for the establishment of a National Angling Museum in Redditch be noted; and
- 3) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitor the outcome of resolutions 1 and 2 above at a meeting of the Committee in 2010 in order to determine the viability of establishing a National Angling Museum in Redditch.

3. Financial, Legal, Policy, Risk and Sustainability Implications

Financial

There are no direct financial implications. The actions required through resolutions 1 and 2 could be met using existing budgets.

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Legal

There are no legal implications.

Policy

There are no policy implications.

Risk

There are no risk implications.

Sustainability / Environmental

There are no sustainability, environmental or climate change implications.

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4. Background

- 4.1 The National Angling Museum Task and Finish Review was launched in May 2009. Five Councillors were appointed to undertake this review including Councillor Mould (Chair) and Councillors Enderby, Hopkins, Hunt and Norton.
- 4.2 The review was originally established as a two stage exercise. For the first stage Members were tasked with reviewing the feasibility of establishing a National Angling Museum. They were also required to identify potential sources of funding that could be utilised to pay for the introduction and ongoing running costs of a museum.
- 4.3 For the second stage of the review the Task and Finish Group would have been tasked with assessing the level of support amongst both local residents and within the angling community for the introduction of a National Angling Museum and the types of arrangements that could be utilised to display the town's fishing tackle heritage. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee clearly specified that the second stage of the review would only be launched if the Group demonstrated the feasibility of introducing a National Angling Museum in the Borough.
- 4.4 The Group convened three meetings between May and July 2009. During the first of these meetings Members discussed potential locations that could be utilised to site a National Angling Museum. They discovered that there were no suitable Council owned properties situated in a central location within the town which could be used for this purpose.

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- 4.5 During their second meeting Members addressed the possibility of establishing a National Angling Museum in a property which had formally been used in the local fishing tackle industry. However, the majority of such properties were either: utilised for alternative business purposes; had been replaced by more modern buildings; or had been, or were in the process of being, converted into residential apartments. Moreover, Members were concerned about the potential financial costs which would be incurred by the Council in the form of capital expenditure for the purchase, refurbishment and ongoing maintenance of such a building.
- 4.6 The final meeting of the Group took place at Forge Mill Needle Museum. During this meeting Members viewed the museum's fishing tackle heritage collection. They also viewed the Forge Mill and Bordersley Abbey site and the potential to extend facilities at this heritage location to establish a National Angling Museum. However, they noted that there was restricted space in the museum's existing buildings to incorporate a National Angling Museum. Under these circumstances an additional building would need to be introduced, at a significant financial cost to the Council, in order to provide a facility on the site to host a National Angling Museum.
- 4.7 The Group concluded that it would not be possible to determine the feasibility of a National Angling Museum without first acquiring additional information. They are suggesting a number of resolutions that should enable the Council to gather this information which would then be reported for the consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2010.
- 4.8 During the review members discussed the promotional materials currently produced by the Council to advertise Forge Mill Needle Museum's collections. They commented that these promotional leaflets and relevant pages on the Council's the website provided a lot of information about the museum's role preserving the heritage of the needle industry. Furthermore, the title of the Museum highlighted the connection between the venue and the town's needle heritage.
- 4.9 However, the Group commented that references could be made to the museum's fishing tackle collections in promotional materials such as leaflets. Moreover, they suggested that the Council could utilise the Council's website to promote the museum's fishing tackle artefacts to a wider audience.
- 4.10 The Group noted that Officers could utilise the website to catalogue the museum's fishing tackle artefacts. This would reveal the scale of the collections to interested parties. However, there was some concern that this would be a labour intensive process and potential visitors might be dissuaded from travelling to the museum if they felt that they could view all the artefacts online.

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- 4.11 The Group feel that the Council could further promote the fishing tackle collection at Forge Mill Needle Museum by providing more detailed online information about a select number of artefacts. This would entail developing a focussed online display which would act as a sample to attract interested customers to attend the museum.
- 4.12 During the course of the review Members were also informed that an alternative National Angling Museum project was in the later stages of development. This alternative project would provide competition to any fishing tackle museum that might be established within the Borough. In addition, there appeared to be a large degree of support for this alternative project within the wider angling community. Under these circumstances the Group questioned whether it would be feasible to introduce a similar establishment in Redditch.
- 4.13 However, Members concurred that this alternative establishment might also represent an opportunity for Redditch. They commented that Forge Mill Needle Museum could offer to lend some of the Museum's fishing tackle archive for a temporary exhibition to this museum once it had been established for some time. This temporary exhibition would serve to provide the National Angling Museum with access to an established collection of fishing tackle articles. At the same time it would provide an opportunity to promote Forge Mill Needle Museum and Redditch's fishing tackle heritage to a wider audience.

5. Key Issues

- 5.1 The Group concluded that it would not be possible to determine the feasibility of a National Angling Museum without first acquiring additional information. They are suggesting a number of resolutions that should enable the Council to gather this information which would then be reported for the consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2010.
- 5.2 **Resolution 1: the Group's request that Officers stage a temporary fishing tackle exhibition, incorporating an angling competition, in 2010 in order to demonstrate the level of interest in an Angling Museum be noted.**
- 5.2.1 Members were informed that a number of temporary exhibitions focussing on fishing tackle had taken place at Forge Mill Needle Museum in recent years. These exhibitions had been widely promoted in a variety of relevant publications, such as the Angling Times. However, unfortunately, the exhibitions had been poorly attended.

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- 5.2.2 During the course of the meeting that took place at Forge Mill Needle Museum Members observed that the Council had a diverse fishing tackle collection. They noted that, although angling enthusiasts might not have attended the previous temporary exhibitions, viewing these objects might still be of interest to the wider angling community as well as other visitors. The Group commented, however, that anglers, who would be the likely target audience for specific fishing tackle exhibitions or a National Angling Museum, might be less interested in fishing tackle artefacts than in angling as a competitive sport.
- 5.2.3 In order to assess the level of interest amongst both anglers and the general public in visiting museums to view fishing tackle displays the Group are suggesting that a temporary angling exhibition should take place at Forge Mill in 2010. This exhibition would take place over a six week period. An angling competition would take place during the fourth week. Officers could compare attendance figures for the first three weeks and last two weeks to attendance figures for the fourth week. This would enable the Council to determine the level of interest in fishing tackle artefacts as opposed to interest in participating in a competitive sport.
- 5.2.4 The Group concurred that the figures extrapolated from this assessment would provide useful data for determining the likely level of public interest in visiting a National Angling Museum. They agreed that the attendance figures should be reported for the consideration of Members at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2010. The Committee, could use this evidence to help assess the viability of a National Angling Museum.
- 5.3 **Resolution 2: Officers' intention to discuss with the Regional Manager for the Heritage Lottery Fund the feasibility of securing funding for the establishment of a National Angling Museum in Redditch be noted; and**
- 5.3.1 During the course of the meeting Members were informed that the Council would incur numerous costs through establishing and later maintaining a National Angling Museum. They were advised that it would cost approximately £700,000 – 800,000 to convert a small industrial unit, about the size of a school sports hall, into a suitable location for a small museum.
- 5.3.2 Furthermore, Members were informed that there would be additional costs attached to a National Angling Museum project. The Council would be required to cover utility

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charges and would need to employ personnel to manage a National Angling Museum. This would entail expenditure on staff salaries.

- 5.3.3 In the existing economic climate Members were informed that it was unlikely that the costs of this project could be met using Council sources of funding. The Council did not have the budget necessary to support the costs of the project. Under these circumstances, if the Council was to pursue the option of establishing a National Angling Museum further the costs would need to be met using external sources of funding.
- 5.3.4 The Group discovered during their review that the Council has consulted with regional representatives of the Heritage Lottery Fund in previous years over the potential to secure lottery funding to finance other projects. Representatives of the Heritage Lottery Fund are well placed to advise the Council about the feasibility of proposed heritage projects. They can also provide guidance about the likelihood that the organisation might secure funding from the Lottery and other sources to support proposed heritage projects.
- 5.3.5 Under these circumstances the Group concurred that it would be useful for Officers to utilise their established relations with representatives of the Heritage Lottery Fund to explore the feasibility of a National Angling Museum project further. Officers have noted that they are scheduled to meet with regional representatives of the Heritage Lottery Fund in the autumn and would be willing to raise the subject of the National Angling Museum during that meeting.
- 5.3.6 The Group agreed that the information provided by the representatives of the Heritage Lottery Fund should be considered at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2010. Funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund would be invaluable to enable the Council to afford to progress the project. Consequently, the Group concurred that the level of support from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a National Angling Museum would be a crucial factor in determining the feasibility of pursuing the project.
- 5.4 **Resolution 3: the Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitor the outcome of resolutions 1 and 2 above at a meeting of the Committee in 2010 in order to determine the viability of establishing a National Angling Museum in Redditch.**

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- 5.4.1 The Group noted that the outcomes of the actions they were proposing in their resolutions should inform any final decision as to whether to establish a National Angling Museum. However, due to the timescales involved in organising a temporary fishing tackle exhibition at Forge Mill Needle Museum and in obtaining information from the Heritage Lottery fund it was unlikely that this information would be available until mid 2010.
- 5.4.2 Consequently, the Group are suggesting that it would not be appropriate for the Task and Finish Review to continue at present. Instead, they are proposing that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should consider the outcome of the actions taken in response to the Group's resolutions at a meeting in 2010. Based on the evidence provided during this meeting the Committee should determine whether or not to recommend that the Council adopt a National Angling Museum. The Committee might also decide to reconvene the Task and Finish Group to undertake the second stage of the review.

6. Other Implications

- Asset Management - There are no asset management implications.
- Community Safety - There are no Community Safety implications.
- Human Resources - There are no human resources implications.
- Social Exclusion - There are no social exclusion implications.

7. Lessons Learnt

- 7.1 During the course of this review it became clear it would not be feasible for the Council to establish and manage a National Angling Museum in Redditch unless external sources of funding could be obtained to fund the project. Members also concluded that evidence needed to be gathered to ascertain the likely level of interest in fishing tackle heritage amongst potential visitors.
- 7.2 The actions which the Group are asking the Committee to resolve on should enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to assess the viability of a National Angling Museum project in Redditch. The Group are suggesting that this report should not be forwarded to the Executive Committee for consideration until this information has

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been received and considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2010.

8. **Background Papers**

Feasibility Study on Bordersley Abbey and Forge Mill Museum Visitor Centre, (October 2006).

Forge Mill Needle Museum and Bordersley Abbey Visitor Centre Collection Management Policy 2008/13, (9 January 2008).

Museum Accreditation Scheme Acquisition and Disposal Policy, (9 January 2007).

Notes from meetings of the National Angling Museum Task and Finish Group. (Tuesday 5 May 2009; Tuesday 9 June 2009; and Thursday 2 July 2009).

9. **Consultation**

Relevant Officers were consulted by the Task and Finish Group during the course of the review.

10. **Author of Report**

The author of this report is Jess Bayley, (Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer), who can be contacted on extension 3268 (e-mail: jess.bayley@redditchbc.gov.uk) for more information.