

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons	09032015
Subject: Museum accreditation for The View	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Epping Forest SEF 13/15	For Decision

Summary

Your Committee of 24th March 1993 agreed to apply for museum registration (the predecessor to the accreditation scheme) for Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge (SEF 13/93) and committed to maintaining and caring for the museum collection in section 8 of the Historic Environment Policy adopted by your Committee on 8th September 2014 (SEF 28/14).

Arts Council England museum accreditation would provide a wide range of benefits for Epping Forest's museum collection. As well as opening up a number of funding channels, accreditation would ensure that the material heritage of the Forest is well cared for within a nationally recognised heritage industry framework, raise the profile of the collection and the history of the Forest, provide opportunities for workforce development and partnership working, formalise the management of the collection and provide opportunities for inter-museum loans.

Though significant progress has been made towards achieving accreditation in the last 12 months, The View's 'working towards accreditation' status is due to expire on 31 March 2015. Applying for an extension until 31 March 2016 would enable work to be completed in areas where the management of the collection does not currently meet the required standard.

To achieve museum accreditation, the Conservators are required by the scheme to have access to appropriate professional advice. Consequently, a well-qualified, Museum Mentor, who will not charge for professional advice, has been identified.

This report is required to approve the appointment of the identified Museum Mentor and to enable the process of museum accreditation to continue, bringing all the benefits associated with the scheme and demonstrating the commitment of the Conservators to preserving Epping Forest's material heritage.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Authorise the Superintendent to apply for an extension to 'working towards accreditation' status and undertake the work necessary to meet the accreditation standard
- Approve the appointment of Helen Giles as the Museum Mentor for The View and Epping Forest Collection

- Authorise the Chairman to sign the Museum Mentor agreement on behalf of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee

Main Report

Background

1. Epping Forest's museum collection is invaluable material heritage that helps to communicate the many fascinating stories that Epping Forest has to tell. Much of the collection is on display at The View. The other Forest Centres also display objects from the collection, often on a temporary basis, and images from the collection are used in Forest publications and interpretation. The remainder of the collection is kept in storage at The Warren.
2. The Epping Forest & Open Spaces Committee approved seeking museum registration, the forerunner to accreditation, for Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge on 24th March 1993 (SEF 13/93).
3. This process was still ongoing in 2003, when the Epping Forest & Open Spaces Committee last approved a Collections Management Policy for the museum collection (received with report SEF 47/03). This document is now out of date.
4. The application for registration was paused during Stage II and Stage III of the Heritage Lottery Funded Branching Out project, as this involved the building of The View and had implications for the future of archival material in the collection, much of which was transferred to the London Metropolitan Archives. The aspects of the Branching Out project that affect the museum collection have been completed.
5. Following the Branching Out project, Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge no longer qualifies for accreditation, as it does not permanently display museum objects. The View, however, with its permanent exhibition, is eligible for the scheme.
6. On 8 September 2014, your Committee approved the Historic Environment Policy (SEF 28/14), which included a commitment to maintaining and caring for the museum collection. The report also discussed museum accreditation. Your Committee requested further information on the benefits of the scheme.
7. The museum accreditation scheme is administered by Arts Council England. The stated aims are:
 - i. to encourage all museums and galleries to achieve agreed standards in how they are run, how they manage their collections and the experience of users and visitors;
 - ii. to encourage confidence in museums as organisations that manage collections for the benefit of society;
 - iii. to reinforce a shared ethical and professional basis for all museums.
8. Museum accreditation is a national standard. However, the scheme is administered using the principle of scalability, ensuring that all museums, regardless of size and available resources, are able to meet the requirements.

9. Accreditation requires that the museum's governing body has access to advice and guidance from a museum professional.
10. Accreditation enables museums to assess their current performance and supports them in planning and developing their services. There are a number of direct benefits from participating in the scheme:

- i. **Patronage:** demonstrates that a museum has met a national standard, which strengthens applications for public and private funding and gives investors confidence.

There are a number of funds and grants which are only available to those museums with accredited (or 'working towards accreditation') status. These include the Arts Council England Small Grants Scheme and Museum Resilience Fund, the Heritage Lottery Fund Collecting Cultures funding programme, Museum of London Collections Grants and a number of other small programmes.

- ii. **Performance:** acts a quality standard that serves as an authoritative benchmark for assessing performance, rewarding achievement and driving improvement.
- iii. **Profile:** raises awareness and understanding of the museum, building confidence and credibility with the public.
- iv. **People:** helps museums to improve their focus on meeting users' needs and interests and developing their workforce.

Our current 'working towards accreditation' status has enabled the Forest Centres Officer for Heritage and Interpretation (FCO (H&I)) and other members of staff to attend trainings at the Museum of London on collections care, documentation and interpretation free of charge.

- v. **Partnerships:** helps museums to examine their services and to encourage joint working within and between organisations. Many museums will only loan objects to other accredited organisations, as the scheme ensures standards of care will be met.
- vi. **Planning:** helps with forward planning by formalising procedures and policies.

11. Museum accreditation would be a valuable means of securing the future of Epping Forest's museum collection by ensuring high standards of collections care, opening up a range of funding avenues, raising the profile of the collection and providing opportunities for mutually beneficial partnerships with other museums.

Current Position

12. The View currently has a status of 'working towards accreditation'. As a result, the FCO (H&I) has raised grants of £7,369 in the last three financial years (2010-11 to 2013-14) to fund the development of the museum and the museum collection, including some staffing costs.
13. Work has been undertaken to draft versions of all policies required under the scheme. On completion, these policies are required to appear before your Committee as the governing body of the museum for approval.
14. Second-hand storage units, which meet appropriate accreditation standards for storage, have been acquired from another museum at no cost and staff have undertaken a deep clean and reorganisation of the store in The Saw Mill.
15. The View, Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge and The Temple have all been recognised under Visit England's Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme (VAQAS). This scheme is recognised by Arts Council England and counts towards accreditation, acting as evidence that the museum meets many of the user-focussed criteria.
16. No member of staff currently meets the definition provided for a 'museum professional', so the accreditation scheme requires the recruitment of a Museum Mentor.
17. A role description was developed which placed emphasis on the skills required to advise a small museum with a mixed collection within a larger organisation.
18. This voluntary position was advertised online and candidates were measured against this role description and the criteria for Museum Mentors developed by Arts Council England.
19. An appropriate Museum Mentor has been identified. Helen Giles is an Associate of the Museums Association, holds a Postgraduate Diploma in Museum and Gallery Studies and has over 17 years' experience working in museums, mostly in a local authority setting.
20. Helen Giles has agreed to undertake this unpaid position, subject to Committee approval, which means that Epping Forest would gain a valuable source of advice on the museum collection at no additional cost.
21. Visitor Services has recently recruited a new Heritage Information Assistant, who, alongside their front of house duties in the Forest Centres, will focus on caring for, documenting and improving the storage conditions of the museum collection.
22. The View's current 'working towards accreditation' status expires on 31 March 2015. Arts Council England has advised that an extension would be permitted until 31 March 2016, but that this would be the last opportunity for an extension. If accreditation is not achieved by the end of this period, the museum collection will lose its existing status and the associated funding streams.

Options

23. The City of London has two options with regard to museum accreditation
- i. **Option 1:** Do not authorise an application for an extension to 'working towards accreditation' status. This would not incur any additional costs for the City of London, but would result in a loss of funding opportunities and would not help to guarantee the future of the museum collection. This option is therefore **not recommended**.
 - ii. **Option 2:** Authorise the Superintendent to apply for an extension to 'working towards accreditation' status for The View and approve the appointment of the Museum Mentor. The majority of the costs associated with pursuing accreditation are already being met from the local risk budget (Visitor Services). Achieving full accreditation would open up additional funding streams, raise the profile of the museum collection and help to secure its future. This option is therefore **recommended**.

Proposals

24. An application for the permitted extension to 'working towards accreditation' status will be made.
25. Areas of the management of the museum collection that currently fall short of the accreditation standard will be addressed and an application towards full accreditation will be submitted before the extended deadline.
26. Staff will work closely with the Museum Mentor and seek her advice on collections care, the management of the collection and the accreditation process.
27. Further improvements to The Saw Mill, specifically control of pests and damp, may be required.
28. The FCO (H&I) will explore additional funding streams, subject to gaining accreditation, to secure the long-term future of the museum collection.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

29. **Open Spaces Department Business Plan 2013 – 2016:** Pursuing museum accreditation meets the Department Improvement Objective: "Achieve nationally recognised standards and delivering value for money in providing our Open Spaces service".
30. **Open Spaces Department Business Plan 2014 – 2017:** Pursuing museum accreditation meets the Departmental Strategic Objective of "Improving our use of resources through increased income generation", as well as meeting one of the objectives associated with the Department Value of 'Quality': "We will participate in schemes which measure and benchmark our quality".

31. **Corporate Plan 2013 – 2017:** Pursuing museum accreditation meets one of the strategic aims of the Corporate Plan: “to provide valued services to London and the nation”. Museum accreditation is also working towards Key Policy Priority 5: “Increasing the impact of the City’s cultural and heritage offer on the life of London and the nation”.

Implications

32. **Financial:** As a volunteer, the Museum Mentor is providing advice without cost apart from small expenses for travel, which will be met from the local risk budget.

33. All staff costs will be met within the existing local risk budget (Visitor Services).

34. Following the advice of the Museum Mentor, some improvements may be needed to The Saw Mill to control pests and damp. The resultant minor costs will be met from the local risk budget.

35. Achieving accreditation would open several possible funding streams, for example the Arts Council England Museum Resilience Fund (up to £300,000, but smaller grants are also available) or Small Grants Scheme (up to £1,000) and Museum of London Collections Grants (up to £2,000).

36. **Property:** There are minor housekeeping items to be undertaken to the Saw Mill to accommodate the proposals which are to be met from the local budget, but nothing substantive nor any additional or long term property maintenance expenses or implications arising therefrom.

Conclusion

37. Applying for an extension of ‘working towards accreditation’ status and achieving full recognition under the scheme would have a number of significant benefits for the museum collection. Pursuing accreditation would help to demonstrate the commitment of the Conservators to preserving the heritage of Epping Forest.

38. The Museum Mentor recruitment would bring invaluable expertise not only to the management of the museum collection, but also in ensuring that all museum policies meet legal and national ethical standards.

39. In time, gaining full accreditation would help to secure the long-term future of the museum collection at Epping Forest.

Appendices

- No appendices

Background Papers

SEF 13/93 Epping Forest & Open Spaces Committee Report: Queen Elizabeth’s Hunting Lodge: Proposed Registration with Museums & Galleries Commission

SEF 47/03 Epping Forest & Open Spaces Committee Report: Epping Forest
Museum Status

SEF 28/14 Epping Forest & Commons Committee Report: Epping Forest Historic
Environment Policy

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