

Rescue

The British Archaeological Trust

7th November 2014

Councillor David Perry
PO Box 2
Harrow Council
Civic Centre
Station Road
Harrow
HA1 2XY

Dear Councillor Perry

I am responding to the Harrow Council budget consultation on behalf of RESCUE, the British Archaeological Trust who are very concerned to see the closure of Harrow Museum as one of the money saving options being considered. RESCUE is a non-political organisation dedicated to supporting archaeology (www.rescue-archaeology.org.uk). We do not receive any state support and are entirely dependent on the contributions of our members to support our work. It is our policy to post all correspondence about heritage issues on our webpages unless there is a specific request for privacy.

The council has invested significant sums in the Museum complex in recent years and we are nonplussed by the suggestion that this should effectively be thrown away by the closure of the Museum. In addition the Council and Museum successfully bid for Heritage Lottery funds to prepare a Stage 2 application for a substantial sum of money to invest in the Museum, a bid that appears likely to be successful. We note that in the Council documentation there is no indication of the monies that might be saved by closing the Museum, and certainly no mention of the potential millions of £s in lottery funding that might be lost to the Borough as a result of this action. And are you certain that if the Museum is closed and the Stage 2 lottery bid not submitted, Harrow Council will not be liable to repay the funds already received?

Harrow Museum is part of nationally important complex of Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments and RESCUE notes that Harrow Council has previously shown real commitment to this extraordinary Heritage Asset. The Council funded restoration of the Great Barn offers commercial opportunities to support the Museum which provides the people, and in particular the school children of Harrow, with a range of excellent services, activities and opportunities to engage with their past.

We understand that the council has a master plan for Harrow Museum and Headstone Manor and that this may include alternative options for the future of the museum, including Charitable Trust status. RESCUE members are concerned that it

appears that the proposal to close the Museum is mooted before such options have been properly researched and that this runs the risk that any alternative options will not be afforded sufficient time or resources to prepare a plan that will ensure its success.

RESCUE would also like to know how the Council proposes to discharge its ongoing responsibilities for the curation of the Museum archives and exhibits and maintaining access to researchers in the future, if the Museum is closed.

There is enormous current public interest in history and archaeology, as evidenced by the growing number of active members of local history and archaeological societies. The cultural sector is an important part of the international tourist industry and it is widely acknowledged that British museums and galleries hold collections which attract a significant number of visitors to this country. Given these facts, Read

RESCUE asks Harrow Council to maintain this valuable asset for the people of Harrow and not to risk the economic loss that would result from its closure, including the loss of considerable HLF grant funding.

Jo Caruth
Secretary,
RESCUE, The British Archaeological Trust