



Maidstone Museums' Foundation

Registered Charity No. 802547

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Dear Victoria

Maidstone Museums – Archaeology Gallery

The Board of MMF is aware that you are to present a briefing to Members of the Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee meeting on 16th November 2021, on the subject of the best option for the current enhancement of the Museums. Knowing that, the Board of MMF wished to advise you (and Members of the Committee) of our thoughts on the subject.

We are aware that £380,000 has been identified in the MBC budget for Capital Project(s) at the Museums, and that the briefing looks at four options to utilise this opportunity – an opportunity which should be used to enhance part(s) of the Museums, lead to increased footfall of the galleries, and act as an additional Museums' attractor overall.

Of the options presented in the briefing, MMF favours strongly the refurbishment of an existing gallery on the topic of local archaeology.

We should say at the outset that this approach is consistent with the approach taken in the opening of the 'Ancient Lives' gallery in 2017 which improved interpretation, presentation and display of the Museums' collections of Ancient Egypt and Greece. These factors, and the increasing 'hands on' opportunities for young people and those with disabilities, led to better appreciation of these collections and increased visitor numbers. The profile of the Museums during the

development phase of the work was raised significantly at local, regional and national (and even international) level. There was much to learn from the exhaustive research undertaken, and the local scanning of the mummies (human and animal) captured people's attention in a powerful way.

Addressing, now, another gallery could have a similar impact on the standing of the Museums and their profile locally and regionally. It is, in our opinion, wholly at one with the agreed Maidstone Museums' Transformation project. Taking a step-by-step approach to modernising the Museums is the correct way forward in a post Covid environment. Furthermore, the emphasis on local archaeology will appeal to the residents of the Borough. It is also the view of the MMF board that improving the gallery will have huge educational benefits, by interpreting the Museums' archaeological collection to better state their importance and relevance to local people.

Thus MMF supports the preferred option that suggests the use of MBC's existing capital funds in improving the Museums, by refurbishing the gallery on the first floor of the Tudor part of the building on the topic of local archaeology. This will encourage greater access to collections by residents, use existing spaces to their best, and act as an attractor for secondary spend and increased donations.

MMF is also very encouraged by the financial offer made by the William and Edith Oldham Trust, for improving the archaeological gallery. This demonstrates a real enthusiasm and support for the preferred option presented in the briefing to Members. We are also aware that the generosity of the Oldham Trust is dependent upon MMF matching the offer made. MMF accepts the challenge here and in principle will work towards this goal, if agreed by Members of the Committee.

Finally, on the assumption that Members agree the Recommendation, we would urge the early production of an embryo project plan for the archaeology gallery together with an indicative budget. For MMF to approach Foundations for financial support a project plan and budget will be essential. We have much experience of raising financial support from grant-giving Foundations, and we can say that to embark on such an exercise without these key pieces of information will be futile. Thus, these are needed now.

Kind Regards

Yours sincerely

Mark Baker

Chairman of MMF