



Community proposal Q4.2

Benefits – summary

The benefits will derive primarily from the provision of:

- education and training – enabling the museum to extend its workshop and training activities specifically for school pupils, unemployed, disadvantaged and minority groups
- economic activity – employment of a small number of people locally in connection with the museum and Mill Cottage, increasing as time goes on (initially around 1 FTE directly employed, indirect?)
- improving the local environment by sympathetically renovating the existing near-derelict property and providing a space for use by the local community
- links to heritage - closer involvement between the community and the museum's collections relating to local heritage, enabling people in the community to play a stronger role in researching and appreciating their culture and heritage
- mental health and wellbeing - engagement by the museum with more people locally – more people volunteering, benefiting from workshops and training, learning new skills, and the positive impact these have on mental health and wellbeing (target numbers?)
- Social interaction - a facility for use by the community – encouraging more of the community to participate in social activities
- Preserving the past - the collections housed more securely
- Social engagement – to encourage community engagement and ownership
- Certainty for the future in the storage and protection of the museum's collections, by moving from leased storage accommodation to a local property owned by the museum and hence by the community.

Education and training

The museum already provides education and skills development both in connection with its collections and more generally. Associated with the collections are lectures, workshops on aspects of the collections and the history behind them, workshops on skills associated with the collections (photography, videography, creative writing, effective research methods, conservation techniques, cataloguing, archaeological techniques). Also associated are workshops on artistic and crafting techniques relating to items in the collections (knitting, felting, mosaics, needle-felting, etc).

These workshops have involved a wide range of people and groups in the local community – our volunteers, the general community, pupils from local schools, art groups,

older-people's groups, dementia groups, groups for people with mental and physical disability, economically disadvantaged groups.

These have been limited to some extent by the lack of suitable workshop space, which the new property will help to tackle.

We plan to extend our delivery of workshop and skills development activity, focusing on those groups in the community which will benefit most – for example, school-leavers and the long term unemployed, delivering skills and developing confidence that may help them gain employment in the future.

Economic activity

The Museum has a core budget of around £30,000 plus on average an annual project budget of around £40,000. Much of this is spent locally in employing local project and support staff, contractors and suppliers. Mill Cottage will require 2 part-time employees initially to clean and administer the facility, and will provide a work environment for our existing part time paid curator. In the provision of training and workshops, the museum uses the services of local specialists – creative writers, artists, researchers etc – and this usage would be expected to increase with the adoption of Mill Cottage.

The museum is also an important tourist attraction in the village – its collection of Pictish stones and of the works of George Bain, are both known world-wide, and are actively promoted on tourist trails such as the North Coast 500 and the recently-published Pictish Trail. These certainly add to the tourist numbers to the area – and the proposed new property will serve to add to this by offering more intimate and interactive access to the museum's collections.

Environment

The Museum does much to protect the environment as far as it can. Mill Cottage being in a conservation area, will be developed sympathetically and in line with other properties on Bridge Street, and would offer facilities such as secure bicycle storage to encourage users of the facility to walk, cycle or use public transport. It will utilise eco-friendly air- or ground-source heat pumps for heating and environment control and will promote best practice in environmental management.

The proposed development of the property is designed to preserve the frontage and existing features of Mill Cottage and to comply with the requirements of the conservation area in which it is located. The property is currently largely overgrown to the front and rear, but we propose to develop both areas to provide attractive garden space consistent with neighbouring properties, and to retain the existing elevation of the building. The extension to the rear is proposed to be flat-roofed with grass coverage, to merge with the surrounding area, and to be invisible from the front and side. The property already has air-sourced heat pump heating which we would retain. The property has limited car parking potential – we estimate a maximum of 2 spaces, one of which we would designate for disabled access. The car park across the road from the property is for visitors to the Fairy Glen, but is already heavily used by local residents to provide off-street parking. We are therefore proposing to recommend visitors to the property using cars to use the car park designated for Groam House (at the foot of the High Street) and to walk to the property using the footpath that runs to the rear of the properties on the north side of Bridge Street. This would benefit from the provision of a footbridge from the path to the Fairy Glen car park, so as to provide easier access to Mill Cottage.

There is a bus stop close to Mill Cottage.

Heritage

The Museum has been an integral part of the community for forty years, linking local people with the heritage of the area, and encouraging long-term residents to pass on their knowledge of the area. Mill Cottage will offer an important opportunity to relocate the museum's stored collections to the heart of the village, where they will become more accessible to local people and more at home in the community which owns them. We hope to develop further the strong sense of heritage within the communities of both Rosemarkie and Fortrose by engaging more with the local people. We already have relationships with Fortrose Academy (serving the Black Isle) and with the primary schools throughout the Black Isle; we have also historically worked with local groups serving the elderly, people with dementia, and disadvantaged groups (for example BREATHE in Merkinch in Inverness). Through our recent past projects such as the Mosaic Trail, and Felting workshops we have involved over 15 local community groups, involving some 120 people locally.

Mental health and well-being

Volunteering is good for your health. So say our volunteers and a considerable body of research; it provides a wide range of benefits – social involvement and interaction, a sense of contributing to something worthwhile, learning new skills and knowledge, overcoming challenges, and just having something interesting to do. Groam House currently has around 25 volunteers; with the move of the collection to Mill Cottage we expect the number to increase, extending the benefits of volunteering to more people in the community. We hope to see volunteer numbers increase to around 40, being an increase of 15, and on average these people will contribute 50 hours a year each, representing a continued value of £7,500 per annum, on top of the £12,500 value our existing volunteers contribute (hourly rate equivalent based on minimum living wage)

Social engagement

Rosemarkie already has a track record of community engagement relating to the provision of local services - the community-run beach café, operated by the Rosemarkie Amenities Association, the public toilets in Rosemarkie and Fortrose, operated by the Rosemarkie and Fortrose Trust (created by Groam House Museum to save the toilets from being closed), Groam House museum itself, entirely volunteer-run, the Gordon Memorial Hall, also run by volunteers. This proposal builds on this backdrop by proposing a new facility to complement that of Gordon Memorial Hall and Groam House Museum, by providing a facility of smaller scale and more suited to one-to-one skills-building sessions and small group activities. A facility for the community, owned and run by the community.

Preserving the past

The move of the museum's stored collections to purpose-made storage in Mill Cottage will help to preserve the artefacts for the future, and to keep them protected. The benefits of the collections being closer to the community which owns them are highlighted above. The move from leased accommodation, which has no certainty of tenure, to a property wholly owned by the museum and hence by the community, will also ensure the long term storage and protection of the museum's collections.

Social interaction

Finally, the facility will offer capacity for use by small local groups to meet and participate in shared activities. Current facilities in the village tend to be larger, and therefore more costly and less appropriate to small group interaction.