



‘St Neots Museum – Resilience & Beyond’ Project Plan Summary

The St Neots Museum is at an exciting point with an aspiration to repair and extend our buildings and redisplay our collection to make them available to everyone in our fast growing town. The result will be a brilliant new museum with greater space for increased community engagement in local history and the arts and adaptable commercial activities to make the organisation more financially resilient.

St Neots is a continually growing London commuter belt town with new developments increasing the population significantly in the next few years. St Neots museum will both tell the stories of the town’s heritage but also wants to weave in the more recent history and so be an inclusive and collaborative history and arts hub that will support the local economy, enhance community cohesion and be a great place to visit for locals and other visitors.

However, the museum has significant building issues, both structurally and with the limited layout and spaces we currently have. We are working closely with our landlord, St Neots Town Council, to evaluate the building’s issues including damp and roofing. Several attempts have been made to firm a plan for redevelopment in the recent past including architects plans for a new, extended museum on the same footprint. But, the uncertainty surrounding the building’s condition and lack of large project management experience in the team has meant they have not resulted in a plan going forward for grant funding. It is a vital part of the vision for the museum that a redevelopment project is undertaken in the near future.

The early stages of the redevelopment involve:

- Establish and incorporate the views of our local population about their aspirations for the museum and its role in our area. This is planned to be achieved by facilitated evaluation at a number of summer community events and with local schools and interested groups.
- Liaison with St Neots Town Council over a building survey and plan of repairs. This is already underway.
- Inform and shape the project based on sound evidence of the commercial and engagement options so decisions are made which ensure long term resilience and flexibility. This requires an options and feasibility study looking at potential uses for the current museum building and alternative sites.
- Consolidation of our fundraising processes and draw on best practice so it will bring in income for the museum and build financial reliance.

- Work is also needed to increase and diversify our Trustees and volunteers so the impact of succession is reduced and we get a wider range of people involved in the museum to reflect our local community.

This project will require hours from existing staff and a review of the programme to release their time to focus on the redevelopment programme. We also expect to recruit additional staff and consultants to provide the resources and training needed to reach the point where we have a clear, evidenced plan for redevelopment informed by public opinion and an upskilled, wider team in place to support the work ahead.

By the end of the project period we will have a clear redevelopment plan in place for the museum which enables high quality engagement with the collection across the local population, increased resilience to future financial challenges and has a robust, informed team in place to take the next stage of redevelopment forward.