

Appendix 4 Report on Farmland Museum

The Farmland Museum and Denny Abbey are open from April 1st to the end of the October half term from Tuesday to Sunday and on Bank Holiday Mondays from 11.00 am until 5.00pm. The Museum manages Denny Abbey under a management agreement with English Heritage (EH). Most visitors are unaware that they are visiting two different sites and see it as a whole.

The management agreement with EH is being renegotiated and will result in a financially less generous arrangement for the Farmland Museum. We are beginning to look at how we manage this next year and already have made some adjustments as preparation. However we have a good working relationship with our contacts there .

We have recently appointed two new Trustees. One is also an active volunteer, has managed a large department at Addenbrookes and also has extremely valuable management skills experience. The other works at Duxford and is involved in sales and marketing; he too will be an extremely valuable addition to the team

Currently there are two permanent part-time office staff (Manager 0.6 FTE and Assistant Curator 17.5 hours per week). There are also two permanent Tea Room staff who work during the open season at weekends, bank holidays and on two days a week in the school holidays when there are Family Activities .There is a third café assistant who is on a seasonal contract for the season only . The are two Visitor Services Assistants sell tickets and shop items and open and close the site as well as doing a number of other tasks. They are seasonal and the post acts as a good stepping post for recent graduates looking for work in the heritage sector. They have been paid for by EH and this is the last year of that arrangement so we are looking at ways of managing how the shop and admissions process is run in future years.

There were 9902 visitors in 2017 - up 10% on 2016. The feature in S Cambs magazine last summer was greatly appreciated. We also receive coverage in the Urban and Civic magazine. We make much more use of Social Media with Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Cafe income was significantly up on 2016 partly because we were finally able to install a card machine.

We did fewer outside talks to groups and schools because these were not felt to be a cost effective use of staff time. However there was and continues to be outreach by volunteers with stalls at local events (eg Fen Ditton Medieval Fair, Milton Country Park, Ely Harvest Festival weekend) and occasional talks by volunteers or trustees.

Final accounts are not yet complete but we appear to have made a surplus of about £2000 for 2017. The S Cambs grant is a very important part of our budget. A grant was received early in 2018 from SHARE to enable the museum to start to work on promoting hire of site. A grant of £3500 has been received from the Litchfield Trust for a Marketing Consultant; the post has been advertised and applicants will be interviewed now that the Manager has returned from Jury Service.

In October a meeting was held with a number of stakeholders to explore the ways in which the Museum and Abbey could become an important heritage, recreational and community asset for the proposed Waterbeach New Town . The meeting started at the Control Tower on the Barracks and then moved to the Abbey and Museum. People were able to walk

along the existing part to the medieval causeway which linked the Abbey to Waterbeach village (see report to SCDC for Oct 2017).

An application to HLF for a 3 year part time Community Education Officer is to be resubmitted with a more detailed project plan; the basic application was considered to be strong. The post is for someone to work with groups from areas with higher levels of deprivation who do not tend to visit museums (and have been identified as missing from our audience through postcode analysis) and with residents in the new developments in the District (in particular to prepare for the new residents to Waterbeach New Town) to help them understand the story of the region, and how it has changed. The Abbey and Museum also have the potential for schemes to promote health and wellbeing through enjoyment of its very serene setting and through volunteering. The reopening of the Medieval Causeway route through the new town and down to waterbeach village will provide an enjoyable healthy, safe and non vehicular way of reaching the site on foot or cycle.

A second round of consultation for The Amey Energy from Waste planning application has recently closed. The EfW plant will have a significant impact on the setting of Denny Abbey and the Farmland Museum.. The planning application includes a package of measures to mitigate the effects on the setting of Denny Abbey and the Farmland Museum and the impact on their viability and sustainability as a very important and significant visitor attraction.

The Denny Abbey Dawn service organized by local churches was broadcast on BBC Radio Cambridgeshire and Jane Williamson (Chair of Trustees) did a brief interview at the end of it.

On April 16th we were visited by HRH the Princess Royal. SCDC was represented by Cllr Burling Vice Chairman of the Council and he and his wife were presented to HRH. The visit celebrated 21 years of the successful partnership of the Farmland Museum with English Heritage. Cllr Peter Johnson attended as the S Cambs representative on the Trustee board at the time and Cllr Anna Bradnam was present in her role as County Councillor. After the event there was another interview on BBC Radio Cambridgeshire.

We are working on a Masterplan to cover not only managing the immediate future but also how the Farmland Museum and Denny Abbey can be developed to provide an important amenity for residents in the area offering a serene place to visit, opportunities for community engagement through volunteering and through use of the site for community activities and events and as a place where people can learn about the story of the area where they are now living and understand how it has changed so dramatically in the last 70 years.

Jane Williamson
12th June 2018