

Title of Report:	Green Lane Museum
Committee Report Submitted To:	The Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	21 December 2020
For Decision or For Information	For Decision

Linkage to Council Strategy (2019-23)	
Strategic Theme	Resilient, Healthy and Engaged Communities
Outcome	Council will work to develop and promote stable and cohesive communities across the Borough
Lead Officer	Head of Community & Culture Cultural Services Manager

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES/
Capital/Revenue	
Code	
Staffing Costs	

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to review the current situation at Green Lane Museum and present a number of options for moving forward.

2.0 Background

Green Lane Museum's collection first came into being in the early/mid 1980s when the Environment and Heritage Service (now known as DAERA) opened Green Lane Museum in Roe Valley Country Park. At this time, no formal procedures were followed with regards to collections development and object donations. As a result of this, donor information was not fully recorded, and unsuitable items were accepted into the collection.

In 1997, Green Lane Museum's collection came under the ownership of Limavady Borough Council. Under the advice of the Causeway Museum Service Officer, the museum began to implement formal procedures regarding donations. At this time, any known donors of material given to Green Lane Museum were contacted to confirm if the change of ownership was acceptable and the museum started recording donations in an entry file (the museum's entry file begins in 1997).

The Collection has remained at 220 objects since then. It features items relating to agricultural, industrial, domestic, commercial and community life from 19th & 20th centuries, including the First and Second World Wars.

The lease for the museum was agreed in 2008. It runs from October 2007 until 2032 and stipulates that the building must be maintained as museum. DAERA will consider a sublease if appropriate to original purpose.

In 2021 DAERA were approached regarding the termination of the lease. They are open to exploring this as an option. Also, in 2021 several community groups in the local area displayed an interest in opening Green Lane Museum with curatorial support from the Museum Service - like the agreement in place with the Friends of Ballycastle Museum. They feel strongly that the historic building and its significant collection should be accessible to visitors.

3.0 Need

In January 2020 Green Lane Museum closed due to limited front of house and programme budget, however access can still be facilitated for group visits by museum staff on an ad hoc basis.

The rates setting workshop for 2020/2021 reduced the Green Lane Museum budget by removing agency costs in order to achieve required savings.

The lease and utilities are still covered by Council. The heating is not fit for purpose, building maintenance is lacking, there is no fire alarm, nor are there any onsite staff facilities – toilets, water etc. A new electricity board with separate meter was installed by DAERA in 2020 and Council is now being invoiced for electricity. This is the only regular contact with DAERA. Heaters and building maintenance issues have subsequently been raised with DAERA by Councils Energy Officer.

Green Lane Museum remains Accredited. The Accreditation scheme was paused during COVID and this has been extended until 2022. The Collection is insured by Council and all museum policies, plans and procedures required for Accreditation remain in place.

The Museum has attracted between 3000 and 5000 visitors every year with seasonal opening hours. There is potential with the building and the collection to facilitate school groups and reminiscence workshops with older members of the community.

There is strong local community support to see the museum reopen and for the collection to remain accessible to visitors.

Limavady War Memorial boards are currently displayed in the museum, on loan to Council from the Limavady War Memorial Trust.

In November 2021, Council agreed to relocate the War Memorial Boards to Roe Valley Arts & Cultural Centre where they had originally been located, subject to the agreement of the trustees, resulting in additional available floor space at the museum.

4.0 Options

Officers have identified a list of four possible options to progress, as follows:

1. Do nothing – the Museum remains closed with the exception of pre booked group visits.
2. Seek community group assistance to operate Green Lane Museum with support from Council for overheads and lease.
3. Surrender the lease (subject to DAERA approval) and dispose of collection following Acquisition and Disposal Policy stages.

Option	Pros	Cons
1. Open by appointment only and reinstate storage area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museum and collection still accessible. • Maintaining Accreditation. • Caring for a local historically significant collection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council covering all associated building costs with potentially low visitor figures and levels of engagement. • Officer time required to provide access. • Off putting for many visitors to have to schedule an appointment. • Museum will appear as closed to majority of Roe Valley country park visitors.
2. Seek community group to operate Green Lane Museum with support from Council for overheads and lease.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museum and collection are made accessible with agreed opening times. • Maintaining Accreditation. • Local people sharing their local history creates an engaging and enjoyable visitor experience. • Opportunity for community groups to research collections and display their own relevant research projects. • Opportunity for local people/volunteers to gain transferrable skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council covering all associated building costs. • Staff time in training volunteers. • Staff time in managing any competing uses impacting on collection. • Different commitment levels and different skills from volunteers. • Opening hours are dictated by volunteer availability.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for community group to provide access for local schools. • Increased number of visitors to the museum and increased engagement. • Potential to engage between 3000 and 5000 visitors (as per previous years visitor numbers). 	
<p>3. Surrender the lease (subject to DAERA approving this) and Dispose of collection following Acquisition and Disposal Policy stages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council is no longer liable for any associated building costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local community reaction – bad news story. • Loss of historically valuable collection which is of interest to the local community and visitors to the Country park. • Lengthy disposal process (up to 2 years) which will take up staff time: includes Stage 1: contacting donors (where known and advertising for any interests), Stage 2: offering to another Accredited Museum, Stage 3: offering to another venue, Stage 4: disposing/sell off as last resort.

5.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that members consider progressing with option 2, to seek expressions of interest from interested community groups to operate Green Lane Museum with support from Council for overheads and lease, subject to DAERA and Council approval.