

ESSEX FIRE MUSEUM ANNUAL REPORT 2007/08

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Protecting our heritage



Essex Fire
museum

1. Introduction

This is the first Annual Report of the Essex Fire Museum and its purpose is to provide the Essex Fire Authority and Chief Fire Officer with a résumé of the Museum's activities during the period 1st June 2007 to 31st May 2008 together with an outline of matters identified for future consideration and development.

2. Background

The Museum was officially opened by the then Fire Minister Angela Smith MP on 14th June 2007. The opening ceremony was attended by amongst others members of the Essex Fire Authority, serving officers and retired personnel of ECFRS, volunteers, Friends of the Museum and media representatives.

3. Staffing

The Museum's current staffing is as follows: Collections Officer / Assistant Curator (part time – 22.5 hours per week). In addition, specialist support is provided by the Safer Communities Directorate as and when required.

4. Finance

Pending the allocation of a specific EFM budget, expenditure is monitored by the Safer Communities Directorate budgetary procedures. It is estimated that the annual operating costs of the Museum are x(INSERT) per annum.

5. The Year's Performance

During the year approximately 600 visitors have attended the Museum and these included groups from various charitable organisations and educational institutions, such as the Salvation Army, U3A (University of the Third Age) and specialist care organisations. Liaison has taken place with the Service's Equality Officers with a view to developing more open access to the Museum's services and in this respect, a visitor feedback questionnaire has been introduced. Data from this questionnaire will be included in future annual reports

To date, twenty four letters of appreciation have been received and these, together with the Museum's Visitors' Book, are available for inspection. There have also been several email and written enquiries to the Museum and the majority of these have resulted in a positive outcome. Many of the enquiries relate to old photographs and service histories of 'long gone' Fire Brigade members. Some enquiries have also been redirected to other institutions / Museums /data sources but wherever practicable assistance has been given by Essex Fire Museum.

One letter of complaint was received during the year and this related to a retired Fire Brigade member not receiving the acknowledgement to which he believed he was due for his past efforts in relation to the protection of the Fire Service heritage. An appropriate response was sent to the individual concerned and as far as can be ascertained the matter was resolved. The correspondence is available for inspection.

6. Noteworthy Events

7th September 07 – Visit by Andrew McKinley, MP for Thurrock and his wife

October 07 – Attendance by the Collections Officer to the Fire Heritage Network UK AGM in Glasgow at which he submitted a report on the Museum's progress

12th November 07 – visit by Collections Officer with EFM appliance to the Salvation Army Training Centre at Hadleigh (approximately 80 persons attended the event)

January 08 – Essex Fire Museum provided the Chief Fire Officers Association with a DVD compiled by the Museum showing Leytonstone Fire Station and its crews circa 1958. This was in response to a request from the CFOA for their AGM programme.

4th May 2008 – The EFM fleet of vehicles took part in the Historic Commercial Vehicle Society's 48th Annual London to Brighton run. This was completed with minor mechanical issues being overcome. One of the vehicles carried the banner – *Thurrock and Brentwood Community Command Smoke Alarm Campaign*.

15th April – 1st May 2008 – Taking the Fire Museum into Schools - as part of a programme to help make the EFM more accessible to schools, the SHQ Education Team (supported by Museum staff) delivered three Fire Service historical topics to seven schools in the Grays, Basildon and Chelmsford areas.

7. Future Strategy

The Essex Fire Museum's future management and organisation is currently under review by the Chief Fire Officer and reports will be submitted to the EFA in due course. The issues which will, however, need to be addressed include the following:

- i. Creation of management organisation (either charitable trust or direct control by the EFA)
- ii. Consideration of the Museum's staffing and accommodation requirements including succession planning
- iii. Creation of budgetary procedures and income development and insurance strategies

- iv. Preparation and implementation of Museum operating and collection policies
- v. Development of education and visitor policies and programmes including performance monitoring
- vi. Ongoing promotional activities including open day, potential development of an internet-based *virtual tour* and promotional DVD/web site
- vii. Liaison with other interested groups and partner organisations
- viii. Implementation of an appropriate IT infrastructure

A copy of the Museum's Initial Business Plan (prepared last year) is attached at appendix 1 and provides a snapshot of the various issues.

8. Acknowledgements

The Museum has made very good progress over the last 12 months and this would not have been possible without the positive support of elected members, Chief Fire Officer, Volunteers, Essex Record Office and serving and retired ECFRS personnel. In addition, invaluable ongoing practical support from members of the Safer Communities Directorate at SHQ and personnel at Grays Fire Station is greatly appreciated.

Appendices

1. Initial Business Plan
2. Information Leaflet