

No 3/2011

MP No OA 50/267

Memorandum for Executive Council

SUBJECT Potential Exhibition of Rupert's Valley Slave Artefacts

Memorandum by Deputy Chair, Civil Society Tourism & Leisure
Committee

ADVICE SOUGHT

1. **Council is asked to authorise the Tourism Development Executive to pursue with relevant authorities, the possibility of an international exhibition of the artefacts uncovered during the Rupert's Valley excavations within the Liverpool Slavery Museum, and the subsequent return of artefacts and display materials.**

**BACKGROUND &
CONSIDERATIONS**

2. Council will recall that during the excavations of the slave graves in Rupert's Valley, as part of the air access environmental statement work, a number of artefacts were uncovered. These were primarily beads and fragments of cloth.

3. In September 2008 Executive Council agreed to allow the artefacts to be sent to the UK for appropriate conservation and analysis, and this has been carried out.

4. In late 2010, when the archaeologist who had undertaken the excavations at Rupert's was back on Island, he advised that the Liverpool Slavery Museum (part of Liverpool Maritime Museum) was extremely interested in creating a special exhibition of the artefacts which would highlight St Helena's role in the abolition of the slave trade.

5. Such an exhibition would give a high profile to the Island (as it would include background information) in a major tourism location in the UK that attracts visitors from across the world. It would also allow the artefacts to be displayed publicly at a time when the Island does not otherwise have the facilities to display them, and they would remain in store (possibly with cost implications, although this is still to be determined).

6. It is thought that it would be feasible, as part of any negotiations around the exhibition, to ensure that the display materials could subsequently come to the island when the artefacts are returned, thus providing purpose made display and interpretation material for the Museum.

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7. Both the Tourism Commission and the Civil Society Tourism and Leisure (CSTL) Committee have discussed and fully support this idea. In order that negotiations may proceed, CSTL Committee has requested that Executive Council be updated on the plans for the artefacts, and authorisation be sought for Michael Dean, Tourism Development Executive, to negotiate all appropriate arrangements (including subsequent return of artefacts) with the relevant authorities and to ensure a written agreement is produced and signed. Mr Dean would provide regular reports back to CSTL Committee, and would ensure that relevant parties within SHG were also kept informed.

**FINANCIAL
IMPLICATIONS**

8. Financial implications resulting from this memorandum are minimal. Costs involved in the negotiations would be covered under the Tourism Development Project; and the only other costs would be the shipping of display materials once the exhibition had concluded. The artefacts will still need to be shipped back to St Helena at some point. Assuming the exhibition goes ahead it would cost approximately £1,500 to ship both the artefacts and the exhibition materials back to St Helena. There is also the possibility of a reliable person returning to the Island who could bring the artefacts back to St Helena at zero or minimal cost.

**ECONOMIC
IMPLICATIONS**

9. There are positive economic implications as such a high profile exhibition, in a major tourism destination, would provide strong positive coverage for the Island and extend knowledge of the Island. This would encourage potential visitors to the Island, with consequent benefits. There may also be further academic interest, which could then have further economic benefit.

**PUBLIC / SOCIAL
IMPACT**

10. The exhibition itself should have a positive public / social impact in that it will raise the Island's profile and promote our cultural history. In addition, there is the opportunity for the artefacts to be subsequently displayed and supported in St Helena's Museum.

**ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPACT**

11. Not applicable to this memorandum.

**PREVIOUS
CONSULTATION /
COMMITTEE
INPUT**

12. Both the Tourism Commission and the Civil Society Tourism and Leisure Committee have discussed and endorsed this plan. See paragraph 7 above.

PUBLIC

13. If endorsed by Executive Council, there is unlikely to be any

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- REACTION** adverse reaction from members of the public. Some may want reassurance that the artefacts will be returned to St Helena and this could be explained to the public.
- PUBLICITY** 14. If endorsed, publicity should focus on what is to happen and when the artefacts are to be returned. There should also be occasional updates on levels of interest in the exhibition.
- SUPPORT TO STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES** 15. This overall exercise would support Strategic Objective 1.1, specifically sub-objective 1.1.4 – Promote tourism and related developments.

C KG

Office of the Chief Secretary
The Castle

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