



**CABINET – 15 DECEMBER 2020**

**DISPOSAL FROM THE LEICESTERSHIRE MUSEUM COLLECTION  
BY TRANSFER**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES**

**PART A**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the proposal to dispose of X.W40.2006, a Reid and Sigrist aircraft by transfer, from the County Council's Museum Collection to Newark Air Museum.

**Recommendations**

2. It is recommended that the proposal to dispose of X.W40.2006, a Reid and Sigrist aircraft from the County Council's Museum Collection to Newark Air Museum be approved.

**Reasons for Recommendation**

3. The Reid and Sigrist aircraft has been in storage for many years and Leicestershire's Museum Service has no capacity to put it on public display.
4. Transfer to an accredited museum, with specialist expertise in interpreting, displaying and conserving aircraft, will ensure that the plane is made publicly accessible, appropriately interpreted and continues to be properly cared for and maintained.
5. This recommendation is in accordance with the County Council's Collections Development Policy.

**Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)**

6. The Director will use his existing delegation to make the necessary arrangements with the Newark Air Museum to facilitate the transfer.

**Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

7. The Leicestershire Museum Service has explored the disposal of the aircraft by transfer to another accredited museum, having been satisfied that the

Council were legally free to dispose of the item and, in line with the Council's disposal procedures.

8. The relevant clauses from the County Council's Collections Development Policy are 15.2; 15.7 and 15.8 and can be found pages 21–23 of the Policy which is appended to the report. The Policy is scheduled for review in early 2021.

### **Resource Implications**

9. The Council has contributed £13,500 over five years towards the costs of the restoration to the Reid and Sigrist aircraft from its museum conservation budget. The true costs of the restoration are significantly higher and has been covered by Windmill aviation, a specialist light aircraft restorer.
10. The costs of storing the aircraft currently stand at £5,500 per annum. There are no costs associated with the transfer.
11. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the contents of this report.

### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

12. None.

### **Officer(s) to Contact**

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## **PART B**

### **Background**

13. The aircraft is a twin engine light aircraft built as a prototype trainer in 1945 by Reid and Sigrist in Desford. The Leicestershire Museums Accession number is X.W40.2006.
14. The aircraft was rebuilt in 1951 and renamed RS4 Bobsleigh with extended cockpit for "prone pilot" trials by Royal Aeronautical Establishment. It has been given various nicknames, including the 'Desford Bomber'.
15. The aircraft entered Sir William Roberts' Strathallan Aircraft Collection in the 1970s and sold in auction in 1981. It was acquired by the Scottish Aircraft Collection Trust Ltd and during this period lost its certificate of airworthiness.
16. The Leicestershire Museum Service initially acquired the aircraft as a loan, from the National Museums of Scotland and was later transferred to the Councils' collection. Legal transfer of title to Leicestershire County Council finally took place in 2005.
17. The aircraft remained dismantled in storage until July 2014, when it was moved to Windmill Aviation (specialist light aircraft restorer) at Spanhoe aerodrome, Northamptonshire. This was as a loan for the purposes of restoring the aircraft, ideally to flying condition so that it could be made accessible to people, including being displayed at air shows.
18. A number of specialist interest groups and individuals have visited the aircraft and Windmill aviation facilitate public access on behalf of the Leicestershire Museum Service.
19. On 22 April 2018, the aircraft had successful test flights but currently does not hold a certificate of airworthiness.
20. With the original intention to restore the aircraft to a display condition having been achieved, it is timely to consider the long-term future of this item as part of the County Council's museum collection.
21. The aircraft is currently stored in a secure hangar in Northamptonshire. The Leicestershire Museum Service no longer has space to display the aircraft within its own venues and cannot currently provide suitable long-term storage and maintenance.

### **Proposal**

22. The Leicestershire Museum Service has directly contacted eight separate organisations known to have an interest and expertise in aviation heritage, this includes both accredited museums and non-accredited aviation heritage centres, to explore the potential of a transfer.

23. In addition to written enquiries, the Senior Curator and Collections and Conservation Manager, have made site visits to discuss the proposal in more detail with a number of organisations. This has led to one offer of a permanent transfer from Newark Air Museum, Drove Lane, Newark, Nottinghamshire.
24. Newark Air Museum is an accredited museum and a registered charity. The museum has demonstrated its ability to be able to care for the aircraft long term and make it publicly accessible. It has regular published opening hours (pre-Covid pandemic) and an active schools education programme. Its founding aim is:

*“The preservation of the country’s aviation heritage and to display a collection of aircraft and exhibitions to the local public”*

Further information on Newark Air Museum can be found on its website:  
[www.newkairmuseum.org](http://www.newkairmuseum.org)

25. If a transfer to Newark Air Museum is not progressed, the County Council will need to continue to make provision for the aircraft’s long-term care and preservation. The service does not have suitable in-house storage and currently rents hangarage at a cost of c.£5,500 per annum. The Leicestershire Museum Service has no ability to put this historic aircraft on public display and its ability to support pre-booked public access is limited.

### **Conclusion**

26. A transfer of the Reid and Sigrist Aircraft: Accession No: X.W40.2006 to Newark Air Museum would fully satisfy the requirements of Council’s Collections Development Policy and specifically clause 15.7 which states:

*“Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.”*

27. Therefore, it is recommended to transfer the aircraft to Newark Air Museum, as this would both safeguard the long-term future of this important aircraft.

### **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

28. The decision to dispose, by transfer, of the above item is not felt to have any equality or human rights implications and therefore an Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment has not been undertaken.

**Background Papers**

None.

**Appendix**

Leicestershire County Council Collections Development Policy 2015-2019

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