

Council scraps £3m HLF application for Snibston

Leicestershire council's decision fuels concerns that museum may close

Rebecca Atkinson

Cuts monitor Leicestershire County Council has scrapped a £3m application

to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to enhance Snibston Discovery Museum, prompting concerns that it may be earmarked for closure.

A county council cabinet report confirmed that it would not submit a stage two bid to the HLF. It stated: "A bid, had it been approved, would have resulted in the county council being left with contingent liabilities of circa £4m that would have needed to be paid back to the HLF in certain circumstances."

The council agreed last year to undertake a Libraries, Heritage and Arts Review, which aims to save £4.2m a year by 2015 and will look at



A stage two bid to the HLF for enhancements to Snibston Discovery Museum has been ditched

the future of Snibston, as well as of Harborough and Charnwood museums.

"It is because of this review and the increased financial pressures facing the council that we cannot, at this stage, make decisions on investment plans," said a spokeswoman.

Mark Taylor, director of the Museums Association, said the move suggested the museum could be at risk of closure in the future.

Carmarthenshire County Council has launched a consultation to cut spending on its museum

service ahead of final budget decisions next month.

John Marjoram, the development officer at the Federation of Museums and Art Galleries of Wales, said he was "very concerned" about the future of the county's museums.

In Scotland, the **University of Strathclyde** confirmed that it would close the Collins Gallery in May.

A spokesman for the university said: "We are taking appropriate measures to ensure the long-term care of collections."

Hants merger gets go-ahead

Winchester and Hampshire plan tie-up

Sharon Heal

Winchester City Council cabinet passed plans to investigate a merger between Hampshire and Winchester museum services to create a county-wide museum service last month.

Cabinet members also authorised the sale of two items from the museum collections.

One of the items for sale is an oil painting by W Sidney Cooper, called Tanqueray Island, Kent, which has been valued at £12,000 and is said to fall outside of the current collecting policy.

It is understood that any money raised from this sale would be ringfenced for the conservation of other art works in the collection.

The council also agreed to sell an Indo-Tibetan bronze statuette of the Hindu goddess Parvati, valued at £20,000, and to either dispose of or put into storage the entire ethnography collection.

World news digest

Australia: Belgian artist Wim Delvoye is showing more than 100 works at the Museum of Old and New Art in Hobart, Tasmania (until 2 April), the institution launched last year by the collector and professional gambler David Walsh. The exhibition includes the installation Cloaca Professional (2010), a series of chambers that emulate the human digestive system and produce artificial faeces.

Dubai: An Iranian-born entrepreneur has converted a warehouse in the Al Quoz district into a gallery that will host exhibitions of works drawn from private collections worldwide. Businessman Ramin Salsali,

who is the sole backer of the venture, plans to show pieces drawn from his own 400-strong collection. He also hopes to open a gallery in Berlin for Middle Eastern art.

France: Thieves have stolen a Saudi quartz falcon from the Jacques Chirac museum in Corrèze, Limousin. The robbers smashed the glass case containing the piece, which is decorated with 1,400 precious stones including diamonds, rubies and emeralds. The museum houses more than 5,000 items given to Chirac by various heads of state during his time as president.

The Netherlands: Experts have discovered a new

painting by Rembrandt after X-ray analysis revealed an unfinished portrait beneath the work, Bearded Old Man. Ernst van de Wetering of the Rembrandt Research Project dated the small painting, which belongs to a private collector, to 1630. It will go on show this spring at the Rembrandt House Museum in Amsterdam.

Qatar: The Gulf state is building a contemporary art empire, following the opening last month in Doha of a major show devoted to Chinese artist Cai Guo-Qiang at the Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art (until 26 May), and the launch of the Museum of Islamic Art park. An 80-foot sculpture created by US artist Richard



Cai Guo-Qiang's Homecoming installation outside the Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art

Serra is the centrepiece of the 68-acre site.

US: Four trustees at Miami Art Museum have resigned in protest following a board decision to rename the institution the Jorge M Pérez Art Museum of Miami-Dade County after a property developer. Pérez will give \$35m in cash and art over the next 10 years towards the institution, which plans to relocate to a new building on the city waterfront by 2013. Mary Frank, a former trustee, said the museum "had sold its name".

Compiled by Gareth Harris. Seen in the Art Newspaper, Miami Herald, Huffington Post and artinfo.com