

The Borough Museum, Lowewood, Hoddesdon.

The ability of a local community to understand its own history and celebrate particular individuals who have contributed to it, is essential for rich, diverse and local culture. It seems that there are now serious questions about the future of the Lowewood Museum.

I would encourage you to think positively about its importance as it provides an inspiring and critical centre for local knowledge and supports a wide range of activities including craft and art classes for young people, notable collections of objects and furniture and a celebration of the life of James Ward the famous landscape painter. His Gordale Scar is one of my favourite paintings from the greatest period of Romantic English Landscape painting at the Tate. It also holds items of the Pulham family's contribution to the making of landscape design in Britain.

My mother-in-law had an important exhibition of her ceramic work at the Museum a few years ago and I remember with great fondness the excitement of seeing her work there and sharing it with friends and locals.

It would be very short-sighted to think that these important locations of creative and historic potential should be abandoned due to lack of funds. I would urge the council to think again and appoint young and enthusiastic curators to animate and engage the public both local and from afar.

As a former trustee of the British Museum and having sat on the National Arts Council I understand the important relationship between great institutions and smaller museums all around Britain. The British Museum continues its programme of loaning objects and it is to exactly this kind of intimate local museum that they seek to make temporary loans. Making exhibitions that allow children and local residents to see important works from the BM in dialogue with objects from a particular place and history is a precious and necessary part of enriching and re-enforcing local identity.

It can often seem that small institutions like this are only cared for and about by the older generation but this is all a question of programming and appointment. They can actually be vital for any young person growing in curiosity and interest.

The Broxbourne community is adequately rich to provide support and focus interest in the museum. Have you had an open meeting locally to invite, investigate and gather support? Has there been a consultation with any national body like the Museums Archives and Libraries commission or the Art Fund to see in what way they could advise and support the activities of the museum?

Local museums like this provide an extraordinary opportunity for young creative minds to engage with history and for curatorial practice and archiving to be developed. It is often through knowledge and familiarity of local history that wider interest is sparked.

In the right hands a museum such as this wonderful house and contents in Hoddesdon are a unique and critical part of any communities ability to inspire and educate. Through their conservation and celebration of the past we are enabled to contribute to the future.

This is a passionate plea to keep Lowewood Museum alive and relevant.

Yours sincerely,

Sir Antony Gormley, RA, OBE, FRIBA, Hon Doc Cantab,