

To whom it may concern

Date: 7 August 2012

Letter of Intent regarding ViS: Centre for Viking-Age Studies

The Museum of Cultural History (MCH) enthusiastically supports the research proposal for a Centre for Viking-Age Studies to be established at our museum. MCH is an integral part of UiO and ranks as a faculty. In the UiO plan 'Strategy 2020' the museum is described as of paramount importance in sharing UiO's on-going research findings with the wider public. The ViS proposal stands behind this objective along with the museum's ambition that its collections in the future are to be exploited in new and innovative ways for both the purpose of education and research.

The centre will strive for a top place as a world-leading research body in Viking-Age studies and along with this achievement ViS will support several other important aspects of our museum's long-term development plans: recruitment of the best international scholars and national and international cooperation with high profile research institutions. Viking-Age research has our highest priority in the MCH research plan and for years we have worked towards its realization through recruitment, financial support of relevant scholars and the organization of seminars in Viking and related studies. The MCH regards ViS as a key agent in transforming the museum into a cutting-edge institution for inter-disciplinary research, combining archaeometry and public dissemination. We expect ViS to be a leading force in promoting our recent attempts to develop a 'project culture' in which younger scholars in particular are encouraged and supported in their attempts to develop and build projects and research groups. ViS will be located in a facility that meets the demands of the Research Council, facilitates synergy with MCH and between the disciplines involved.

The MCH's Viking collection is, I venture to suggest, the most significant worldwide, both in terms of quantity and its uniqueness of objects. It contains finds of the unparalleled quality, like the Oseberg and Gokstad ships and the accompanying exquisite grave equipment. The ViS Sampling Programmes, which we embrace, will revitalize the research activity around these and other objects, including those from other parts of the 10.000 year-long prehistoric and medieval period.

MCH performs cultural management excavations amounting to 5–8 million EUR annually. The research potential of the archaeological evidence thus produced is formidable and largely under-exploited. ViS will join ongoing excavations to conduct targeted research, and we are certain that this will contribute to heighten the scholarly level of both excavation and research.



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Ongoing research projects at MCH, like The Assembly Project (HERA), Gokstad Revitalized (RCN, private and public funding) and the Avaldsnes Royal Manor Project (private and public funding), which all apply a broad array of archaeometric methods, will be included in ViS. So will several planned and pending grant proposals, if successful.

We are acutely aware of the challenges that MCH will meet when the RCN centre grant comes to an end. MCH will work closely with ViS to ensure that the competence built up around the ViS staff can benefit the museum after the cessation of the ViS. All of these high-skilled competences will be highly needed in the future, not least the Analysis and Database Unit (ADU), which will support our pronounced intention to make research data from the museum generally available for the international community of researchers.

Museums need to maintain their research vitality to uphold their position as essential cultural institutions within society. The MCH will in the coming year conduct a full analysis of its activities, organisation and personnel. This will be followed by well-planned changes within the museum organization. The decision on the ViS proposal in November is ideally timed for incorporating the ViS organisation in this analysis, thus creating mutually beneficial synergies between ViS and MCH.

It is our firm belief that the far-reaching public profile and the ambitious research plans of the ViS proposal will be crucial for fulfilling our ambition to bring MCH into new uncharted regions of knowledge and research communication. Thus, as a museum and research institution we support the proposal without hesitation and in the strongest possible terms.

Sincerely yours,

Rane Willerslev
Director

ViS: Centre for Viking-Age Studies

Attachment 1: Letters of Intent

The attached Letters of Intent are numbered according to the following list:

Host

1. University of Oslo
2. Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo

Museums with substantial Viking-Age collections

3. National Museum of History, Sweden
4. National Museum of Denmark
5. Archäologisches Landesmuseum, Schleswig, Germany
6. University Museum of Bergen, Norway
7. Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger, Norway
8. Tromsø University Museum, Norway
9. The Museum of Natural History and Archaeology, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway

Archaeological Departments in Norwegian Universities

10. Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion, University of Bergen
11. Department of Archaeology and Social Anthropology, University of Tromsø
12. Department of Archaeology and Religious Studies, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim

Partners, Norwegian

13. Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History, University of Oslo
14. Department of Media Studies, University of Oslo
15. Department of Geosciences, University of Oslo
16. The Geological Survey of Norway

Partners, non-Norwegian

17. Centre for the Study of the Viking Age, University of Nottingham
18. McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge
19. Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology, Schleswig

Core-group members outside the University of Oslo

20. Dr. Lesley Abrams, Lecturer of History, University of Oxford
21. Dr. Anders Andrén, Professor of Archaeology, University of Stockholm
22. Dr. James Barrett, Reader in Medieval Archaeology, University of Cambridge
23. Dr. Mateusz Bogucki, Assistant Professor of Archaeology, Polish Academy of Science
24. Dr. Mads Kähler Holst, Associate Professor of Archaeology, Aarhus University
25. Dr. Judith Jesch, Professor of Viking Studies, University of Nottingham
26. Dr. Anne Pedersen, Senior Researcher, Medieval and Renaissance Collections, National Museum of Denmark
27. Dr. Alexandra Sanmark, Postdoc, Centre for Nordic Studies, Orkney, University of the Highlands and Islands
28. Dr. Sarah Semple, Senior Lecturer in Early Medieval Archaeology, Durham University
29. Dr. Søren M. Sindbæk, Assistant Professor in Viking Studies, Aarhus University
30. MA Frans-Arne Stylegar, Commissioner of Monuments and Sites, Vest-Agder county
31. Dr. Fredrik Svanberg, Associate professor of Archaeology, Head of Research, National Museums of History in Sweden
32. Dr. Gareth Williams, Curator of Early Medieval Coins, British Museum

