

Dear Friends,

February began with an important session at Craven Street to advance sound, lighting and design plans for the Historical Experience. We are making good progress on integrating the exciting 21st century technology with the 18th century fabric of the building required for the Historical Experience, which will be the public's primary interface with Benjamin Franklin House. This is a challenge Ben would have relished. After all, to paraphrase his statement on his electrical work, 'I was born 200 years too soon, something will be made of all this!' The museum-as-theatre Historical Experience, which has been well received in the extensive consultations we have undertaken, will be fresh and engaging and remove the traditional distance between visitor and history by creating a virtual stage in each of the historic rooms. It will present the excitement and uncertainty of Franklin's London years using the rooms he inhabited for nearly sixteen years as staging for a drama which seamlessly integrates live performance, and cutting-edge lighting and projection technology, establishing, we believe, a new standard for historical interpretation.

Other highlights this month include:

* A prominent US donor has issued a new challenge toward outstanding project costs and the creation of our £1 million endowment fund to further the aims of the House and secure its future. If we can raise \$100,000 from US sources over the next few months, he will match this with an additional contribution of \$100,000!

Through the Benjamin Franklin House Foundation, a US 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, US-based donors are able to receive a tax deduction. If you have any ideas or wish to lend support for this challenge, please email us at BenjaminFranklinHouse@msn.com. I will provide updates going forward!

* We are nearly there with 'PM1' sign-off from the Heritage Lottery Fund pending the completion of legal documentation for another project supporter, the Architectural Heritage Fund, who will be providing a fixed interest, 4% loan, repayable within two years to cover approximately £200,000 in outstanding project costs (we will be expending just over £1.5 million between now and opening on remaining conservation; infrastructure; Historical Experience, Student Science Centre and Scholarship Centre installation; and related fees). I look forward to reporting in next month's email that the project is officially started!

* With pro bono support from KPMG and Benjamin Franklin House Governors, Alistair Johnston, Ralph Quartano, Graham Nixon and Anne Keigher, we will be introducing a new accounting software package to make preparation of our monthly and annual management/financial accounts even easier!

* We continue our work with the US Tercentenary Commission, particularly Dr. Rosalind Remer, Executive Director; Dr. Page Talbott, Associate Director, and

Chief Curator; and Nicola Twilley, Director of Public Programming. This is the team behind fabulous plans to commemorate Franklin's 300th birthday, beginning with a major touring exhibition, Benjamin Franklin, In Search of a Better World, which opens at the new US Constitution Center in Philadelphia this December. We are now developing a Benjamin Franklin Trail throughout the UK commencing with Benjamin Franklin House next January and winding through other sites in London like the National Portrait Gallery (who will display a Franklin portrait now in storage) before continuing farther afield to such spots as Soho House in Birmingham, the residence of Franklin friend Matthew Boulton, one of the great pioneers of the Industrial Revolution. We are also grateful to the Commission for making available to us during 2005 the services of Geoff Manaugh, their professional marketer/fundraiser, for special projects on a pro bono basis!

* Students at Britain's Chelsea College of Art, lead by Benjamin Franklin House scholar, Michael DeGuzman, are working on a special exhibition inspired by Benjamin Franklin and 36 Craven Street. A March viewing is planned!

* Please save the dates:

Wednesday, 19 October 2005, Benjamin Franklin House Symposium - Benjamin Franklin, Design and Innovation - 4-9 pm (including a buffet dinner), at the Royal Society of Arts, London

Tuesday, 17 January 2006, Benjamin Franklin House Gala Opening Celebration, The Banqueting Hall, Whitehall, London

If you have news you would like to share, would like to get involved, or make a contribution, just let us know: BenjaminFranklinHouse@msn.com
<<mailto:BenjaminFranklinHouse@msn.com>>

Thank you for your time, consideration, and support.

With all best wishes,

Márcia

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