

## MINUTES

**Norwich Area Museums Committee****14:00 to 16:10****11 July 2017**

Present:

**City Councillors:**Brociek-Coulton (chair following  
appointment)  
Bradford  
Herries  
Maxwell  
Price**County Councillors:**Nobbs (vice chair following appointment)  
Clipsham  
Jones (B)  
Rumsby  
Ward**Co-opted voting members:**Brenda Ferris (Norfolk Contemporary Art Society)  
Amanda Geitner (East Anglia Arts Fund)  
Ceri Lamb (Friends of Norwich Museums)  
Councillor Hardy (South Norfolk Council)County Councillor Buck (vice-chairman, Norfolk Joint Museums committee)  
(ex officio member)

Apologies:

County Councillor Butifkofer (other council business) and City Councillor  
Jones (T)**1. Declarations of interest**

Councillor Buck declared an interest in item 4 (below), Friends of the Norwich Museums – Update, because he had been the recipient of a grant.

**2. Minutes**

**RESOLVED** to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2017.

**3. Norwich Museums Briefing February to June 2017**

By way of introduction, the head of operations and learning said that, at the last meeting, the committee had asked the collections development manager to undertake a review of the collections to identify film containing silver nitrate that could potentially become unsafe. An item had been identified at Strangers Hall which would be kept under-review and any decision on its future would be referred to the committee.

The head of operations and learning presented the report and answered members' questions.

Ruth Battersby-Tooke, curator of costumes and textiles, gave a power-point presentation on the Nelson and Norfolk exhibition, which would contain objects and clothing associated with Lord Nelson from his childhood in Norfolk to his death in 1805. The Ensign of Le Généreux had been made in the late eighteenth century and was an early example of tricolour. It was an important historic object which had been gifted to the City of Norwich by Captain Edward Berry and had been displayed at St Andrews Hall for 97 years. The exhibition would be the first time that it had been displayed in public for 100 years. It had been subjected to forensic testing and gunpowder dust had been identified. Other significant exhibits on display included the drape from the Nelson's funeral car; the portrait of Nelson by William Beechey which was donated to the City of Norwich, the dress coat worn by Nelson at the Battle of the Nile, a dress worn by Lady Hamilton and a brick with Nelson's initials (interesting in itself, in that it was discovered by H Rider Haggard).

When considering the forthcoming exhibitions, members welcomed the Nelson and Norfolk exhibition. Amanda Geitner referred to the Magritte: The Lost Painting exhibition in the Colman Project Space and said that tickets for a talk at 17:30 the following day had sold well. She referred to the Rembrandt: Lighting the Darkness exhibition of etchings and said that the mechanism of printing had not changed much since the fifteenth century. The John Jarrold Printing Museum had been approached for the loan of a printing machine to demonstrate the printing technique. Members asked for a detailed presentation on the exhibition at its next meeting.

During discussion members of the committee congratulated the officers for the success of the Norfolk Museums Service at securing external funding including the recent announcement of National Portfolio Organisation funding from Arts Council England covering the period 2018-22. The head of operations and learning said that the credit for this was due to Steve Miller, the assistant director, community and environmental services (culture & heritage) and a strong team of officers; and, importantly, the support of the Norfolk Contemporary Art Society, East Anglia Art Fund, The Friends of the Norwich Museums, Heritage Lottery Fund, the Freeman and other partners which strengthened the bids and enabled projects such as The Keep to be progressed. He explained that prior to this year the Arts Council had funded 16 museums and, as from this year, bands had been created widening out the criteria for funding to 66 museums. There were a number of museums across East Anglia that, unlike the Norfolk museums service (NMS), had previously not benefited for funding that were now eligible for funding under bands 2 and 3. NMS was in band 3, one of only 12 museums now in that band. He explained how the service received additional funding from Arts Council England to support regional development work across the East of England including the Share Museums East workforce development programme and support for independent museums with Accreditation.

The operations manager circulated the attendance figures for the last quarter at the meeting. He explained the importance of the "blockbuster" exhibitions, such as the Nelson and Rembrandt, in attracting visitors to Norwich Castle. Members were advised that the visitor numbers included wedding and school visitors where appropriate.

Discussion ensued on managing visitor numbers and the potential to use of Trip-advisor and social media to provide up to the minute information. A member referred to new technology which enabled supermarkets to change prices in response to demand and asked whether flexible pricing could be used to encourage visitors at quiet times or divert visitors away from Norwich Castle to the other city museums. The operations manager said that the service would need to make decisions about pricing in the long term. However it was important to ensure that admission charges were not too great as to be priced out of the market. The Freeman's gift of two weeks' of free entrance to the Norwich museums would give an opportunity to survey visitors to ascertain their motives for visiting the museums. The head of operations and learning confirmed that whilst dynamic pricing could in theory see individual ticket prices decrease or increase, there were no plans to change the overall pricing structure at present. There would be comprehensive review of pricing structure as part of the Keep Project business plan. This would look at a range of options. A member said that he would not be happy with "rationing entry by price". Members were reminded that free admission continued to be offered to key groups including Norfolk school children.

Members commented on the popularity of Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse and were advised that this was due to the new "Voices from the Workhouse" exhibition. The event there for foster carers had families had been well attended. The operations manager said that a key motivator for the purchase of museums passes was events or exhibitions. In reply to a question, he said that it was not possible to break down figures of young people attending events or exhibitions from the rest of the museum. This could only be done by monitoring visitors at the door. The head of operations and learning said that part of the Keep Project business plan would be to monitor the flow of visitors around the museum.

Angela Riley, the Keep Project manager, gave a power-point presentation to update members on the Keep Project (Norwich Castle – Gateway to Medieval England) as it moved through the development stage. The contract for the Project Management role had been awarded to Artelia UK. She explained the objectives and expected outcomes from this complex project. Members were also advised that the project was in a strong financial position with a remaining £1.2 million still to be raised. The Garfield Weston Foundation had given £500,000 which had boosted the funding. It was hoped that £50,000 of this would be through by a keep-giving campaign that would be launched in September to coincide with the European Heritage days. The committee then viewed the "fly-through" of what the project would look like when completed.

During discussion, the Keep Project manager, together with the head of operations and learning, answered members' questions on the procurement arrangements and the project team. Discussion ensued on the promotion of Norwich as a medieval city and members were advised of works including a survey that had been conducted by University of Leicester post graduate students into what the city had to offer as a medieval city and reviewing the landscaping to improve access to the museum. The working group would be looking at the outcome of this and was considering digital trails, improved signage and maps. It was intended to hold a medieval festival in either 2020 or 2021.

**RESOLVED** to:

- (1) note the report and thank the officers for their presentations;
- (2) ask the head of operations and learning to arrange for a presentation on the Rembrandt exhibition at the next meeting;
- (3) hold an informal tour for members of the committee who wish to attend in the hour before the next committee meeting, and to ask members to advise the head of operations and learning if they have any preferred areas that they would like to visit.

(Due to the length of the meeting, Councillor Ward had left the meeting at this point. Councillors Jones (B) and Hardy left the meeting during the following item.)

**4. The Friends of Norwich Museums – Update**

Ceri Lamb presented the report on the activities of the Friends of Norwich Museums (FNM). The FNM had been established in 1921 and was the second oldest independent friends group in the UK. In reply to a question, she said that the FNM obtained its funding to support the museums through its members' subscriptions. The FNM only funded projects or artefacts at the request of the curators.

**RESOLVED** to thank Ceri Lamb for the report.

**5. Norfolk Contemporary Art Society**

Brenda Ferris presented the report on the activities of the Norfolk Contemporary Art Society (NCAS). The society had celebrated its sixtieth anniversary in 2016 and had held a range of exhibitions and activities throughout the year. The society raised most of its funds through the biennial auction. The next auction would be on 24 November 2017 and members wishing to purchase good contemporary art at a reasonable price were advised to attend.

**RESOLVED** to thank Brenda Ferris for the report.

CHAIR



**Norwich Area Museums Committee**

**14:00 to 15:05**

**12 September 2017**

Present:

**City Councillors:**

Bradford  
Herries  
Jones (Tim)  
Maxwell  
Price

**County Councillors:**

Nobbs (vice chair, in the chair)  
Clipsham  
Rumsby  
Watkins

**Co-opted non-voting members:**

Brenda Ferris (Norfolk Contemporary Art Society)  
Amanda Geitner (East Anglia Arts Fund)  
Ceri Lamb (Friends of Norwich Museums)  
Councillor Hardy (South Norfolk Council)

County Councillor Buck (vice-chairman, Norfolk Joint Museums committee)  
(ex officio member)

Apologies:

City Councillor Brociek-Coulton (chair) and County Councillors Ward (other council business) and Jones (Brenda)

**1. Membership**

The committee noted that the county council had appointed Councillor Watkins to the committee and that he had replaced Councillor Butikofer.

**2. Public questions/petitions**

There were no public questions or petitions.

**3. Declarations of interest**

None.

**4. Minutes**

**RESOLVED** to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2017, subjecting to amending the list of members present by replacing "Co-opted voting" with "Co-opted non-voting" members.

## **5. Norwich Museums Briefing July to August 2017**

The head of operations and learning presented the report and answered members' questions.

Dr Francesca Vanke, keeper of art, gave an illustrated presentation on the "Rembrandt - Lightening the Darkness" exhibition (21 October to 7 January 2018). The exhibition would include Norwich Castle's collection of 93 prints and one drawing by Rembrandt and loans from British Museum, National Galleries of Scotland, National Gallery and the Royal Collection.

The committee noted the success of the family-focused day and the programme of lectures at Norwich Castle, which were part of the national Archaeology Festival. Members were pleased to note that this would be a feature on the Castle's annual events programme.

During discussion on the evaluation and impact of the free admission days from 25 July to 6 August funded by the Norwich Freeman as part of the programme of activities taking place across the city, a member asked that the information was shared with the Freeman. The publicity provided by the Freeman for the open days had been very successful with around 90 per cent of the visitors to Strangers Hall and the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell stating that they would make a return visit. There would be further analysis to see why 10 per cent would not be returning. The committee expressed its gratitude to the Freeman for the support given to the Norwich museums and appreciated that the Freeman supported the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell which promoted the city's industrial and commercial history.

Members were sad to learn of the death of Katrina Siliprandi, who had worked with the Norfolk Museum Service (NMS) for 30 years, and had left a significant legacy in the quality of the learning programme that was at the heart of the museums. This was demonstrated as the NMS learning team at Norwich Castle had yet again been awarded the Sandford Award for Heritage Education. Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse had also been awarded it and the Time and Tide Museum would be re-applying for it next year. The committee noted the learning team's work with schools, including GCSE and A'level students and Looked After children.

The committee received the news that a funding bid, expression of interest, had been submitted to Arts Council England for a grant under the Celebrating Age programme, for a project to be delivered over a three year period at the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell, in partnership with Norwich Writing Centre and Norfolk Libraries focused on older people.

The committee welcomed the award of Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Kick the Dust funding for the project, Norfolk Journeys to Norfolk Museums Service, as part of a consortium with YMCA Norfolk and Creative Collisions. The project would engage young people in a range of heritage activities to develop skills, experience and confidence. Further details would be reported to the next meeting of the committee.

Harriet Loffler, curator of modern and contemporary art, gave a power point presentation on the New Geographies for the East which would be a land mark project to nominate destinations of interest for art projects; the "We Came Here to Conquer: Eleven Artists Respond to the Print Collection at Norwich Castle" and the

“Women in the World” exhibition in the Timothy Gurney Gallery which would showcase women’s art in the Norwich Castle collection.

(Amanda Geitner left the meeting at this point.)

The operations manager circulated the attendance figures for the last quarter at the meeting. Visitor numbers at Norwich Castle in August were highest on record since 2001, and could be attributed to the success of the Nelson exhibition and the Pirates and Seafarers children’s activities. The Nelson exhibition was continuing to attract visitors this month as many people had waited for the school holidays to end. The Freeman open days had also made a dramatic impact on visitor numbers. The Heritage Open Days had also been very well attended with Norwich Castle reporting its busiest day ever on the Saturday (9 September 2017). In response to a question on the impact of such high visitor numbers, the operations manager said that there had been congestion at the café which had struggled to cope with the demand on that Saturday. He pointed out that it had also been a very wet day and the combination of free access had contributed to the high visitor numbers. An important aspect of the Keep Project would be to study the flow of visitors around the museum. There had been no negative comments on Trip Advisor, although one person had commented that Norwich Castle was “a nice place, not that old”.

Councillor Maxwell, as chair of the Mousehold Heath Conservators, said that the Conservators were interested in identifying links with the heath and Norwich Castle and could contribute to the Keep Project. Former tram lines were being marked and recorded on the heath.

The operations manager then presented the good news to members that Norfolk County Council had provided capital funding for major improvements to the external lift at the castle, alongside improvements to environmental controls within the main temporary exhibition galleries in the museum. The lift operating system needed to be replaced and should be operational by the end of March 2018. Environmental control was important and Norwich Castle had to meet standards to satisfy the rules to continue to receive exhibits on loan. This project should be completed by the end of 2019-20 when the Keep Project was also expected to open to visitors.

**RESOLVED to:**

- (1) note the report and thank the officers for their presentations;
- (2) ask the chair to write:
  - (a) a letter of condolence to the family of Katrina Siliprandi and express gratitude for her stewardship of the learning programme and that her influence will continue as a legacy into the future;
  - (b) to write to the chairman of the Freeman to pass on the committee’s vote of thanks for their generosity in supporting the Norwich museums;
- (3) note that at the next meeting there will be further reports/presentation on:

- (a) the current work of the Norwich Museums learning team with young people
- (b) the HLF Kick the Dust programme.

CHAIR