

NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2010

Present:

Norfolk Joint Museums and
Archaeology Committee
Mr B J Collins (Chairman)
Mrs H T Nelson

Norfolk County Council
Mr J Ward

Borough Council of King's Lynn and
West Norfolk
Mrs E Nockolds

Breckland District Council
Mr R G Kybird

Broadland District Council
Mr J W Bracey

North Norfolk District Council
Mr H C Cordeaux

South Norfolk District Council
Dr C Kemp

Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society
Mr R Bellinger

The Broads Authority
Dr J Johnson

Also Present:

Mrs Susan Glossop, Thetford Town Manager
Mr Terry Lamb, a local District Councillor for Thetford
Dr Richard Hoggett, Post-Excavation Manager, NAU Archaeology

1 Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 2 October 2009 were confirmed by the Advisory Committee and signed by the Chairman.

2 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Miss E J Collishaw (Norwich City Council), Mr W Fletcher (English Heritage), Mr J R Shrimplin (Great Yarmouth Borough Council) and Mr E N Stanton (Norfolk Farmers' Union, County Branch)

3 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were also no declarations of interest.

5 Chairman's Remarks – Thetford Priory

The Chairman placed on record Members' thanks to Stephen Heywood,

Conservation Officer, Heritage and Landscape, Department of Planning and Transportation, Norfolk County Council, for providing a guided tour of Thetford Priory and its gatehouse immediately prior to the meeting. Thanks were also due to District Councillor Marion Chapman-Allen, the Thetford Town Manager, the owner of the gatehouse, and those Officers of the District and County Councils who had made the arrangements for the tour and the meeting.

6 Half-Yearly Report of NAU Archaeology – The Results of the Thetford Historic Environment Survey

The annexed report by the Head of Museums and Archaeology was received.

The Advisory Committee received a report and a PowerPoint presentation from Dr Richard Hoggett, Post-Excavation Manager of NAU Archaeology, about the results of the Thetford Historic Environment Survey conducted by NAU Archaeology to whom the NLA contracted most of the work on this project.

Dr Hoggett said that the report on the project entitled ‘The Thetford Historic Environment Survey’ contained period-based summaries and archaeological character maps and assessment of the archaeological significance of entries held for Thetford in the Historic Environment Record (HER) as well as highlighting the potential for further archaeological discoveries. The resultant GIS and assessment provided information for archaeological assessments for specific development sites, master plans and strategic planning, and complemented the Thetford Historic Buildings Survey. The objectives of the Thetford Historic Environment Survey were summarised as follows:

- Period-based summaries of Thetford Archaeological Record
- Period-based archaeological character maps
- Assessment of existing designations
- Assessment of Historic Landscape Characterisation
- Assessment of Archaeological Significance
- The integration of digital data into the HER
- Web pages on the Norfolk Heritage Explorer
- Ultimately to feed into strategic planning (NLA).

The Heritage Assets in Thetford were summarised as follows:

- Palaeolithic Axes
- Mesolithic and Neolithic flint working
- Bronze age barrows
- Iron age hill fort
- Unique iron age Temple Complex
- Anglo Saxon defended town
- Viking occupation
- Late Saxon churches
- Early Norman cathedral
- Two medieval castles
- Medieval priory and other monastic houses
- Post-medieval industrial sites

- World War I and World War II military features.

The sites of archaeological significance were summarised as follows:

- International significance
 - 1 NHER (Fison Way)
- National significance - all scheduled monuments and grade I and II* listed buildings
 - 37 NHERs (18 listed buildings; 19 scheduled monuments)
- Regional/County significance – all grade II listed buildings
 - 219 NHERs (148 listed buildings; 62 monuments; 9 finds spots)
- Local significance
 - 277 NHERs (7 buildings; 94 monuments; 175 finds spots)
- Negligible significance
 - 5 NHERs
- Ungraded
 - 8 NHERs.

During discussion, it was pointed out that publicly available information about the project was available on the Norfolk Heritage Explorer website. The project covered the area of the modern parish of Thetford. The results of the project would be shared electronically with the Thetford Town Manager, and could be shared with other interested organisations on request. NLA Archaeology was examining the possibility of going out to contract for a similar project for the King's Lynn area.

The Advisory Committee noted the considerable amount of hard work that NAU Archaeology had put into making the Thetford Historic Environment Survey a success.

7 Half-Yearly Report of NAU Archaeology

The annexed report by the Manager of NAU Archaeology was received.

The Advisory Committee received a report that described the work of NAU Archaeology during the five months between September 2009 and January 2010 inclusive.

Ms Jayne Bown, Manager of NAU Archaeology, said that during the period covered by the report NAU Archaeology had provided 113 project designs and fee quotes for potential projects and undertook 69 projects (plus post-excavation stages of

ongoing projects). She said that the organisation also produced 46 different reports of which 29 were reports of Norfolk sites. These included a draft report on work undertaken prior to the redevelopment of Cinema City in Norwich that was due to be published as an article in a forthcoming issue of Norfolk Archaeology.

Ms Bown went on to give a brief summary of some of the most recent field work projects undertaken by NAU Archaeology. The Norfolk projects included work adjacent to the parish church of Burnham Overy Town; at St Nicholas' Church, East Dereham; at St Stephens Church, Norwich; land off Weybourne Road, Sheringham; at 133 High Street, Stalham, and at the site of a proposed power station to the north of Thetford. It was noted that Norfolk-based projects amounted for 86 (76%) of the 113 project designs and fee quotes for potential projects. It was also noted that from the beginning of 2010, and like last year, NAU staff were teaching the UEA Archaeological Field Methods module to a group of enthusiastic under-graduate students.

Resolved –

That the report be noted.

8 The Norfolk Historic Environment (Norfolk Landscape Archaeology) Action Plan and Service Plan 2007-12 Mid-Term Review

The annexed report by the Head of Museums and Archaeology was received.

The Advisory Committee received a report that presented a mid-term review of the work of Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA) to deliver its Action Plan and Service Plan for Norfolk's Historic Environment in 2007-12.

In reply to questions, Mr Gurney, the County Archaeologist, said that the NLA did not have the resources to reduce the backlog of unpublished excavations without the support of external partners. It was pointed out that the Brampton archive had been secured and the data within it was available to researchers. However, to complete this project to publication stage would require considerable external funding and the appointment of a project officer. The potential for working with colleagues at the UEA to make the Brampton archive and possibly other unpublished excavations into post-graduate research projects was being explored.

The Advisory Committee noted that all eight districts had been asked to enter into a Service Level Agreement for Historic Environment Services from 2010/11. Six out of the eight districts had responded favourably and the two that had not so far given their support were being reminded of the importance of doing so.

The Advisory Committee RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND –

That the Joint Museums and Archaeology Committee approve the mid-term review document subject to the inclusion of a comment about the NLA supporting the analysis and publication of unpublished excavations through external projects and partnerships.

9 Half-Yearly Report on the Work of Norfolk Landscape Archaeology

The annexed report by the Head of Museums and Archaeology was received.

Mr Gurney, the County Archaeologist, explained the work of Norfolk Landscape Archaeology during the period from September 2009 to the end of February 2010. The Advisory Committee received as part of the report a spreadsheet which showed that, in 2008/09, the NLA dealt with 867 planning applications; issued 264 briefs for archaeological projects; created 1,158 new NHER records; enhanced 5,763 existing NHER records; identified and recorded 22,008 portable antiquities and dealt with 109 cases of Treasure. Since September 2009, 519 new monument records had been created and 1,087 had been modified. 970 new event records and 849 new source records had been added to the data-base. Planning application numbers had risen in the last six months, although due to changes in consultation methods this was not represented in the NLA statistics. Planning applications were now down-loaded from all District and Borough Councils bar one, and the City, leading to an apparent drop in planning consultations. However, last year NLA issued more briefs for archaeological projects than in any other year since 1991-2. The Advisory Committee also noted that NLA received 395 Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) consultations, one of the highest numbers of any county in the country. Since the start of October 2009, 58 consultations had been received, a significant increase on the past six months. It was pointed out that Norfolk remained the busiest county in the eastern region; in the last quarter of 2009, Norfolk received double the number of consultations received by the second busiest county in the eastern region.

Mr Gurney went on to say that the new Planning Policy Statement (PPS) for the Historic Environment was expected to be published very shortly but the guidance document (by English Heritage) was unlikely to appear at the same time because it needed more work and possibly a further round of consultation before being finalised.

Mr Gurney pointed out that the on-line version of the Norfolk Historic Environment Record, the Norfolk Explorer, had recently had its 40,000th visitor since March 2007. Up to 65 people a day used the website to explore Norfolk's archaeology and historic environment. The November issue of the Norfolk Suffolk Life Magazine included a feature on the Norfolk Heritage Explorer website, and a copy of the magazine was available at the Advisory Committee for Members to inspect. English Heritage had recently selected the Norfolk Heritage Explorer website as a case study for a publication that could be viewed on-line at <http://www.helm.org.uk/>. A printed copy of this publication was available for inspection at the meeting.

Various other publications were also laid on the table for Members to inspect. These included copies of the latest in the series of Norfolk Health, Heritage and Biodiversity Walks booklets, covering walks in and around Diss and Harleston in South Norfolk. The latest portable antiquities and Treasure Annual Report (for 2007) was also laid on the table.

In reply to questions, it was pointed out that the Annual Review would be made available on the NMAS website. In addition, a new leaflet about the work of the NLA had recently been produced and while this was not available on the NMAS website a paper copy could be obtained from the NLA on request.

The Advisory Committee was pleased to note that Dr Richard Hoggett, (whom had attended the meeting to present the previous item) had recently been appointed to fill the temporary (14 months) and project-funded post of Norfolk's Coastal Heritage Project Officer. Dr Hoggett's new role would include organising and supporting a series of heritage events in 2010 and early 2011, with local coastal communities deciding for themselves the investigations that they wished to be involved with. Copies of the first North Norfolk Pathfinder newsletter were available at the Advisory Committee for Members to inspect.

Resolved –

That the report be noted.

10 Half-Yearly Report of the Archaeology Department, Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery, October 2009 to March 2010

The annexed report by the Head of Museums and Archaeology was received.

Dr John Davies, Chief Curator, explained the range of duties and activities undertaken by the Archaeology Department during the period October 2009 to March 2010. He said the Department was working towards the establishment of a new Museum Archaeology Network in the East of England, facilitated by the Renaissance SHARE scheme. The SHARE scheme was established through Renaissance East of England to secure support from the Hub Museum staff to the wider museum sector. The Archaeology Department had provided assistance to two assignments, the first at Dragon Hall in Norwich and the second at Swaffham Museum.

Members were particularly interested to hear about the phased approach to the redevelopment of Norwich Castle Keep. Dr John Davies said that work on phase 1 of the project had recently started. This had involved removing and relocating the existing prison displays from the Castle Keep main floor and clearing space for a focus on the Norman and Medieval period. There were four phases of the project and it was likely to take until sometime in 2012 before they were all complete.

Dr John Davies said that another significant development had been a project to conserve the 18th Dynasty, inscribed, mummy shroud, which had been identified as an artefact of international importance. The Advisory Committee was informed that a timetable had been agreed for this work, together with an action plan. The shroud would be with the British Museum's Organic Conservation Department between January and March 2011. Conservation would be undertaken by a textile conservator/student under the direction of the museum's textile conservator. NMAS conservation staff would be involved at key stages during the process, which would also serve to develop the team's skills. The project would be documented through a short video and set of digital images.

Dr Davies said that the NMAS was leading the Norfolk contribution to the British Museum/BBC "History of the World" project. This was a 100-part series on Radio 4, featuring objects from the British Museum collections. The Advisory Committee noted that the BBC was rolling out the project at regional level and that Dr John Davies had been appointed the lead officer for Norfolk. An initial ten Norfolk objects had been chosen from the county, coming from a range of museums. All

ten objects had a local significance and global connections.

Resolved –

That the report be noted.

11 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Resolved –

That the next meeting of the Advisory Committee be preceded by a tour of a site of archaeological interest in the South Norfolk area of the county on Tuesday 5 October 2010 and be held at a time and place to be determined after consultation with the Chairman.

The meeting concluded at 3.45pm

Chairman



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