

NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2011

Present:

Norfolk Joint Museums and
Archaeology Committee

Mrs H T Nelson
Mr B Collins (Chairman)

Norfolk County Council
Mr J Ward

Broadland District Council
Mr J W Bracey

Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological
Society
Mr R Bellinger

South Norfolk Council
Dr C Kemp

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

Great Yarmouth Borough Council
Mr J R Shrimplin

Broads Authority
Dr J S Johnson

Norfolk Farmers Union (County Branch)
Mr E N Stanton

1 Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 October 2010 were confirmed by the Advisory Committee and signed by the Chairman.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr H Cordeaux, Miss E J Collishaw, Mr W Fletcher, Mr R Kybird and Ms S Spooner.

3 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Half-Yearly Report on the Work of the Historic Environment Service (Formerly Norfolk Landscape Archaeology)

The annexed report by the Historic Environment Manager (County Archaeologist) was received.

Mr David Gurney, Historic Environment Manager (County Archaeologist) said that during the period covered by the report, Norfolk Landscape Archaeology was combined with the Heritage Team in the Heritage and Landscape Section of Environment, Transport and Development (ETD) at County Hall to form a new Historic Environment Service (HES) in ETD. He said that before the creation of the

HES (as part of ETD's strategic review) there was a change of focus with regard to the HES' future work on historic buildings. The HES would be looking to focus on the built heritage assets that were owned or managed by NCC and negotiate Service Level Agreements with District Councils for any other work on historic buildings. Mr Gurney added that the County Council had agreed at its most recent meeting to end some grant funding for work on historic buildings in order to deliver savings of £240,000 over the next three years.

Dr Johnson asked if the HES planned to support the work of historic building conservation trusts, such as the Norfolk Mills and Pumps Trust, following the decision taken by NCC. In reply, Mr Gurney said that HES was looking to have a wider role than keeping the eight windmills that were in County Council ownership in "good condition", both in 2011/12, and when the NCC grant to the Norfolk Mills and Pumps Trust ceased after 2011-12. The HES was already working closely with the Norfolk Mills and Pumps Trust, with other historic building conservation trusts, with the District Councils, with the Broads Authority and with English Heritage to make the best possible use of what limited funding was available. In order to attract new funding from external bodies, it was important for the aims and working methods of most historic building conservation trusts to undergo a radical change and for such trusts to get the local community, through the "Big Society", more involved in supporting their work. External funding could be acquired for conservation work on historic buildings, but only if it formed part of a much bigger project incorporating outreach, events, activities, volunteers and community engagement.

Mr Gurney went on to point out that a new Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS5) came into existence in March 2010. He said the new PPS5 was accompanied by an English Heritage Good Practice Guide, and represented a major overhaul of the planning system for the historic environment. In reply to questions, he said that the Planning Team in the HES was working with colleagues elsewhere in NCC, the District Councils, the Broads Authority and English Heritage to implement the new PPS5 and to ensure the continued protection and effective management of the historic environment. Mr Gurney added that a further important development was the National Heritage Protection Plan, currently in preparation by English Heritage. The NHPP would identify the threats that heritage assets faced and guide future activities.

The Advisory Committee noted that planning applications were up by more than 50%, with a slight increase in the number of briefs issued. In the year to March 2010, the HES had carried out a detailed assessment of 500 planning applications with improvements for the historic environment and issued 203 briefs for historic environment recording projects.

The Advisory Committee also noted that the Norfolk Monuments Management Project had recently won a CPRE award for its work on Kelling Heath, where Norfolk's best preserved group of Bronze Age burial mounds had been cleared for the first time in living memory. The site had been fenced so that it could be grazed and interpretation panels were being prepared.

Mr Gurney pointed out that the HES delivered Norfolk's Coastal Heritage Project on behalf of North Norfolk District Council. This project was aimed at exploring ways

of helping coastal communities plan and adapt to coastal change. To this end, the HES was working initially with the residents of Happisburgh and last week 80 people (including officers from HES) attended a conference that was the first public meeting of the Happisburgh Heritage Group. The focus of the project was now being broadened out to include other coastal communities through a wide range of activities in the field, lectures, newsletters, exhibitions and events, and work on a publication was in progress.

In reply to questions, Mr Gurney said that HES was represented on a NCC Project Working Group looking at World War II USAAF airfields and preparing a bid to the HLF for a project on World War II heritage assets. A Working Group led by officers within Community Services at NCC was also exploring the possibilities for carefully selected walks round places of WWII interest in Norfolk.

Resolved –

That the report be noted.

6 Half-Yearly Report of NAU Archaeology

Ms Jayne Bown, Manager of NAU Archaeology, said that during the period covered by the report NAU Archaeology had been invited to bid for 146 projects, 92 of which were Norfolk-based and undertook 90 projects (along with the post-excavation stages of ongoing projects). Of the 90 projects, 62 (69%) were projects in Norfolk. NAU Archaeology issued 56 fieldwork and desk based assessment reports of which 40 were reports on sites in Norfolk.

Ms Bown went on to outline some of the major Norfolk projects of the last six months, which included an excavation following the earlier evaluation of the site at St Andrew's Lane, Congham, where a new stable block and ménage were being constructed. A very large number of artefacts were present including a silver dress tag, an iron arrowhead and a silver penny of King Offa. In reply to questions, it was pointed out that this coin was probably lost during the course of trade and its presence did not suggest that King Offa had jurisdiction in the area in which it was found. A large amount of Early, Middle and Late Saxon and medieval pottery was found at the site along with a small number of prehistoric, Roman and post-medieval sherds. Also recovered were 20 Saxon or medieval knives, eight horse shoes and 328 nails, three Roman coins and one Saxon brooch.

Ms Bown said that the desk based assessment and archaeological evaluation that was undertaken at Stoke Road and The Street, Poringland in advance of an application for a proposed development for residential purposes could be followed up by a metal detecting survey of the site. During the archaeological evaluation, a small piece of wreckage from the engine of a Bolingbroke aircraft was found in one of the trenches.

Ms Bown agreed to let Mr Bracey have details about the findings of the reports concerning land to the north of Norwich (Report No. 2400a) and at 15-21 School Road, Drayton (Report No. 2301). Ms Bown said that she was willing to provide Members with details of the findings of any of the projects undertaken by NAU Archaeology that were listed in Appendices 1 and 2 to the report, on request.

Resolved –

That the report be noted.

7 Half-Yearly Report of the Archaeology Department, Norwich Museum and Art Gallery

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

Dr. John Davies, Chief Curator and Keeper of Archaeology at Norwich Museum and Art Gallery said that during the last six months the work of the Archaeology Department had focused on rationalisation, collections management, outreach activities, providing support for the wider museums community and undertaking major projects. Current proposals for NMAS included the requirement to move the Costume and Textile Collections and Services from Carrow House to the Shirehall. In order to accommodate the additional material, a substantial reorganisation of the building had been planned. Work had begun on the reorganisation and moving of Shirehall offices, collections, departmental libraries and resources. This work would continue throughout the rest of 2011. As a result of these moves, Norwich Castle Study Centre would embrace more functions and collections for public access, alongside the existing departments, which included archaeology.

In reply to questions, Dr Davies said that the Department was becoming more stringent in what it collected and disposing of material that was more relevant to other museum collections, of poor quality or of limited interest. It was, however, important for the Department to continue to acquire material that was relevant to its collections (in accordance with NMAS Collecting Policy) because otherwise important objects that were only rarely on the market could be lost to the NMAS forever.

Dr Davies went on to point out that Norwich Castle had continued to acquire important objects through the workings of the Treasure Act and from the close relationship with the county's metal detector users. The Collecting Cultures Scheme, reported at previous meetings of the Advisory Committee, was enabling the enhancement of the archaeology collections and displays. This project, worth £220,000 in total, remained a major part of the Department's work programme, through to 2013.

Dr Davies went on to say that the Norman Connections Project was proving to be a great success. This project was developing a shared approach to the conservation, interpretation and display of Norman monuments, artefacts and documents. The partners were exploring the possibilities for the creation of a Norman Heritage Tourism Trail which could span both sides of the Channel.

Dr Davies said the Egyptian Collection was now considered to be one of the most important such collections in the UK. Fay Kalloniatis had continued her work on this collection, with the ultimate aims of publishing a catalogue and of increasing awareness of the collection within the local and Egyptological community. During the last six months, the main emphasis of the project had been the study of the Ancient Egyptian shroud which dated to c.1550 BC and was inscribed with hieroglyphics of chapters from the Book of the Dead; spells designed to help the deceased on their journey to the afterlife. Over the coming months, the shroud

would be fully exposed and conserved by the British Museum Textile Conservators, with assistance from the Norwich staff. During the course of the project, up-to-date progress could be followed through the blog <http://blog.britishmuseum.org/category/conservation-2/norwich-shroud/>. It was worth noting that once the shroud had been fully restored and interpreted, study days would be held at both the British Museum (on 7 April 2011 and Norwich Castle on 24 May 2011). If any Members were interested in attending the event at the Norwich Castle then they should contact Dr John Davies at the Castle Museum to reserve a place.

Resolved –

That the report be noted.

8 Chairman's Concluding Remarks: Date and Time of Next Meeting: Item for the Next Meeting.

The Chairman placed on record the Advisory Committee's thanks to Dr John Davies, Chief Curator, and Dr Tim Pestell, Curator of Archaeology, both at the NMAS, for conducting the tour that preceded the meeting of the round tower Church of St Peter and St Paul at Borough Castle, and the adjacent Roman Saxon Shore Fort. Members were also grateful to Great Yarmouth Borough Council for their hospitality in hosting the meeting and for providing a conducted tour around the Town Hall.

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Advisory Committee should be held at the offices of North Norfolk District Council on Monday 10 October 2011 at 2pm and that the meeting should be preceded by a tour of Cromer Museum.

The Advisory Committee asked for a report to be brought to its next meeting about the planning system for the historic environment, following the publication and implementation of the new Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS5).

The meeting concluded at 3.40pm.

Chairman



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