

## **Norfolk Joint Museums Committee**

Minutes of the Meeting Held on Friday 25 April 2014  
2:00pm, Edwards Room, County Hall, Norwich

### **Present:**

#### **Norfolk County Council**

Mr A Grey  
Mr H Humphrey  
Mr J Joyce  
Mr R Parkinson-Hare  
Mr m Somerville  
Mr M Storey  
Mr J Ward (Chairman)  
Mrs M Wilkinson

#### **Norwich City Council**

Mr D Bradford  
Mrs C Brimblecombe  
Mrs S Button

#### **Broadland District Council**

Mr J W Bracey

#### **North Norfolk District Council**

Mrs L Brettle

#### **Breckland District Council**

Mr P J Duigan

#### **South Norfolk District Council**

Dr C Kemp

### **Co-opted Members (Non-Voting)**

#### **Museum Friends**

Mr J Knight

#### **1 Apologies and Substitutes**

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Mrs J Brociek-Coulton, Mrs E Nockolds and Mrs K Robinson-Payne.

#### **2 Minutes**

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 3 January 2014 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

#### **3 Declarations of Interests**

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

#### **4 Items of Urgent Business**

- 4.1 The Chairman agreed that the Joint Committee should receive the report of the Great Yarmouth Area Museums Committee of 7 March 2014 (which was laid on the table)

when receiving the reports of the other Area Committees at item 6 on the agenda.

## **5 Public Question Time**

5.1 There were no public questions.

## **6 To Receive Reports of Area Museums Committees**

### **6.1 Breckland**

The annexed report of the Breckland Area Museums Committee meeting held on 11 March 2014 was presented by Mr P Duigan.

In introducing the report, Mr Duigan reported on the development work and planning that was underway at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse following the successful Stage 1 Heritage Lottery Fund application for Gressenhall's Voices from the Workhouse project. He added that a high quality Easter themed event that was held at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse on Easter Monday had attracted 2,800 visitors, a record attendance figure for the site.

Mr Duigan went on to report that Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse had been designated as a "care farm" responsible for taking referrals of patients with mental and physical health problems from health and social care organisations. The Head of Museums said that details about this matter would be provided at a future JMC meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the report.

### **6.2 Great Yarmouth**

The annexed report of the Great Yarmouth Area Museums Committee meeting held on 7 March 2014 was presented by Mr R Parkinson-Hare.

In introducing the report, Mr Parkinson-Hare spoke about the very successful work of the Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust at St Luke's Church and at the Town Wall Towers.

The Chairman of the JMC praised the work of those people who had recently dressed in period costume to increase the awareness of the Elizabethan House Museum amongst local people and tourists in order to sustain and grow visitor numbers and effectively market the museum as a leading visitor centre. He suggested that this approach to encouraging visitors to attend a museum should be used more frequently at other NMS museums.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the report.

### **6.3 King's Lynn and West Norfolk**

The annexed report of the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Area Museums Committee meeting held on 31 March 2014 was presented by Mr H Humphrey.

In introducing the report, Mr Humphrey spoke about the success of the Heritage Lottery Fund Project entitled “Fenland Lives and Land”, a three-year collaborative project celebrating the heritage, landscape and identity of this unique and important region.

In reply to questions, it was pointed out that the Greater Fens Museums Partnership was led by the NMS and consisted of local authority and independent museums from across the Fens. The partnership included the Lynn Museum and Wisbech and Fenland Museum both of which attracted many visitors from across Norfolk and elsewhere in the region.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the report.

#### 6.4 **Norwich**

The annexed report of the Norwich Area Museums Committee meeting held on 4 March 2014 was presented by Mrs S Button.

In introducing the report, Mrs Button said that the Castle Museum and Art Gallery was continuing to generate record numbers of visitors, largely as a result of a varied and high-quality exhibition and events programme. She pointed out that “The Roman Empire: Power and People” exhibition had proved to be a particular success.

Mr Bradford stressed the importance of corporate bookings of NMS sites and asked for the Joint Committee to be kept informed about the ongoing work to develop the Castle rotunda and the major project to transform the Castle Keep experience, positioning the museum as the major heritage attraction in the region. He suggested that at some time in the future the Castle Keep should be used to host a mediaeval banquet aimed at increasing NMS publicity. In reply, it was noted that wedding licences were currently being secured for conference and banqueting events to be held at a number of NMS sites.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the report.

#### 6.5 **North Norfolk**

A verbal report of the North Norfolk Museums was given by Mrs L Brettle. She said that the targets for school visits to museums in north Norfolk had been exceeded despite the many barriers that schools faced in making a school visit. She added that contacts between with the NMS and independent museums and arts organisations in north Norfolk were being maintained and that North Norfolk District Council would be working even closer with the NMS on the promotion of forthcoming arts events in the area because from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 the NMS had taken on additional responsibility for providing strategic support for Arts and Events in Norfolk.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the verbal report.

### 7 **Norfolk Museums Service - Performance and Strategic Update Report**

7.1 The Committee received the annexed report (7) by the Head of Museums. The report

provided an update on performance against Norfolk Museums Service (NMS) service plans. The report explained progress against the agreed service plan for 2013/14 and future developments in the Service in terms of meeting budgetary pressures and in responding to external opportunities in 2014/15.

## 7.2 During the discussion the following points were raised:

- The NMS was on target to deliver its major programmes and its new income generation targets.
- For the period 1st April 2013 to 1st April 2014 there were approximately 380,000 visitors to NMS museums, the best result for at least 10 years. This represented more than a 7% increase in attendances and was largely attributed to the Roman Empire exhibition at Norwich Castle generating record visitor figures for the Service's largest site. The 'Wonder of Birds' exhibition was due to open at Norwich Castle and Art Gallery on 24th May 2014 and was expected to go a long way in supporting attendance figures going forward.
- It was pointed out that school visits had also shown a 7% increase which was equally spread across all parts of the NMS.
- Time and Tide had been nominated for two major awards at the national Museums & Heritage Awards for the exhibition 'Frayed: Textiles on the Edge' and the Arts Council funded 'Stories from the Sea' schools programme. The Museum has also had its judging visit for its Sandford Award for Excellence in Education – the result of which will be known in the summer.
- Some Members of the Committee had provided helpful advice to the NMS on the setting up of the new Development Foundation which was proving to be a useful vehicle for maximising income and securing Gift Aid on museum membership.
- Members placed on record their congratulations to the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts that had been shortlisted for the Art Fund Museum of the year award; the outcome of the application was expected in July 2014. The NMS had close links with the Sainsbury Centre as it did with many other independent museums in Norfolk. In reply to questions it was pointed out that the Service also had close links with the Mid Norfolk Railway which had been recently won a prestigious award.
- The NMS had moved to a Cultural Exemption model for VAT which meant that the Service would be able to reclaim VAT on admissions in a similar way to many other cultural organisations. The additional income generated by this strategic development would go some way to helping the Service meet its budgetary commitments for 2014/15 and subsequent years.
- The Head of Museums informed the Joint Committee (at the end of the meeting and included in the minutes at this point in the proceedings for ease of reference) that the Service would be undertaking a new promotion in partnership with the Children's University. This national scheme provided children with free access to cultural activities including museums. It was expected that this scheme would enable more

Norfolk children to access Norfolk Museums Service sites and activities all year round, helping to address Norfolk County Council's as well as the City and District Councils broader goals around the development and education of young people in the county.

7.3 The Committee **RESOLVED** to note:

1. Progress with performance against 2013/14 service plans;
2. Future strategic developments for the NMS including the provision of strategic support for Arts and Events in Norfolk from 1 April 2014; the Service's continued successful delivery of its Arts Council England Major Partner Museum programme and the submission of an application for the continuation of funding for 2015-18; creation of the Norfolk Museums Development Foundation; on-going delivery of the Museum's commercial strategy; adoption of the new 5 Year Strategy.

## **8 Norfolk Museums Service – Integrated Finance and Risk Monitoring Report for 2013/14**

8.1 The annexed report (8) by the Head of Museums and Archaeology was received. The report provided an update on performance against Norfolk Museums Service (NMS) budget out-turns based on information at 28<sup>th</sup> February 2014.

8.2 The Joint Committee noted that the NMS Risk Register had been reviewed and updated and was included within the main body of the report. The Joint Committee also noted that progress with NMS Revenue budgets and Reserves and Provisions indicated that the Service should achieve a break-even position at the year end.

8.3 The Joint Committee **RESOLVED** to note:

1. Progress with performance and 2013/14 service plans
2. Progress with the revenue budget, capital programme and reserves and provisions out-turn positions for 2013/14
3. Progress with the management of risk within the NMS.

## **9 NMS Collections Rationalisation Programme 2010-14**

9.1 The annexed report (9) by the Head of Museums and Archaeology was received.

9.2 The Joint Committee **RESOLVED**:

To approve the rationalisation of the items listed in Annex 2 of the report. It was noted that these items had been considered and approved for rationalisation by the Norwich Area Museums Committee on 4 March 2014.

## **10 Five Year Strategy 2014-2018**

10.1 The annexed report (10) by the Head of Museums and Archaeology was received and noted.

10.2 Members drew particular attention to the proposed NMS projects that were aimed at displaying the West Runton Mammoth and completing the National Fossil Database, a

collaborative project with the British Museum. It was pointed out that when these projects were taken together with the project for the development of the Castle Keep they represented the major projects for the NMS during the five year period 2014-18.

- 10.3 Members' attention was also drawn to the leadership role which the NMS provided to other museums across Norfolk and the East of England, along with support to other cultural, educational and heritage organisations.

On behalf of all Members of the Joint Committee, the Chairman congratulated the NMS for the hard work that they had been put in the preparation of the five year strategy.

- 10.4 The Joint Committee **RESOLVED**:

To note the five year strategy and the commitments to continuous improvements in the NMS through a programme of ambitious capital and major development projects.

- 11 **Presentations:**

**1. Stories from the Sea, Time and Tide Museum, Great Yarmouth - Presentation by John Simpson-Wedge**

**2. Collections online - the new Norfolk Museums Service collections website - Presentation by Jamie Everitt**

- 11.1 The Joint Committee received two detailed presentations.

It was noted that details about the presentation concerning new Norfolk Museums Service collections website could be found at [www.norfolkmuseumscollections.org](http://www.norfolkmuseumscollections.org) .

It was pointed out that the presentation about Stories from the Sea at Time and Tide Museum, Great Yarmouth was part of the ACE Museums and Schools programme. Working with Royal Museums Greenwich as one of ten national partnerships this project ran from September 2012 – March 2015. The aim of the project was to support attainment in literacy by inspiring children to explore their local and national maritime past through world-class museum collections, intriguing stories and unforgettable characters.

- 11.2 The Joint Committee **RESOLVED** to note the presentations.

The meeting concluded at 3.45pm.

**CHAIRMAN**



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