

NORFOLK JOINT MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 22 July 2022 at 2.00pm at Norfolk County Council

Present:

Norfolk County Council

Cllr J James
Cllr K Mason Billig
Cllr E Maxfield
Cllr R Savage
Cllr J Ward (elected Chair)

Breckland District Council

Cllr R Kybird

Norwich City council

Cllr J Huntley
Cllr C Kidman
Cllr B Price

Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk

Cllr E Nockolds

North Norfolk District Council

Cllr V Gay

1 Election of Chair

1.1 RESOLVED

That Cllr J Ward be elected Chair of the Joint Committee for the ensuing year.

(Mr J Ward in the Chair)

2 Election of Vice-Chair

2.1 RESOLVED

That Cllr R Kybird be elected Vice-Chair of the Joint Committee for the ensuing year.

3 Apologies for Absence

3.1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllr J Brociek-Coulton, Mrs F Devonshire Cllr B Duffin, Cllr J Easter, Cllr G Freeman, Cllr S Penfold, Cllr D King, Mr D Keen, Cllr K Vincent and Mr L Wiseman.

3.2 Apologies for absence were also received from Mr S Miller, Director of Culture and Heritage (with Dr R Hanley, Assistant Head of Norfolk Museums Service attending the meeting in his place).

4. Minutes

4.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 1 April 2022 were confirmed by the Joint Committee and signed by the Chair.

5 Declarations of Interest

5.1 There were no declarations of interest.

6 Matters of Urgent Business

6.1 There were no matters of urgent business.

7 Breckland Area Museums Committee

7.1 The annexed minutes of the Breckland Area Museums Committee meeting held on 20 June 2022 were received and noted.

7.2 In introducing the minutes Cllr R Kybird spoke about the proposed building works at the former King's Head public house, a listed building next door to the Ancient House Museum at Thetford, and the issues which he had taken up with Breckland District Council to prevent these works from having a disruptive impact on the museum.

7.3 Cllr R Kybird spoke about how Thetford Museum had marked the 150th anniversary of the birth of Princess Catherine Duleep Singh with an exhibition that featured items on loan and a newly commissioned portrait of the Princess. He said that exhibition had now been replaced by the Vikings, History on your Doorstep Exhibition which explored the history of the Vikings in Thetford and the surrounding area and the impact of their presence and culture. This latest exhibition was being delivered as part of the Brecks Fen Edge and Rivers Landscape Partnership Scheme's 'Celebrating River Heritage' Project and was linked to the 'River Raiders' research project being delivered by the Breckland Society. It was made possible with funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund. The Chair of the Joint Committee said that he had attended an official opening of the exhibition which included numerous interesting local artifacts and recommended that Members should visit it if they were able to do so.

7.4 Cllr R Kybird also spoke about the wide range of events and activities at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse which included special event days, Norfolk school holiday activities, ticketed events and Kick the Dust: Norfolk project activities.

8 Norwich Area Committee

8.1 Cllr J. Huntley presented the annexed minutes of the Norwich Area Museums Committee meeting held on 7 June 2022 which were noted.

8.1 Cllr J. Huntley said that the Area Committee had received a progress report on the Kick the Dust Project and the Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England Project and had discussed the works to resolve the infestation of dry rot in the Shirehall Chambers which was expected to be completed over the next 12 months.

9 King's Lynn and West Norfolk Area Committee

9.1 Cllr E Nockolds presented the annexed minutes of the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Area Museums Committee meeting held on 13 June 2022 which were noted.

9.2 Cllr E Nockolds gave an overview of NMS activities in the King's Lynn and West Norfolk area including work as part of the Kick the Dust project. She drew the Joint

Committee's attention to a new exhibition that had opened at Lynn Museum on 25 June 2022 at which the Turner oil painting Walton Bridges, the first Turner oil painting to be publicly exhibited in King's Lynn, took centre stage. The exhibition focused on this great master's achievements as a painter of rivers and seascapes.

9.3 Cllr E Nockolds informed the Committee that unfortunately it had not been possible to recruit new officers to the Committee of the Friends of King's Lynn Museums and that therefore, following consultation with the membership, the current Friends Committee had decided to dissolve the charity. The Assistant Head of Museums added that the Curator was examining, in consultation with former members of the charity, how any residual funds could be used for the benefit of King's Lynn museums.

9.4 The Chair of the Joint Committee said that he remained hopeful that it would be possible to have in place at some time in the future a new friends organisation for King's Lynn museums.

10 Norfolk Museums Service - Finance Monitoring Report for 2022/23

10.1 The annexed report (10) by the Director of Culture and Heritage was received.

10.2 The Joint Committee received a report that covered the Norfolk Museums Service (NMS) forecast budget out-turn for 2022/23 and details about the latest monitoring position of the revenue budget, capital programme, reserves and provisions.

10.3 The Joint Committee discussed the following issues with Dr Robin Hanley, the Assistant Head of Museums:

- All NMS sites were currently open to the public and the Service was projected to meet its revenue targets. The Service was, however, currently operating at approximately 75% of pre-pandemic visitor numbers and experiencing a loss of income from admissions and commercial activity.
- NMS budgetary pressures were being managed by the County Council at CES departmental level.
- The detailed budget position for 2022/23 was as set out in the table at paragraph 1.1.5 of the report.
- The take up of museum passes had remained at a consistent level throughout the pandemic despite an initial drop. The new NMS marketing manager had instigated a new marketing campaign aimed at rebuilding and increasing the number of museum pass holders. There were further opportunities to develop the museum pass offer through increased use of incentives available exclusively to pass holders which helped with membership retention and recruitment.
- School visits had also held up very well throughout the pandemic. As soon as they were legally able to do so, many schools had returned to requesting physical museum visits which showed the high educational value that they placed on the work of the NMS learning team.
- It was noted that there were new opportunities for more joint working with partner organisations throughout the county (such as with English Heritage on visits to Grimes Graves in the Thetford area which was cited as one such example that the NMS would follow up on after this meeting).
- It was pointed out that NMS had taken steps to improve energy efficiency and reduce its carbon footprint throughout all its museum sites. This was being

done through such measures as fitting LED lighting and new forms of roof insulation whilst at the same time remaining mindful of the many restrictions that were placed on historic buildings. This work was being achieved through external funding applications where possible and through making use of the corporate initiatives that were available to the NMS, including partnership projects with the Council's environment team. NMS was also making full use of the new Environment Hub based at Gressenhall and promoting environmental issues through its work with schools and community groups

- The Joint Committee noted suggestions from Cllr Price that Members should be provided with an opportunity to view an audit report on energy efficiency measures within the NMS and that the Joint Committee should receive an annual report on progress to achieve carbon neutrality across the Service. He also suggested that achieving net zero by 2030 should be added to the risk register.
- The table at paragraph 1.2.3 of the report set out the capital building programme for 2022/23.
- The position regarding reserves and provisions was as set out in paragraph 1.3 of the report.

10.4 The Joint Committee resolved:

To note the latest monitoring position of the revenue budget, capital programme, reserves and provisions and forecast out-turn for 2022/23.

11 Norfolk Museums Service - Risk Management Report

11.1 The annexed report (11) by the Director of Culture and Heritage was received.

11.2 The Joint Committee received a report that provided Members with the latest Norfolk Museums Service Risk Register as at July 2022. The Norfolk Museums Service risk register was last reported to the Joint Museums Committee in April 2022.

11.3 The Assistant Head of Museums said that there were no considerable changes to existing risks in the risk register since this matter was last reported to the Committee.

11.4 The Committee's attention was drawn to the following issues:

- There was a new risk pertaining to future NPO funding from the Arts Council England (ACE), which if not agreed, would have major implications for the delivery of museum services and projects. This was a short-term risk that needed to be accounted for until the decision for future funding for the Norfolk Museums Service was made by ACE which should be known by the end of October 2022.
- For risk RM14381 - Failure to successfully deliver the Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England Project within agreed budget, and to agreed timescales, the target date had been maintained as September 2022. This would be further reviewed and amended accordingly in September to roll on a six-monthly review cycle until the end of the project.
- NMS had responded to the new ACE 10-year strategy by demonstrating how it could meet their targets which were fully aligned with the NMS five-year strategic framework. NMS had a strong track record of working with ACE.
- Officers remained confident that they would be able to manage the impact of

rising construction costs for the Norwich Castle Gateway to Medieval England project. This work was being overseen by a project board which included the Chair of the Joint Committee. The rolling risk would be reassessed in September 2022 and continue to be reviewed on a 6-month basis thereafter.

- Management of the NMS risk register complied with the way in which the risk register was managed for other services across the County Council.

11.5 The Joint Committee resolved:

To agree the active and dormant risks as per appendices A and B of the report, noting the new risk RM14499-Future Arts Council England Funding.

12 Norfolk Museums Service – Performance & Strategic Update Report

12.1 The annexed report (12) by the Director of Culture and Heritage was received.

12.2 The Joint Committee received a report that provided progress with performance of Norfolk Museums Service over the current financial year 2022/23 including the Service's award-winning learning programmes and the Service's work with groups including Looked After Children, carers and foster families. The report also provided an update on all major projects, including the National Lottery Heritage Fund supported Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England project and youth development programme, Kick the Dust Norfolk.

12.3 In response to Members questions, the following points were discussed and noted:

- From September 2022 onwards, Breckland District Council would again be accepting applications for funding administered by the Norfolk Community Foundation. If NMS was able to make a successful funding application, then this would help with other NMS partnership funding applications.
- The structural engineers for the Norwich Castle Gateway to Medieval England project had now taken the necessary steps to support the glass roof at the Castle Museum entrance while preserving the impact this work had on the historic flint fabric of the building. A way forward for this work was agreed with the City Council and others including Historic England.
- The changing place at the Castle Museum was compliant with national standards and would help make this new visitor experience accessible to everyone.
- The Deep History Coast project continued as a joint project with North Norfolk District Council. Plans for a major academic event associated with the project (for which the impact of Covid-19 had necessitated a review of existing plans) were being progressed with North Norfolk District Council.
- Members spoke about the retro games exhibition at Time & Tide Museum from 9 July 2022 - 20 March 2023 which charted the rise of computer gaming through the boom of the 1980s to the present day. Starting with the early days of the '70s games arcades – like those on Great Yarmouth seafront – visitors were able to see key pieces of vintage hardware in retro room settings and have the chance to play games using vintage and contemporary technology for an immersive experience.
- Members heard about how NMS continued to have a strong leadership role for the wider museums sector across the East of England through its work with SHARE Museums East which had sought the support of the Joint Museums

Committee for an application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a project to support the development of the region's museum's environmental sustainability.

12.4 The Joint Committee resolved:

- 1. To note the update on the 2022/23 position to date.**
- 2. To note progress regarding development of the Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England project.**
- 3. To note progress in terms of our key Arts Council England and National Lottery Heritage Fund programmes for 2022/23 and the Service's planning relating to its future Arts Council England funding.**
- 4. For the Joint Museums Committee to give its support for the submission of an Expression of Interest (EOI) to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) by Thetford Town Council for a Heritage Masterplan for Thetford, with NMS listed as a partner for a future funding application.**
- 5. For the Joint Museums Committee to give its support for NMS to put forward a project enquiry form to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) to explore funding opportunities to increase the Duleep Singh interpretation at Ancient House Museum.**
- 6. For the Joint Museums Committee to give its support for an application by SHARE Museums East to apply to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for an additional funded programme of training and development support to East of England museums.**
- 7. To note the submission of an Expression of Interest (EOI) to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) to develop an application for a capital investment in Time and Tide Museum, Great Yarmouth.**
- 8. That because it was unfeasible for the County Council (the NMS governing body) to provide Arts Council England with a monthly cash flow statement for NMS's National Portfolio Organisation grant for 2018-23 and for NMS' Subject Specialist Organisation grant for Museum Development for 2018-24, the Joint Committee ask ACE to waive this payment requirement on the understanding that the County Council will commit to provide ACE with an assurance to underwrite any cash shortfalls across the life of the funding agreements.**

13 To receive an update Presentation Regarding the Kick the Dust Project

- 13.1** The Chair introduced Christine Marsden, Project Coordinator for the Kick the Dust Project (funded through the National Lottery Heritage Fund) that had continued to engage with young people throughout the COVID-19 period and thereafter. The presentation (which could be found on the Committee pages website) highlighted the work of the Kick the Dust team in terms of how it had adapted its approach to accommodate activity to continue to support existing groups across Norfolk.

13.2 The Joint Committee resolved:

- 1. To thank Christine Marsden, Project Coordinator for the Kick the Dust Project, for an interesting presentation.**
- 2. Look forward to receiving further update reports about this important project at future meetings.**

The meeting concluded at 4 pm.

Chair

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