

NORFOLK JOINT MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 29 October at 2.00pm at Norfolk County Council

Present:

Norfolk County Council

Cllr Barry Duffin
Cllr Jane James
Cllr E Maxfield
Cllr K Mason Billig
Cllr R Savage
Cllr K Vincent
Cllr J Ward (Chair)

Norwich City Council

Cllr J Huntley

Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk

Cllr E Nockolds

North Norfolk District Council

Cllr V Gay

Breckland District Council

Cllr R Kybird

Co-opted Member (Non-Voting)

Museum Friends

Felicity Devonshire

1 Apologies for Absence

- 1.1** Apologies for absence were received from, Cllr J Brociek-Coulton, Cllr K Mason Billig, Cllr S Penfold, Cllr David King, Cllr Rachel Everett, Cllr M Schmierer, Cllr G Freeman, Mr L Wiseman and Mr D Keen.

2. Minutes

- 2.1** The minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 July 2021 were confirmed by the Joint Committee and signed by the Chairman.

3 Declarations of Interest

- 3.1** There were no declarations of interest.

4 Matters of Urgent Business

- 4.1** There were no matters of urgent business.

5 Breckland Area Museums Committee

- 5.1** Cllr Robert Kybird presented the annexed minutes of the Breckland Area Museums Committee meeting held on 14 September 2021 which were noted.
- 5.2** In introducing the minutes of the Area Committee Cllr Kybird referred to the following:
- Feasibility work was underway to create new displays that made more of the

unusual connections at the Ancient House Museum with the Maharajah Duleep Singh and his family, especially his son Prince Frederick Duleep Singh.

- Today was the official launch date for an exhibition at the Ancient House that featured the life of Princess Catherine Duleep Singh.
- The Ancient House continued to host a paid traineeship, provided through the NMS Teaching Museum programme. The current trainee Sami Yusuf had recently succeeded in securing a position in Norfolk Museums Service in the development office.
- The Thetford Treasure Exhibition at Ancient House Museum ran until 29 August 2022 and included important objects on loan from the British Museum.
- Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse Museum was able to fully reopen on 17 May 2021 with most indoor spaces now available to visitors.
- Digital activity had played a very important part at Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse Museum during the pandemic. NMS staff had developed a broad range of digital resources to support audiences, including resources for children and families.
- Digital activity as part of the *Kick the Dust: Norfolk Project* (which was an item on the agenda for this meeting of the Joint Committee) had also continued to engage with young people throughout the Covid-19 lockdown period.

- 5.3** The Chair said that he was pleased to see the resumption of major outdoor Museum events such as Apple Day at Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse Museum.

6 Norwich Area Committee

- 6.1** Cllr J. Huntley presented the annexed minutes of the Norwich Area Museums Committee meeting held on 7 September 2021 which were noted.

- 6.2** Cllr J. Huntley said that the Area Committee had received updates on the work of the Norwich Learning Team, the reopening of Norwich museums, digital activity, *Kick the Dust* and the work of voluntary organisations (including a speech about the Friends of the Norwich Museums which was in its centenary year). While many Covid secure measures remained in place to protect staff and visitors, all the Norwich museums were now open to the public.

7 Norfolk Museums Service - Finance Monitoring Report for 2021/22

- 7.1** The annexed report (7) by the Director of Culture & Heritage was received.

- 7.2** The Joint Committee received a report that covered the Norfolk Museums Service (NMS) forecast budget out-turn for 2021/22 and details about the latest monitoring position of the revenue budget, capital programme, reserves and provisions.

- 7.3** Steve Miller, Director of Culture & Heritage, drew the Committee's attention to the following main issues for consideration by this Committee:

- Covid-19 had made for significant budget pressures in relation to the revenue budget situation for 2021/22 and particularly a loss of income from admissions and commercial activity.
- The detailed budget position for 2021/22 was as set out in the table at paragraph 1.1.2 of the report and showed a steadily improving Covid-19 situation.

- All NMS sites were currently open to the public but were operating at reduced capacity due to Covid-19.
- NMS budgetary pressures were managed by the County Council at CES departmental level.
- NMS had received vital financial support from MHCLG through the CES allocation of Government income support funds. A grant from the DCMS Cultural Recovery Fund had also helped NMS to continue to provide a county-wide service and support critical projects over the short-medium term.
- The table at paragraph 1.2 of the report set out the capital building programme for 2021/22.
- The position regarding reserves and provisions was as set out in paragraph 1.3 of the report.

7.4 In reply to questions, Dr Robin Hanley, the Assistant Head of Museums, said that the NMS was working 7 days a week in partnership with the Registrar Service to deal with the substantial backlog of weddings at Norwich Castle Museum caused by the pandemic. The NMS was on target to meet its income targets from weddings for 2021/22, however, Covid -19 related restrictions meant it was not currently possible to meet the demand for weddings at museum sites elsewhere.

7.5 The Joint Committee resolved:

To note the latest monitoring position of the revenue budget, capital programme, reserves and provisions and forecast out-turn for 2021/22.

8 Norfolk Museums Service - Risk Management Report

8.1 The annexed report (8) by the Director of Culture & Heritage was received.

8.2 The Joint Committee received a report that provided Members with the latest Norfolk Museums Service Risk Register for October 2021. The Norfolk Museums Service risk register was last reported to the Joint Museums Committee in July 2021.

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

- There were no material changes to the risk register since this matter was last reported to the Committee.
- Emergency planning remained in place to deal with the possibility of a significant flooding event at any of the Museum sites. While this risk was currently rated green it remained on the register because a residual low-level flooding risk would always remain in terms of Elizabethan House at Great Yarmouth and the Museum Stores at King's Lynn.

8.4 In reply to questions, Dr Robin Hanley, the Assistant Head of Museums, said that the Tollhouse Museum at Great Yarmouth (which was depended on the use of a shared toilet facility at Great Yarmouth Library) had reopened to the public in time for school half term and would remain open for upcoming school visits.

8.6 The Joint Committee resolved:

To agree the active and dormant risks as per appendices A and B of the report, noting latest updates associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

9 Norfolk Museums Service – Performance & Strategic Update Report

9.1 The annexed report (9) by the Director of Culture and Heritage was received.

9.2 The Joint Committee received a report that provided progress with performance of Norfolk Museums Service over the current financial year 2021/22 including the Service's award-winning learning programmes and the Service's work with groups including Looked After Children, carers and foster families and vulnerable older residents across the County. The report also provided an update on all major projects, including the Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England project and the National Lottery Heritage Fund supported youth development programme, Kick the Dust Norfolk.

9.3 The following points were discussed and noted:

- All museum sites had reopened and the Service continued to deliver its projects and programmes with many Covid-19 related restrictions still in place.
- Overall, 61,232 visits were made across all NMS museums up to 31 August 2021, with timed visitor tickets and capped numbers used to maintain social distancing for a significant part of the season.
- Whilst physical school visits for the first five months of the year were lower than usual due to the Covid-19 restrictions (937 visits up to 31 August 2021), the Museums Learning Team had continued to be very busy in terms of online provision and had developed a strong 'hybrid model', blending physical visits with high-quality digital resources for pre- and post-visit. 1,634 virtual visits were delivered up to 31 August 2021, giving a total of 2,571 school visits for the year to date.
- In total, Norfolk Museums Service now had a combined 133,369 followers across its four key social media platforms representing a 2% increase since the previous report to the Committee in July 2021.
- The Joint Committee's attention was drawn to the links within the report to the YouTube highlights on the Norwich Castle channel and on the NMS channel, the Blog Highlights, NMS-wide social media campaigns and social media highlights from NMS museums that covered a diverse range of subjects.
- The Service's digital output had benefitted hugely from the outgoing Museum Trainees' creative ideas and technical know-how. Most of the outgoing cohort had moved on to new and exciting posts within the sector or had found new jobs within NMS which meant that they would be staying with the Service for some time yet.
- The Teaching Museum's newest recruits had been welcomed to the Service and it was hoped to be able to introduce them to Members of the Joint Committee at a meeting in the new year.
- NMS continued to work closely with Broadland and with South Norfolk to support a wide range of new work.
- The NMS was working with partners in the New Anglia Culture Board on a range of initiatives, including the Cultural Tourism project, supported by Arts Council England and the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership. Details about a new collaborative marketing project, *Head East*, could be found at <https://www.visiteastofengland.com/head-east>
- Alongside the major exhibition *A Passion For Landscape: Rediscovering John Crome* which ran at Norwich Castle until 5 September 2021, sponsored by the

Friends of the Norwich Museums and also supported by East Anglia Art Fund and Arts Council England, the NMS social media channels shared images, facts and stories about the exhibition. A filmed tour of the exhibition with Exhibition Curator Dr.Giorgia Bottinelli went live on YouTube at the end of the summer.

- The Assistant Head of Museums gave an update on the work of the Norwich Castle Project Board which had received a progress report on the schedule of works for the *Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England Project* including updates on construction work, and the development of the British Museum Partnership Gallery of the Medieval Period. Details regarding the construction work and interpretation work were as set out in the periodic report and were regularly updated on the project website. Members would be provided with an opportunity to visit the site as soon as that could be facilitated in accordance with Covid-19 protocols.
- In reply to questions, it was pointed out that the findings from archaeological excavations in advance of piling work for the project appeared regularly in articles in the local media. The overall results on the archaeological findings would be published by Oxford Archaeology following the completion of the project.
- The Chair drew the Committee's attention to the work on the Friends of the Norwich Museums' tapestry that was produced by many dedicated volunteers from across the county.
- The Chair also drew attention to the small, temporary café that was open at the Castle Museum and to the Castle Museum shop which had been stocked with new items for sale in the lead up to Christmas.
- The Committee was reminded that NMS was successful in its application to be included in the Arts Council England's National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) family for the period 2018-22. The Service was in receipt of a grant of c.£1.3m per annum from Arts Council England to provide professional support, advice and guidance to museums for the four-year period 2018-22. The programme of support was delivered by SHARE Museums East. An extension of the NPO programme had been agreed until 2023.

9.4 The Joint Committee resolved:

- 1. To note progress on the 2021/22 position in light of the continued impact of Covid-19.**
- 2. To note progress regarding development of the Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England project.**
- 3. To note progress in terms of key Arts Council England and National Lottery Heritage Fund programmes for 2021/22.**

10 To receive a presentation from the Friends of the Norwich Museums as they celebrate their centenary year in 2021.

10.1 The Chair introduced Charles Bingham-Newland, Chairman of the Friends of the Norwich Museums, and Francesca Makins, Chairman of the Friends of the Norwich Museums 100 committee, and former Chairman of the Friends, and welcomed them to the meeting.

10.2 Charles Bingham-Newland and Francesca Makins gave a joint speech, which provided a brief synopsis of the first 100 years of the Friends of the Norwich

Museums which can be found on the Committee pages website.

10.3 The Joint Committee resolved:

- 1. To thank Charles Bingham-Newland and Francesca Makins for their interesting and informative talk;**
- 2. To record the gratitude of the Joint Committee for the sustained and valuable contribution that the Friends have made to the cultural life of the city and the wider county;**
- 3. To record the gratitude for the work that the Friends do for the Norfolk Museums Service and the people of Norwich and Norfolk.**

11 To receive an update presentation regarding the Kick the Dust Project

11.1 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. 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 since the start of lockdown in March 2020 to continue to support existing groups across Norfolk

11.2 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 in the new year.**

The meeting concluded at 4 pm.

Chair

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