

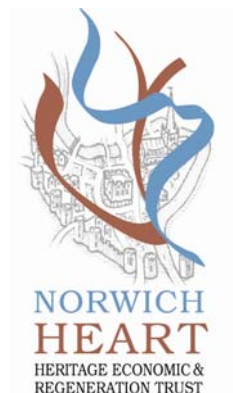
# **NORWICH AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE**

**16 June 2008    Item 13**

## **THE BRIDEWELL PROJECT Public Consultation Programme**

### **Focus Group Research Consultation Interim Report March 2008**

**Dr Sheila Watson, University of Leicester  
Rachel Kirk, Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service**



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### **Public Consultation Programme**

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**Rachel Kirk, Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service**

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## INTRODUCTION

- **Project Overview**

The Bridewell was set up as a museum of trade and industry in 1925. The building has been many things during its long life, a medieval merchant's house, a prison for women and beggars, and also a factory. It is now home to a large collection of historic objects and machinery which reveal how Norwich people earned their living. The museum is open April to November and currently attracts in the region of 6,500 visitors per year including school groups.

The building is currently physically inaccessible and is in need of some repair and updating. Its displays whilst still popular with many visitors, have remained substantially unchanged for a number of years and would benefit from a new approach and contemporary interpretation methods. Interpretation is predominantly from the point of view of the object or a particular trade or industry rather than from the perspective of people and their stories, or from the wider perspective of Norwich's story, both of which would enable the inclusion of a wider range of social history collections, .e.g. domestic collections and costume and textiles.

In order to develop a vision for The Bridewell and explore and test ways of building audience numbers and developing new audiences, Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service's Renaissance in the Regions funding has been used since 2005 to create a Community History Curator post to consult with stakeholders, build partnerships, and develop and evaluate modest displays and interpretation improvements and to generate new activities, events and projects for museum visitors and outreach groups. Part of this work also included the commissioning of an access audit followed by a feasibility study to provide access into and around the museum through the introduction of a new entrance, lifts, level access around the museum and accessible toilets.

A capital bid for the access related work was submitted to and approved by Norfolk County Council in 2007, providing the necessary match funding to apply for a modest Heritage Lottery Fund bid to improve and refurbish the building and visitor facilities and present and interpret displays.

Audience numbers have steadily increased since the commencement of the Renaissance funded project from 3889 in 04/05 to 6557 in 07/2008 year to date, supporting proposals to redevelop the museum which includes a strong community history focus.

- **A Story of Norwich**

Norwich's heritage offer does not include a museum dedicated to the history of Norwich. Norwich Castle has a Norman Keep and is home to some of the most outstanding collections of fine art, archaeology and natural history. The Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum tells about the everyday lives of soldiers and their families. Strangers' Hall offers a historic house experience with period room settings and The Bridewell focuses on Norwich people and how they earned their living. All four museums contain collections and exhibitions relating to the history of Norwich but none tell its full story. Similarly, the other heritage attractions and buildings in Norwich present interpretive

material about their own particular building or story but none provide the whole Norwich picture.

Time and Tide, the Museum of Great Yarmouth Life, which tells the story of that town by focussing on key stories within a general historical overview, has been hugely popular with local people and many Norwich people wrote to the press saying that something like this was needed in Norwich.

The Bridewell contains the highest number of Norwich-related collections and comes closest to telling the Norwich Story. The demonstrable success of recent improvements focusing on community history displays and activities, together with the opportunity to use funds available for increasing building access to match fund display improvements, provide an ideal opportunity to explore the proposal to tell the Story of Norwich at The Bridewell.

- **The Bigger Picture**

Norwich has a large number of museums, heritage attractions and historic buildings. If the redevelopment of The Bridewell is to succeed we need to understand Norwich's heritage offer. The Bridewell needs to be positioned so that it reinforces and supports the wider heritage offer as well as delivering its own unique visitor experience.

- **Why Consult?**

In order to attract visitors it is essential to find out what our target audiences want. It is also necessary to demonstrate to external funding bodies that there is a demonstrable public need or desire for a project.

Public consultation has been used to great success by Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service and other museum and heritage attractions. An example is Great Yarmouth, where focus group research and evaluation was used cumulatively over a number of museum development projects culminating in Time and Tide, Museum of Great Yarmouth Life. Visitor numbers to Time and Tide have far exceeded target numbers and the Museum has received much acclaim. The Museum's name, every display theme, every display design and every interpretation method were developed out of community consultation, and evaluation thus far has indicated that consultation findings have been successfully translated and delivered and that the museum is helping to change people's perceptions of Great Yarmouth. Visitors from a diverse target audience and across the socio-economic spectrum have been unanimous in praising the Museum. Furthermore, everybody appears to like the same things, suggesting that the Museum has achieved social inclusion without excluding the traditional museum visitor.

- **Why Focus Groups?**

Focus Group research is a method of qualitative research which asks questions such as 'What', 'Why', 'How' rather than quantitative questions such as 'How many'. It involves small samples of people who are not necessarily representative of large populations, but participants can be recruited to represent particular target groups, e.g. families with school age children living in a particular area who regularly visit museums.

The technique involves presenting groups with stimulus material and focusing participants by using open questions to share their opinions, feelings and experience, rather than a simple question-and-answer format focusing on abstract ideas. The method

allows access to the ways in which people express themselves, provides opportunities for participants to explore subjects and to raise issues which have not been considered. It's possible that the results may not be liked by staff and that the museum's ideas may need to be adapted or discarded. The focus group method empowers and gives ownership of redisplay projects to communities in a way which is difficult to achieve by any other method.

Focus group work rarely gives exact answers but provides a guide as to the way to go forward. Findings are not always clear and are sometimes contradictory, particularly when a variety of target groups are involved. The findings rely on the interpretation of the group leader and the person pulling together a report. Each focus group involves a group moderator and an observer. The sessions are recorded and transcribed by the moderator and further notes are provided by the observer. The notes from each session are then combined to produce one report.

Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service has considerable expertise in the area of focus group research following a number of redevelopment projects and are able to call upon experienced in-house staff to facilitate and observe groups.

It is essential to decide which audiences one wants to talk to and why. In order for The Bridewell to be a success it needs to sustain existing audiences and build new ones. We need to discover what will attract existing visitors and regular museums users, but also what would appeal to people who don't visit museums and the difference and similarities between people from different socio-economic backgrounds. To position itself as a community history museum it needs to appeal to local residents, but it will also need to attract visitors from elsewhere in the county and tourists. There are also individuals with special interests and needs and other stakeholders whose interests and agendas need to be taken into account, in addition to families, older people and young people.

In order to ensure that we involve representative samples of people in the focus groups an external PR company was contracted to recruit participants from the general public. Questionnaires were designed to identify suitable participants for each group based on our criteria.

- **Focus Group Leaders**

The Focus Group Research Programme for the Bridewell Project was developed and delivered in-house by Norfolk Museums and Archaeology staff with the support of Dr Sheila Watson, Department of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. Dr Watson has considerable experience in carrying out and evaluating focus group research, primarily in Great Yarmouth for the Great Yarmouth Heritage Partnership properties and Time and Tide, Museum of Great Yarmouth Life, and was able to provide an impartial approach to collating the notes from each session and pulling together the initial draft findings which were then developed further and presented by the Focus Group Consultation process leader, Rachel Kirk. Dr Watson is particularly interested in this type of public consultation and has published a number of papers on the subject. The University of Leicester supports her continued involvement in the Bridewell Project.

The staff involved in developing the consultation brief and in moderating and observing the focus group sessions included trained staff from Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service museums across the county who have gained experience of the focus group

process through capital development of museums or galleries in their areas. These include:

- Rachel Kirk, Norwich Museums Manager, formerly Project Manager for Time and Tide Museum of Great Yarmouth Life led the Bridewell Project Focus Group Consultation process. Rachel Kirk has considerable experience in undertaking focus group research and delivering in-house training for staff throughout the Service.
- James Steward, Area Museum Officer for Great Yarmouth. James was Project Curator for the development and implementation of Time and Tide Museum of Great Yarmouth Life.
- Joe Carr, Assistant Curator Great Yarmouth Museums.
- Robin Hanley, Area Museums Officer for Kings Lynn. Robin is currently leading the redevelopment of the Lynn Museum.
- Emma Taylor, Norwich Museums Development Officer. Emma led the Focus Group consultation for Norwich Castle's Anglo Saxon and Viking Gallery.

The following Norwich Museums staff will be responsible for further developing and implementing display and interpretation for the Bridewell Project and were trained in focus group research techniques by Rachel Kirk in 2007:

- Hannah Maddox, Community History Curator, The Bridewell.
- John Renton, Curator of Social History, The Bridewell.
- Helen Renton, Assistant Curator, Strangers' Hall.
- Kathy Terry, Curator of Social History, Strangers' Hall
- Kate Thaxton, Curator of Social History, Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum
- Ruth Battersby Tooke, Curator of Costume and Textiles, Carrow House Costume and Textile Study Centre.
- Jenny Caynes, Project Support Officer.
- Harriet Foster, Evaluation Officer.

- **The Sample  
Focus Group Participants**

<b>Recruitment</b>	<b>GROUP</b>	<b>PROFILE</b>		
In-house	<b>Partners &amp; stakeholders</b> X 2 groups	Reps from G&G partners, HEART, City Officers, Arts venues, heritage attractions, UEA,		
In-house	<b>Interest Groups</b> X 2 groups	Reps from Friends, C&TA, Norwich Soc, Norwich Arch, enthusiasts		
Insight Track Ltd	<b>Local Community</b> <i>Postcodes NR1 to NR6</i>	Non or infrequent museum users	Families <i>with school aged children</i>	C1, C2, D, Es and BMEs
Insight Track Ltd	<b>Local Community</b> <i>Postcodes NR1 to NR6</i>	Non or infrequent museum users	Adults <i>No school aged children</i>	C1, C2, D, Es and BMEs
Insight Track Ltd	<b>Local Community</b> <i>Postcodes NR1 to NR6</i>	Heritage minded / regular museum users	Families <i>with school aged children</i>	A, B, C1, C2 and BMEs
Insight Track Ltd	<b>Day visitors / rural</b> <i>Visitors to Norwich from elsewhere in County – postcodes NR7 and up</i>	Non or infrequent museum users	Mixed Families with school aged children & adults	Mixed Socio-economic groups C1, C2, D, Es and BMEs
Insight Track Ltd	<b>Tourists</b> <i>Visitors to Norwich from outside County</i>	Mixed heritage minded/users and infrequent museum users	Mixed families with school aged children and adults	Mixed Socio-economic groups A,B, C1, C2, BMEs
Insight Track Ltd	<b>Local Community</b> <i>Postcodes NR1 to NR6</i>	Heritage minded / regular museum users	Adults <i>No school aged children</i>	A, B, C1, C2 and BMEs
Insight Track Ltd	<b>Day visitors / rural</b> <i>Visitor to Norwich from elsewhere in County – postcodes NR7 and up</i>	Heritage minded / regular museum users	Mixed families with school aged children & adults	Mixed Socio-economic groups A,B, C1, C2 and BMEs
In-house	<b>Norwich Museums Access Group</b>	Individuals and representatives from various access groups.		
In-house	<b>Norwich Area Museums Committee</b>	Elected Members		

Duration of sessions: 1 ½ hours  
 No. Participants: 8-10 per group  
 Date of Interviews: July and September 2007

## **PROJECT PROPOSAL**

To bring together industrial and social history and other relevant collections to tell the Story of Norwich in The Bridewell and to interpret, refurbish and make accessible a Grade 1 listed building.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

- To explore issues relating to a sense of place, identity and self esteem
- To establish a need/interest in the 'Story of Norwich'
- To position The Bridewell within Norwich's heritage offer
- To explore approaches to presenting the story of Norwich e.g. chronological, thematic, when should the story start, what is important, what's special about Norwich.
- To identify key themes/topics/collections – what gets a brief mention – what gets a gallery?
- Preferred interpretation methods.
- The visit and the visitor attraction – prices, use, services, shop etc.
- How can the Bridewell support other Norwich heritage attractions?

### **• Stimulus Material**

Nine A1 sized boards:

Sense of place, identity, Norwich's heritage offer, other heritage attractions, the Story of Norwich

- Images and text sound bites of the City, its historic built environment, heritage attractions, museums, key sites/sights.

Positioning The Bridewell

- Images of The Bridewell, the building and contents.

Narrative approaches, themes and topics.

- Images and text presented as a timeline
- Images and text arranged on themes and topics
- Text presented as 'Norwich firsts'.

Interpretation

- Images of museum displays, presentation, interpretation methods, interactive.

The Visit

- Images and text sound bites of visitor services, facilities, shops, opening hours



## OVERVIEW

### o Summary of findings

- Norwich people are very happy with their City and feel confident and secure with their Norwich identity. Although strongly rooted in the past, this identity is not easy to articulate as it is not linked with a particular character or trade or industry. The sense of the past is mainly based on the historic built environment (which is little understood but much liked), the medieval built heritage making the strongest impression. Today's Norwich is seen as an attractive blend of new and old and an excellent place to shop, but there is an awareness of and regret that things within living memory are being lost, and some concern that the City doesn't sell itself.
- Norwich was a pleasant surprise to visitors who appeared to have little idea that the City had so much to offer in the way of heritage. Norwich appears to have a limited identity as a heritage city outside of the county. It could be because Norwich people are so content with their City that there is an element of complacency with regards to promoting Norwich as a heritage destination, but it could also reflect the absence of a strong theme or character with which to identify. Tourism marketing focuses on the coast and the Broads and many visitors come across Norwich almost by accident.
- Local people and visitors would welcome being presented with the whole Norwich picture, a museum dedicated to Norwich history providing the opportunity to gain a better understanding of often familiar yet little understood social history subjects such as Norwich Union, Coleman's, Shoe factories, the Strangers. The Story should cover everything, but the last 100 years and in particular living memory should be given much more space and focus.
- Not many people are that familiar with the Bridewell or its contents other than special interest groups.
- The Bridewell is perceived to be too small to tell the entire story of Norwich, but it could provide the missing context and act as a reference point sending people out into the City to explore the historic environment with greater knowledge and understanding, as well as telling its own part of the story.
- No strong interests in particular social history themes or topics have yet emerged spontaneously, although there was a general interest in the historic built environment, shopping, history within living memory and the need for a timeline which helps people understand how and why Norwich has changed over the centuries. These broad themes found favour with everybody.
- The Bridewell is an interesting building with a story that needs to be integrated into the history of Norwich. As a medieval merchant's house, a poor house, factory and shop its own story could be integrated into the story of Norwich. Local people, in particular, like the idea of interpreting the building in this way.

## FINDINGS

**Research Objective:**  
**TO EXPLORE ISSUES RELATING TO A SENSE OF PLACE, IDENTITY AND SELF ESTEEM**

- **Local people**

**Positives**

Norwich is universally admired and esteemed. It is seen as a safe, friendly, vibrant city with great shops and leisure activities, physically attractive with a good blend of new and old buildings (*with some regret at the loss of some of the old buildings in the past*). Its medieval built heritage makes a stronger impression than any other period. It has parks and is clean.

Its people are reserved but friendly when you get to know them. It is relatively isolated - 'you have to want to come here' - and this is seen as a good thing. It is close to the coast and to London so it has everything. Newcomers are welcomed as it has a tradition of offering support to 'strangers'. However, it sees itself as an ethnically homogenous city with very little awareness of ethnic migration such as the increasing numbers of East Europeans. This may have been because it is not considered 'correct' to mention immigration in public. However, this may also be because Norwich people do not seem to leave their city as much as other people leave theirs elsewhere or, if they do leave, they come back. Those who come stay a long time or for good. Therefore there is a strong sense of ethnic stability. Norwich sees itself as divided into 'clans' or different communities identified by class and location. These 'insider' groups will be difficult to distinguish from the outside but are very important to local people.

Norwich used to be seen as backward and unsophisticated by local people and outsiders. Local people now feel Norwich is up to date and moving forward in a positive way. They know that outsiders look down on them as rural and behind the times but they think that if they come to Norwich they change their mind. People are so confident they don't mind this patronising attitude – they are happy with what they have and know they are lucky to live here. They also feel that many people don't know about Norwich and that is a 'good thing' – it leaves it to them.

People are uncritical, secure in their Norwich identity which gives them status. They have no problem with negative Norwich history and think it should be part of the history of the place.

Norwich is perceived to have a great deal in its buildings, churches, pubs and museums but its history is complex and little understood.

Lots of good will towards making this history more comprehensible but a great deal of confusion about what it is. Norwich does not appear to have anything that identifies it in the same way Yarmouth had with the fishing and the Rows.

Norwich's symbols are the cathedral, the market, shops, the forum, the castle and (for tourists) the lanes (though more identified as a place with good shops than a geographical location).

### **Negatives**

However, there are signs that the rapid rate of change is causing some anxiety and a sense of loss. The market has changed and not for the better.

The Bridewell will have a role for families to show their children and grandchildren what they remember from not so long ago but which has now vanished.

Some anxiety about what Norwich is famous for now? Other places make things – what do we make now? Only idea of what Norwich does well now is shopping.

Marketing of Norwich itself not good. Norwich doesn't compete as a European or UK tourist destination for heritage or for cosmopolitan café culture (though some like this and don't want to see the place overrun with tourists).

### **Comment**

Norwich's identity is firmly rooted in its past but it has no particular character (e.g. Robin Hood in Nottingham) or one particular industry (e.g. steel in Sheffield) that defines its heritage.

The sense of the past is mainly based on the historic built environment which is seen to be medieval (though it obviously has many later fine buildings) and which is dominated by the Cathedral and the Castle. This sense of the past is rarely articulated but there is a growing awareness of change and some regret that things within living memory have gone quite recently.

Norwich defines itself as a great place to shop, eat and find entertainment.

Its identity is also based on a sense of innate superiority not just to other places in Norfolk but to everywhere else in the UK (and possibly the world). Norwich people are very satisfied with their city and find very little to criticise.

They see themselves as both 'unfriendly' but also welcoming of 'strangers'. This sense that Norwich has absorbed a range of people in the past from the continent is the nearest thing Norwich has got to a communal sense of the past.

The relationship to the county is not explicit and is not as important as the relationship between the multiple communities in Norwich. 'Norwich is a city within a country.'

### **• Tourists**

#### **Positives**

Norwich was a pleasant surprise to these groups who found it under marketed and who had little impression of what there was to see before they came here. They were very impressed by the city.

'It's a county town ...but the way the county is sold is all about Cromer and Sheringham, the holiday resorts, the Broads and the golf courses in the North East corner...you need to advertise what is inland as well as outside.'

They had little idea that the city had so much to offer in the way of heritage attractions, which they thought were interesting and would potentially visit, and they loved the shopping and the general ambience of the city. They found the local people friendly. They had heard of the cathedral and a few had heard of the castle before their visit in a vague way – no publicity of this elsewhere. Some had visited both. Some had picked up on the idea of the lanes and liked them for the individual shops. No knowledge or awareness of any museum in Norwich apart from the castle. No awareness of all the events going on.

### **Negatives**

Very little publicity. Very poor signage. Where do you go when you have parked? No way of working out what there was on offer in a simple 'one stop shop' way. Castle could be confusing – no coherent narrative.

### **Comment**

Tourists are a potential but under targeted audience for Norwich heritage attractions. They would come if they could find their way round Norwich easily and knew what they were looking for. Norwich has no identity as a heritage city outside the county. It also has no strong image outside East Anglia and it has not marketed itself as a tourist destination.

<b>Research Objective:</b> <b>ESTABLISHING A NEED/INTEREST IN 'STORY OF NORWICH'</b>
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- **Local people**

Many people appeared unaware of the Museums offer and seemed confused about the Bridewell and Strangers, sometimes thinking they were permanently closed or else unsure of what they showed and their relationship to each other and the castle.

Yes to a museum dedicated to Norwich. 'The whole picture' and 'knowing where you come from' seen to be important. Some sense that a museum that established a sense of self – identity and pride in the city - would be welcomed. People would like to know about things they are conscious of, e.g. Norwich Union, Colman's, shoe factories, the Strangers, but don't understand.

Many people aware that living memory is being lost and there is therefore perceived to be a need for somewhere to keep the memories alive.

Consensus that visitors should be able to find out about the city.

Any picture of Norwich should be up to date and encourage people to understand today by looking at the past. Some confusion about when this should start but consensus that the whole story needs to be told somehow with more focus on the last 100 years than any earlier period.

However, there is concern that one place cannot tell the whole story and that the Bridewell is not big enough.

Some would like the museum to act as the reference point sending people out into the city to explore the historic environment with greater knowledge and understanding. No particular sense that the Bridewell is the natural place for presenting the whole history of Norwich.

- **Tourists**

These were very positive about the idea of a story of Norwich museum. A timeline is important to them.

<b>Research Objective:</b> <b>POSITIONING THE BRIDEWELL WITHIN NORWICH'S HERITAGE OFFER</b>
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Bridewell as a name is recognised but the museum itself, i.e. its contents, are not known except to a few specialist interest groups and one or two who visited years ago. Radical change possible without upsetting most people. Small (very small) minority will protest.

Marketing needs to be improved, the Bridewell gets lost in amongst the Castle promotions.

If there is to be a history of Norwich within the Bridewell there is consensus that it cannot do it all and that it will have to send people out into the city to find out more. However, it could also play a really important role in providing context for the city's history and encouraging people to go out and explore.

Some people who had visited were surprised at how big it was inside so the Tardis effect could be marketed.

**What could the Bridewell be?:**

1. A living memory site – bring your children and grandchildren and remind them that life was hard in the old days. Remind yourself what it was like. A place to keep these memories before they disappear. Memory to be mapped by photographs and physical reminders of the old city.

General comment: people want to locate their reminiscences in the geography of Norwich – how do we do that?

People in costume could tell you about the past – particularly those who do not remember Norwich then because they are newcomers.

NB it should be very Norwich particular – not just social history e.g. The Fifties' – it should be Norwich in the Fifties.

2. A place to find out things that you see around you e.g. the market and its history, the old shops.

3. A place to bring friends to show them what the city is about.

4. A place for visitors to find out more about Norwich.

N.B. There is real confusion about the role of Norwich Castle and the history of Norwich. The castle is Norwich and yet it is not telling its history. The relationship between the castle and the Bridewell has to be sorted out otherwise this confusion could impact severely on the success of the Bridewell project. **The Bridewell has to carve out a separate and complementary identity to the Castle.** This will also have to take into consideration the role of Strangers Hall to which Norwich people have an emotional attachment.

Marketing, joint ticketing with other Norwich sites, parking and good signage all essential. Some perception that the centre of Norwich has shifted to Chapelfields and the Forum. Others, particularly tourists, do not see this as an issue and position the Bridewell near the market and the Cathedral. This may be more a lack of interest than a real problem.

The Bridewell must be an **experience** not just an academic history. It should be intimate and welcoming.

<b>Research Objective:</b> <b>IDENTIFY APPROACHES TO THE STORY OF NORWICH</b>
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**When Does The Story Start, What Is Important, What's Special About Norwich?**  
**Key Themes/Topics/Collections – What Gets A Brief Mention – What Gets A Gallery?**

**Three key ideas were investigated**  
**Timeline,**  
**Themes and topics**  
**Norwich firsts.**

**Participants were told they could accept and reject all or some of the elements of these or mix them.**

### **Findings**

A sense that Norwich story should go back to the 'beginning' but no real idea of what that is and confusion in a couple of groups about the Castle having the archaeology.

Next consciousness – the medieval city – this is important because its physical remains serve as a reminder all the time to people of the past but they don't understand it. No real sense amongst most people that Norwich was the second city next to London. Some anecdotal stories about numbers of pubs and churches.

No one idea coming out at the moment about Norwich's historical identity except that it is associated with the Strangers, dissent, doing different, being insular and self sufficient.

Living memory is very important – this above all is missing in the current Norwich museum provision and there is a role for it in the Bridewell. This needs to be linked to the present – going out then and now, old cattle market and new Castle Mall, how we spent our Saturdays then and what we do on them now. People need to be able to link their experiences today with those of the past through other people's experiences.

## **Timeline**

Absolutely a must – without it somewhere the history of Norwich will be misunderstood. This should not be a classroom lesson. A timeline on the wall won't necessarily work – people prefer walking through history in a chronological sequence otherwise they get muddled up. This could be the underlying structure of the redisplays but not too 'heavy.'

## **Themes/topics**

This approach liked but not many themes emerging at the moment as favourites. The following are important.

- Built environment – understanding what we see around us, as a structure for telling the Norwich story.
- Then and now
- The suburbs
- World War 2
- Living memory
- Whatever the topic, it has to be about Norwich.

No strong interests are yet emerging spontaneously. Norwich's historical identity appears to be linked not to strong historical narratives such as the fishing in Yarmouth but more to its current appearance as a medieval city (not understood, though), historic and current shopping and entertainment centre, and a general perception that it is changing fast and people want some way of capturing memories of it in the past before they are lost. However, change in Norwich, unlike in other places such as Manchester and Sheffield where change is associated with the loss of an industrial identity and the need to find a new one, appears to be happening without that sense of dismay and anxiety apparent in some other places. Nevertheless the past is important to Norwich people and the Bridewell has a role in preserving memories of that past and helping people understand how and why Norwich has changed over the centuries.

## **Norwich firsts**

This board picked out historical achievements which were pioneered or invented in Norwich.

Mixed reaction to this – some felt strongly for, some against. Some groups liked the idea of unpleasant Norwich firsts such as the first racist caricature, showing medieval Jews in Norwich. Norwich Firsts integrated within a wider display scheme could provide a quirky adjunct but the approach wouldn't work on its own.

<b>Research Objective:</b> <b>PREFERRED INTERPRETATION METHODS.</b>
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## **Overall ideas about the displays**

Experience is very important.

Make it intimate – don't make it sterile like modern heritage centres such as Origins (particularly important for non-users). Special character of the building can be brought out to support this and is very important.

Open the undercroft.

Glass display cases not liked – rope barriers preferred.

Don't have open stores with no explanation.

Put objects in contexts e.g. recreate rooms. Information about 'behind the scenes' liked – maybe as a tour?

People in costume or interpreters without costume – preferred method of finding out about things.

Audio guides OK. Tourist group did not like too many audio-visual elements – can be too much. Consensus about the need to avoid too much high tech, push button interactivity in displays. Simple interaction preferred.

Several people disliked display labels written in traditional styles – put in x hundred years ago rather than in x century.

Seating is very important all the way round.

Don't gear it all to children – have children's things mixed up with adult ones.

No to research space – no-one interested in that.

Have temporary exhibitions.

A range of accessible interpretation and interactives.

<b>Research Objective:</b> <b>THE VISIT AND THE VISITOR ATTRACTION</b>
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**Price**

- Some local families very price conscious and are aware that a visit to a museum entails other costs such as parking, refreshments (*somewhere*) so it needs to be very good value i.e. engage them for several hours. Not something they would do on the spur of the moment – a visit would be planned.
- Suggestions for deals with car parks like the cinemas have.
- Some believe very strongly that museums should be free and open all the year round.
- Some families are prepared to pay and expect to pay.
- Some individuals such as special interest group representatives would not bother about price. They would come anyway.

**Comment**

Entry fees will be a deterrent to many local families unless they are seen to be good value. This could be done by joint ticketing, voucher system, two for one offers, deals with other attractions, and also by marketing special activity days where families perceive they are getting more for their money.

**Café**



- Most wanted this and also somewhere to sit down, though one non-museum user group did not see the need for a café.

### Shop

- Sell good quality local stuff – no ‘tat’.

### CONCLUSIONS

- There is considerable support for a museum to tell the Story of Norwich, but the consultation findings suggest that whilst the Bridewell would be a good place to do this it should not attempt to turn the entire museum over to telling the whole story in great detail. Rather, in addition to telling its own part of the story, it should provide a historical context and act as a reference point sending people out into the City to explore the historic built environment and other heritage attractions and museums with greater knowledge and understanding. This could be done in a number of ways. It needs to have a chronological element but not necessarily one centred around collections. A timeline of some sort could be presented in a discrete space away from the rest of the Museum displays. Approaches to consider could include graphics based timelines, audio-visual solutions and 3D models.
- No strong interests emerged (*other than from the representative of one special interest group who would like the museum to be dedicated to industrial heritage*), either for or against the existing Bridewell displays or other possible topics and themes. But there was a consensus that the museum should focus on things specific or special to Norwich, to get rid of generic themed displays and bring the displays up to the present day to reflect the popularity of living memory. It is also important that the character of the building is maintained, that collections are interpreted from the point of view of people’s experience and not all presented in glass cases, and that there is something for all age groups.

### IMPLICATIONS

- Bridewell as a name is recognised but the museum itself and its contents are not hugely well known except to a few specialist interest groups and one or two who visited years ago. Change would therefore be possible without upsetting too many people.
- The lack of strong interests emerging in terms of themes and topics is possibly as a result of the absence of a strong historical identity together with a limited knowledge and understanding of Norwich’s complex story. This suggests that the next stage of consultation will need to find a way of teasing out which social history elements of the Norwich Story the Bridewell itself should concentrate upon, in addition to providing a general Story of Norwich context. Further consultation could perhaps present participants with an overview of Norwich’s history, finding out what does and doesn’t inspire them in terms of time periods, topics, objects and the way stories should be told.
- It would be a mistake to transform the Bridewell into a sterile environment, to lose the character of the building or hide everything in glass cases.
- The Bridewell needs to establish a separate and complementary identity to the Castle and clarify its role in relationship to the other Norwich Museums and heritage attractions if it is to be successful.

- Organisations working to promote Norwich need to be made aware that Norwich is not seen as a heritage destination, but that tourists would visit if the marketing was improved, they knew what they were looking for and could find their way round Norwich easily.

### **Possible boards for next stage of consultation**

Norwich does different and link to dissent e.g. Elizabeth Fry and the Quakers, the English Civil War and the sale of the cathedral (aborted) to Yarmouth, Norwich goes its own way through the centuries.

Family life – to test out living memory and ideas about World War Two and other Norwich topics.

Favourite objects

The history of the building.

Norwich events

20<sup>th</sup> Century living memory – the club scene, bring up to date.

**NB How the story is told is as important as the story itself and they should be explored together.**