



## NORWICH AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

**2.00 p.m. – 4.10 p.m.**

**18 October 2010**

Present:                      City Councillors                      County Councillors  
                                 Councillor Bradford (Chair)      Councillor Ward (Vice-Chair)  
                                 Councillor Banham                  Councillor Edwards  
                                 Councillor Grahame                Councillor Toms  
                                 Councillor Fairbairn

Co-opted Non-                  District Councillor Bracey (Broadland District Council)  
Voting Members              Felicity Hartley (Norfolk Contemporary Arts Society)  
                                 Charlotte Crawley (East Anglia Art Fund)

Also in attendance      Rachel Kirk (Norwich Museums Manager)

Apologies:                  City Councillor Collishaw  
                                 City Councillor Lay (required on other council business)  
                                 County Councillor Nobbs  
                                 County Councillor Scutter  
                                 District Councillor Kemp (South Norfolk District Council)  
                                 County Councillor Dunn (Chairman, Norfolk Joint Museums  
                                 Committee)  
                                 Vanessa Trevelyan (Head of Museums and Archaeology)

### 1. MINUTES

#### Member Attendance

As requested at the last meeting, the Committee Officer circulated a copy of member attendance commencing from the start of the civic year 2008/2009 to the present day.

#### RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the member attendance;
- (2) agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2010.

## **2. GENERAL UPDATE ON NORWICH MUSEUMS**

The Norwich Museums Manager presented the report and answered questions about the work of the Norwich Museums Service since the last meeting and forthcoming events.

### **Visitor Numbers and Admissions Income**

The Norwich Museums Manager said numbers for school visits were dependant on school programmes, with the majority of visits made in spring and autumn, and the figures should be monitored over a longer period to reflect this. To encourage visits, all schools were provided with information packs and email updates but it had been found that the most effective communications were with those individual teachers who officers already had a relationship with. Information was sent to those schools who did not visit and bursary schemes were also offered to subsidise transport, but it was difficult for schools to justify visits if they only had small number of pupils.

Members discussed potential changes to displays of the Norfolk Regimental Museum. The collections in the museums were owned by the Royal Anglians who were previously known as the Royal Norfolk Regiment and were managed by a group of trustees. Councillor Bracey suggested that new displays could be extended to include collections by all three military services and that the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy could be approached to gauge their interest in joining such a venture.

The Norwich Museums Manager said the new displays at the Bridewell Museum would include information on other military services and the stories of the people of Norwich in World War I and II. Information on other events held at other venues in the county such the annual service in Wymondham to remember the Far Eastern Prisoners of War were advertised at the Regimental Museum and visitors were encouraged to visit the independent Aviation Museum if they expressed an interest.

The Norwich Museums Manager said the MORI surveys were carried out on randomly picked days and the information gathered reflected what particular exhibition was on at the time. She said the visitor profile had changed and there had been an increase in visits by categories C and D of the social economic groups.

She said in addition to the temporary exhibits, over the past three years the Castle Museum had refreshed their permanent displays such as the National History and Bird galleries, had added new displays such as the Arts of Living and Prison Stories and had provided a wide range of activities. The combination of all of these had helped to attract repeat visitors. She said the museums did work with community groups and where possible would display their work around the castle.

### **Implications of Public Sector Cuts**

The Norwich Museums Manager said the Museums Service were looking at the temporary exhibition programme, considering the staffing structures across all of the museums and looking at the availability of staff to be able to deliver the resources required. Norfolk County Council would be carrying out a staff consultation on the ways of working and a public consultation to look at the broader terms.

She said Carrow House was the only premises that the Museums Service paid rent for and they were working with the Costume and Textile Association on a rationalisation process to ascertain which items would be re-located to the Shirehall. Jeanne Southgate said the Costume and Textile Association had invested a lot of time into Carrow House to make it fit for purpose with 8,000 items available in the library for view and would be sad to leave. However, as they received a particular amount of visitors particularly from overseas, the collection would be better placed in the centre of Norwich.

Charlotte Crawley suggested that the old court room in the Shirehall could be used for storage and displays. The Norwich Museums Manager said when the second court room in the Regimental Museum was converted, an agreement had been made with the Council's Conservation and Design Officer and English Heritage that the court room in the Shirehall would remain untouched. She said she would continue to pursue this option but this would require substantial funds that were not currently available and would not provide an immediate solution.

The Norwich Museums Manager explained how the rationalisation process was being carried out across the county and how, with the aid of volunteers, they would need to work through all of the collection. It was a time consuming process and difficult decisions may need to be made to ascertain what collections were relevant to Norfolk.

### **Sunday Morning Opening**

The Norwich Museums Manager said Sunday morning opening was not a viable option in the current economic climate. There was no potential for growth in the current financial year and as it was also certain that the budget for 2011/12 would be reduced, there would be no funding available to run a trial period.

She said visitor numbers had been looked at over Saturday and Sunday afternoons but it would not be reasonable to expect twice as many. Two or three options had been considered but it had been found that it would take a gross budget of just over £60,000 a year to be able to facilitate this.

### **Recent and Current Exhibitions and Events**

The Norwich Museums Manager said the Museums Service was currently fund raising to make improvements to the Castle Keep. As it was a Norman Castle, it was hoped that European funding could be obtained in association with the museum's partners in England and France. Discussions were also taking place with the British Museum to create a BM/NMAS medieval display.

Councillor Toms suggested external funding could be obtained from conservation, biodiversity and environmental groups in order to make any future improvements to displays such as the National History Gallery.

The Norwich Museums Manager said the Civic Coach housed at Strangers Hall had been treated for insect infestation and the Museums Service would continue to keep it clean, although they could not guarantee that the infestation would not return in the future. It would not be possible to re-home in locations such as the Castle Keep and Rotunda as it was not possible to take the coach apart and the coach was still used

for civic functions. It was the responsibility of the City Council to find provide any necessary funding and to find a suitable alternative home.

### **External Signage and Banners on the Castle**

The Norwich Museums Manager said it would cost money to advertise in bus shelters but big banners were located on Castle Meadow and at the Shirehall. Banners had been hung from lampposts in the Castle Gardens in the past but unfortunately they were always vandalised.

Charlotte Crawley referred to the visit on 23 June 2010 and said that the representative from English Heritage had been a lot more receptive than anticipated. She said although it would not be possible to progress at the present time due to budget implications and lack of funding, a company would need to be commissioned to design a banner and a mechanism in order for it be attached safely to the Castle. She suggested that a company could be approached and asked to provide to a free cost estimate of the work and materials required.

The Norwich Museums Manager said the first priority would be to progress the external signage project which was due by March 2011 and that she would revisit the issue of the banners once that piece of work was completed.

#### **RESOLVED to:-**

- (1) note the report;
- (2) ask the Norwich Museums Manager to:-
  - (a) contact the curator of the Royal Regimental Museum to ask if they would be available to attend a future meeting of the committee to give a presentation;
  - (b) consider ways in which to promote all three military services and contact the trustees of the Royal Norfolk Regiment to explore the possibility of extending the collection in the Royal Norfolk Regimental Museums and work with representatives from the other military services
- (3) note the thanks of the committee to the Norwich Museums Manager and other officers and volunteers at the Museum Service for all of their hard work.

### **3. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

**RESOLVED** to note that unless advised otherwise by the Committee Officer, that the dates of future meetings be as follows:-

- Monday 7 March 2011 at 2:00pm
- Monday 6 June 2011 at 2:00pm