



Norwich Area Museums Committee

14:00 to 15:40

12 December 2017

Present: **City Councillors:** **County Councillors:**
 Brociek-Coulton (chair) Nobbs (vice chair, in the chair)
 Jones (Tim) (from item 4 below) Watkins
 Maxwell Ward

Co-opted non-voting members:

Brenda Ferris (Norfolk Contemporary Art Society)
Councillor Hardy (South Norfolk Council)

County Councillor Buck (vice-chairman, Norfolk Joint Museums committee)
(ex officio member)

Apologies: City Councillors Bradford, Herries and Price; County Councillors Clipsham,
 Jones (Brenda) and Rumsby; and co-opted non-voting members:
 Amanda Geitner (East Anglia Arts Fund) and Ceri Lamb (Friends of
 Norwich Museums)

1. Public questions/petitions

There were no public questions or petitions.

2. Declarations of interest

None.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on
12 September 2017.

4. Norwich Museums Briefing September to November 2017

The head of operations and learning presented the report and answered members' questions. The committee received copies of the Norfolk Museums Service Annual Review 2016-17 and members were invited to share it within their organisations.

During discussion the committee noted the exceptionally high number of visitors to the *Nelson and Norfolk* exhibition at Norwich Castle, peaking at 2,222 visitors on Wednesday, 9 August 2017. Members were pleased to note that talks and events linked to the exhibition, including the pirate themed family day, had also been well attended. The *Rembrandt: Lightening the Darkness* exhibition was also proving to be

popular. Brenda Ferris expressed gratitude to Dr Giorgia Bottinelli, curator of historic art, who had facilitated a tour for members of the committee prior to the meeting. The committee noted that curators, Dr Bottinelli and Dr Francesca Vanke, had produced a catalogue to accompany the exhibition which was available in the museum shop.

Brenda Ferris referred to the recent news that the fourth and final part of René Magritte's lost masterpiece *La Pose Enchantée* had been found in Brussels and said that this news following on from the pieces discovered in Stockholm, New York and Norwich Castle would make an interesting exhibition. The head of operations and learning said that the detective story of tracking down the last quarter was an interesting one and suggested that there was an update at the next meeting.

During discussion the committee considered publicity for exhibitions and noted that this ranged from use of social media to paid advertising. Members were advised that advertising on the back of buses had been used for the Nelson and Rembrandt exhibitions. The effectiveness of advertising on the back of buses had been demonstrated in Kings Lynn. The Lynn Museum had experienced a drop in visitor numbers and, following a marketing campaign on the back of buses, the level of visitors had been restored.

The committee noted that there had been 800 entries for the Norwich Castle Open Art Show: Inheritance, which was run by the East Anglia Art Fund in partnership with Norfolk Museums Service (NMS). A shortlist of over 100 works was being drawn up. Brenda Ferris noted that the deadline for this exhibition had passed but as many members of the Norfolk Contemporary Art Society were artists it would have been useful to have circulated the details to them.

Discussion ensued on the pilot activity plan event programme for the *Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England*. The head of operations and learning explained that the *Saturday Knight Fever* (7 October 2017) and the *Museums at Night – Digital Takeover!* were part of the programme and the operational arrangements and outcomes would be evaluated by the consultants.

The committee noted that a funding application would be made to the Heritage Lottery Fund's Our Heritage grant programme in 2018 to implement proposals to redisplay the toy collection at Strangers' Hall. Members also noted that the Christmas events at Strangers' Hall made it a good time to visit. The *Cecil Aldin – The Art of Black Beauty* exhibition at the Museum of Norwich had ended on 25 November and had marked 140 years since Jarrolds & Sons had published Anna Sewell's novel *Black Beauty*. During the October half term holiday, Print to the People, drawing on the exhibition, had demonstrated print techniques and visitors had the opportunity to print their own posters to take home.

The committee was pleased that learning team at Norwich Castle had been awarded the Sandford Award for Heritage Education and noted the comments of the judge.

Members noted the Architecture Day at Norwich Castle (21 October) held in conjunction with the 2017 Festival of Architecture in Norwich and Norfolk and The Big Draw Festival 2017, had been very popular and it was proposed to incorporate it into the annual visitor programme.

The operations manager presented section 7, *Other Developments* of the report. There was expected to be around 650 weddings at Norwich Castle during the current financial year, with current bookings showing an increase of 14 per cent on the previous year and bookings already accepted for 2019. Members were advised that there was a continuity plan in place to ensure that wedding events would not be affected by works on the Keep Project. Members noted that 200 people had attended the Genome 10k event in August, which was traditionally a quiet month for corporate bookings. In contrast September was a busy month in terms of events held at Norwich Castle and Strangers' Hall. In October, there had been a number of business breakfast and lectures associated with the Rembrandt exhibition. Other events which had taken place this quarter included the Big Boom fireworks and 900 visitors to the Museums at Night event.

Members were pleased to learn of the OWL – Opportunities in Work and Learning scheme; a joint project being pioneered with Adult Social Services Department at Norfolk County Council to provide supported work experience opportunities for young people and adults of 18 to 24 years' old, with additional needs. The first placement would commence at Norwich Castle on 10 January 2018.

Discussion ensued on the review of catering operations across all NMS. Members discussed the need to meet demand at peak times and to accommodate increasing visitor numbers at Norwich Castle. Capacity could be increased by reviewing the size of the food preparation area and the food offer and considering the use of a pop-up café in the Rotunda area when the museum was busy. Specialist consultants had been appointed to review all of the business operations of Norwich Castle as part of the Keep Project.

In reply to a question, the operations manager explained that during the works on the replacement and refurbishment of the Castle's external lift, signage would be erected to direct people to routes which avoided the steep slope. Parking spaces on the mound were limited. The part of the works requiring the closure of the lift would be kept to a minimum. The second stage of the infrastructure project comprised improvements to the environmental controls for the temporary exhibition galleries would be implemented by 2020.

The operations manager circulated the attendance figures for the last quarter at the meeting. There was an upwards trend of increased visitor numbers building on the success of the Nelson and Rembrandt exhibitions. Strangers' Hall had seen an increase in visitors sparked by the Freemen free access days. The committee noted that there had been an increase in visitor numbers across the service as a whole. This was due to investment of time and resources in core offers like the Nelson and the Rembrandt exhibitions at Norwich Castle, the touring Titanic exhibition at the Time and Tide Museum and the *Voices from the Workhouse* at Gressenhall, together with good supporting programmes comprising lectures, school and family friendly events, increased visitor numbers and the sustainability of the museums.

The chair introduced Dr John Davies, Project Director and Chief Curator to provide an oral update to the committee on the progress of the Norwich Castle Gateway to Medieval England Project. The chair said that she had agreed that the committee would receive an oral report rather than a written one because the project was developing so fast that it would be out of date by the time the committee received the report. Dr Davies said that applications for building and listed building consent would

be submitted to the city council for consideration by the planning applications committee. Preparation was being made for the Heritage Lottery Fund's mid stage review to ensure that the project was on track and to provide assurance that it was deliverable and sustainable. The external client team had been appointed. An archaeological exploration of the basement would commence in January. A digital model of the keep had been produced. This state of the art 3D model provided accurate measurements for the architects, structural engineers and exhibition engineers. There would be an energy workshop to develop the carbon strategy for the project after stage 2, which would be evaluated under the Green Tourism Programme which was more appropriate for historic buildings than BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method). The fund raising strategy was going well which included some innovative methods including corporate sponsorship, sponsoring an object and crowd funding. In the New Year there would be a workshop with all contractors to increase awareness and identify the risks to the implementation of the project.

Colly Mudie, Norwich museums learning manager gave a power point presentation on the work of the learning team. This included information about a pilot project *Babies in Museums* and a proposal to establish an early years' gallery to welcome families and provide facilities for 2 and 3 year olds. An event had been held for looked after children. This had been targeted at children aged 10 to 12 who were at a vulnerable age as they were moving from primary to secondary school. The team had, in partnership with Norfolk Youth Offending Team, reviewed the 10 week programme by breaking it down into five two week programmes which was better suited to the service and young people. The learning team had also arranged a number of activities which included the Autism Awareness Weekend, the ST*ART Junior Masterclass: Drawing on the Lines of Rembrandt and master classes for A'level students in textiles; and the historic re-enactments by Spring Board East of trials aimed at A'level law students.

(The committee showed its appreciation of the learning team with a round of applause.)

In reply to a question, the museums learning manager said that NMS worked closely with the Norwich University of the Arts (NUA). Undergraduates had free admission and there were specific activities linked to courses around exhibitions and the textile collection.

The head of operations and learning referred to the report and explained that the objectives and expected outcomes of the *Norfolk Journeys* project which was funded under the Heritage Lottery Fund's new Kick the Dust programme. The project was a consortium of NMS (as the lead), Norfolk YMCA and Creative Collisions and had been one of twelve projects selected for the first stage of funding. During the presentation, the head of operations and learning said that the submission with details on how the project would be delivered would be submitted by the start of February 2018. The four year project would have a county wide reach and focus on young people aged 11 to 24 years' old. The project would create a range of activities relevant to young people. Members noted a number of activities linked to NMS exhibitions where young people had been engaged in photography, drama and even making a float for the Lord Mayor's parade. The project would commence in the summer of 2018.

In reply to a question, the head of operations and learning confirmed that the project would be county wide. Creative Collisions was based in Great Yarmouth and had engaged young people in activities in the area. Recruitment to the new posts to run the project would be for posts in Great Yarmouth, Norwich and the West of the county.

Brenda Ferris reported that the Contemporary Art Society had raised £7,000 at this year's auction. The society was disappointed that this was £2,000 less than the amount raised at the auction last year but put this down to the effect of the current austerity and financial uncertainty.

The vice chair commented that compared to the museums service 12 years ago NMS had improved beyond recognition. Members of the committee joined him in thanking the head of operations and learning and colleagues for their contribution which was very much appreciated.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the report and thank the officers for their presentations;
- (2) congratulate Colly Mudie, Norwich museums learning manager, and her team on being awarded the Sanford Award
- (3) thank Brenda Ferris for her update on the Contemporary Art Society's auction and thank the society for its work;
- (4) note that at the next meeting there will be an update on the discovery of the fourth and final part of René Magritte's lost masterpiece *La Pose Enchantée* in Brussels

CHAIR