



Norwich Area Museums Committee

14:00 to 16:00

7 January 2020

Present:

City Councillors:

Huntley (chair)
Maxwell
McCartney-Gray
Price
Schmierer
Wright

County Councillors:

Brociek-Coulton (vice chair)
Clipsham
Jones
Nobbs
Ward
Watkins

Co-opted non-voting members:

Felicity Devonshire (Friends of Norwich Museums), Brenda Ferris (Norfolk Contemporary Art Society) and Amanda Geitner (East Anglia Arts Fund)

Apologies: Councillor Easter (South Norfolk Council)

(The chair thanked members for attending this meeting which had been postponed from 7 December 2019 because of the general election.)

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 10 September 2019.

4. Norwich Museums Briefing – September to November 2019

The chair introduced Sgt Chris Clay, Norwich East Safer Neighbourhood Team, to the committee, and thanked Councillor Price for facilitating Sgt Clay's attendance at the meeting to update members on anti-social behaviour in the area surrounding Norwich Castle.

Sgt Clay explained the area that the team of 11 officers covered in the Norwich East Safer Neighbourhood Team and the issues that the team addressed in the city centre which included aggressive begging, drug dealing and drug use and public order offences. The team covered the retail areas of the city and worked with Norwich BID. He referred to the concerns expressed about antisocial behaviour in

the Castle Gardens and suggested that it was seasonal. He encouraged members and officers to report anti-social behaviour and illegal behaviour so that the team could formulate a plan to address the issues as soon as possible and encourage the area to be used for its legitimate purposes.

Discussion ensued in which members discussed the impact of anti-social behaviour. The assistant head of museums service said that officers did report incidents to the police and agreed that it was a seasonal issue occurring in the spring and summer months. Officers were reticent to arrange activities on the Castle Green or Gardens because of this. There was concern about the impact on visitors to Norwich Castle, particularly if needles or other drug debris were left lying around or people felt intimidated. He explained that the museum was responsible for the land from the bridge but the moat (Castle Gardens) was the responsibility of the city council. The provision of direct contact numbers with the neighbourhood policing team was helpful. Staff were frustrated because whilst they were aware of police activity they had not seen any improvement during the summer months and did report incidences. Sgt Clay said that the structure of the amphitheatre was inviting and consideration could be given to changing it if it was not in use. He also said that drug debris should be reported to the city council and would be cleaned up immediately. It was agreed that fast reporting of incidences of anti-social behaviour and opening up communication between the police and the operations manager was important to address anti-social behaviour.

(Sgt Clay then left the meeting at this point.)

The assistant head of museums presented the report, highlighting issues which were of particular interest to members of the committee.

During the presentation of the report, the assistant head of museums referred to events at Norwich Castle and reported on the success of the *Viking: Rediscover the Legend* exhibition and *The Lines of Sight: Sebald's East Anglia* which had both been successful and met expectations. It was important to provide a diversity of temporary exhibitions and the *Tor Falcon – Rivers of Norfolk* was an example of this. As part of its Coming Home Loan programme the National Portrait Gallery had loaned Norwich Castle a portrait of Lord Nelson. The portrait had been painted by William Beechey who had also been commissioned to paint the full length painting which was on display at The Halls. In reply to a member's question, the assistant head of museums said that part of the rationale for the National Portrait's Gallery's loan programme was that it would be closing for three years to be refurbished and therefore the museums services' curators were in discussions to extend the loan of the portrait for a longer period¹. Members were advised that as part of the New Geographies project, a film work by artist Laura Wilson, *Deepening* of East Anglia's Late Bronze Age fenland settlement would be on display from 18 January 2020. In reply to a member's question the assistant head of museums confirmed that the map of the 270 sites in the region that were "meaningful and interesting" was available on the New Geographies' website and the link would be circulated (<https://newgeographies.uk/>) to members. Amanda Geitner encouraged members to view the *Deepening* and said that the "performance was amazing."

¹ It was subsequently confirmed that it will not be possible to extend the loan as the painting is moving to another venue.

The assistant head of museums then referred to the report and outlined the curatorial work which was being undertaken and said that this drew on the scholarship of the curators researching and working in partnership with other organisations and drawing on the Norfolk Museums Service's collections. Dr Francesca Vanke was currently working on *Castles: Reality, History and Myth, Paintings from the National Gallery, London* which would open in November 2020 and had already secured loans from national museums for this exhibition and incorporated working with young people as part of the Kick the Dust programme. Dr Giorgia Bottinelli had undertaken a placement at Yale Center for British Art at Yale University in preparation for the bicentenary exhibition devoted to John Crome. In reply to a member's suggestion, the assistant head of museums said that he would ask the curator whether any of the Norwich School paintings held in collections in the United States would be on loan for the exhibition.² The curator had also curated *Where Land and Water Meet: Norfolk's rivers Streams, Brooks and Broads* which was a good opportunity to showcase the museums' collections. Similarly, *Spotlight: Works from the Modern and Contemporary Art Collection*, being curated by Dr Rosy Gray was an opportunity to display the wide contemporary art collection held at Norwich Castle.

The committee noted that around 300 drinking glasses dating from c1690 to 1840 to the museums service and that this generous donation would enhance the holdings of historic glass in the decorative arts collection.

During the assistant head of museums' presentation, members expressed an interest in receiving a presentation from Dr Tim Pestell on archaeological acquisitions at a future meeting.

Members noted the activities of the natural history and costumes and textiles departments as set out in the report.

The committee commented on the volunteer work at Strangers' Hall and their contribution to assessing archive material relating to its history as a museum in preparation for its centenary year in 2022-23 and the contribution to the annual deep clean. Members also noted that the Lord Mayor's coach had been returned to the museum following its essential maintenance and refurbishment. The Christmas activities at Stranger's Hall had been very popular and well attended.

The assistant head of museums referred to activities at the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell and advised members that The *Norwich in 1959* exhibition had been successful with Anglia TV's silver knight emblem being one of the most shared Tweets. Members of the curatorial team had attended the twinning celebrations in Rouen. A member asked whether the silver knight had been returned to Anglia TV or whether it was still held by the county council as it had previously been on display at the Archive Centre. The assistant head of museums said that he would investigate this and provide a response to the member.³ The vice chair recommended the new History Mystery Norwich *Goin' up the City* game which she and her family had enjoyed playing. Members agreed that they would like a presentation on the

² It was subsequently confirmed that the curator is currently hoping to borrow a work from the Yale Center for British Art.

³ It was subsequently confirmed that the Knight is on display in the foyer of Anglia TV (not normally accessible to the public).

Dementia Friendly work at the museum and were interested in the work between the museum services in partnership with the Norfolk based charity, Friend in Deed.

Christine Marsden, project co-ordinator and Rachel Daniel, project worker, gave a presentation to update members on the progress of the Kick the Dust: Norfolk programme. (Copies of the presentation are available on the website with the meeting documents for this committee.) During discussion members commented on the programme and asked questions. A member said that she had met with the students who through the programme had curated the display case of 1950's clothing at the *Norwich in 1959* exhibition and said that she had been very impressed with their interest and dedication. Christine Marsden said that members would have an opportunity to meet with students at the celebration for 175 years of the YMCA and that members would receive a formal invitation for the event on 10 February 2020. Members also noted the success of the work with the students at Parkside School and the special membership cards that been issued to Kick the Dust participants. The committee also noted from the report that young people as part of the Kick the Dust project had created and developed and delivered, under the guidance of the project worker, *The Magnificent Museums – The Museum of Norwich at Night*.

The assistant head of museums referred to the report and the work of the learning team which included *Meet Florence Nightingale* events as part of the outreach programme for primary schools.

Members of the committee were updated on the progress of the Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England project. A pre-construction service agreement was in place which had enabled surveys and investigations to take place without closing parts of the building. The current level of operation was expected to be maintained until the end of the February half-term holiday. The assistant head of museums advised members that procurement was underway for the main building work contractors and that this should be completed by the end of February with works expected to commence by the end of March 2020. Preparation for the alternative entrance and "pop-up" café were in place. On 5 October, the activity plan had been launched by a performance of *Fight and Flight!* in the Keep by local dance and movement groups, supported by the Sadler Wells' National Youth Dance Company. It was expected that a firm of consultants would be contracted to develop a new heritage brand for the completed Keep project and wider museum. This would comprise a range of options that would be subject to consultation from stakeholders, with the final decision being taken by the head of museums.

The assistant head of museums reported that the Shirehall court room would be closed for an extended period to deal with a dry rot outbreak.

The assistant head of museums circulated copies of the visitor numbers for all the Norfolk museums for the period. Discussion ensued in which members were reassured that the visitor numbers were on target for Norwich Castle given the success of the temporary exhibitions. The visitor numbers for Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell and Strangers' Hall had benefitted from the Freeman Fortnight in August. Strangers' Hall had performed well across the year and there had been strong bookings for the Christmas activities.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) thank Sgt Clay for attending the meeting and to note the fast reporting of incidences of anti-social behaviour in the vicinity of Norwich Castle will help develop a pattern which can be addressed by the neighbourhood policing team;
- (2) thank the assistant head of museums for presenting the [report](#);
- (3) note the generous donation of 300 drinking glasses to the museums service and ask the chair and vice chair to write to the donator on behalf of the committee;
- (4) ask the assistant head of museums to arrange presentations for future meetings of the committee on:
 - (a) recent archaeological discoveries:
 - (b) Dementia Friendly work at the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell;
- (5) thank Christine Marsden and Rachel Daniel for the [presentation](#) on the Kick the Dust project and ask councillors to contact them about any interested parties or groups which would be interesting in taking part in this initiative for young people.

5. Norfolk Contemporary Art Society

Brenda Ferris circulated the latest Norfolk Contemporary Art Society newsletter and reported that the recent auction had raised £12,000. The society had been established 60 years ago and was pleased to contribute art works for display at Norwich Castle.

RESOLVED to thank Brenda Ferris for the report and note the contribution made by the Norfolk Contemporary Art Society.

6. Friends of the Norwich Museums

Felicity Devonshire presented the report which had been circulated at the meeting. She drew members' attention to the publicity event to promote the tapestry which was being made by Fran Sales and around 100 volunteers and would be displayed in the Royal Bedchamber of the refurbished Keep. The first section had been shown to the press and a film made of interviews of people working on the project. The Friends had gifted £30,000 to fund this project.

RESOLVED to thank Felicity Devonshire for the report and note the contribution to the museums service made by the Friends of the Norwich Museums.

CHAIR