



Norwich Area Museums committee

14:00 to 15:20

13 September 2016

Present:

City Councillors:

Brociek-Coulton (chair*)
Davis
Jones (T)
Price

County Councillors:

Bremner
Morgan

Co-opted non-voting members:

Brenda Ferris (Norfolk Contemporary Art Society), Ceri Lamb (Friends of Norwich Museums), Amanda Geitner (East Anglia Arts Fund) and Councillor Hardy (South Norfolk District Council)

Apologies:

City Councillors Maguire and Thomas (Vi), County Councillors Hannah, Dearnley and Sands (M), Councillor Buck (Broadland District Council) and Councillor Ward (ex officio member)

1. Public questions/petitions

There were no public questions or petitions received.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes

Subject to the correction that the Norfolk Contemporary Art Society had contributed to an acquisition of the Andrew Dadson photograph it was:-

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2016.

4. Norwich Museums briefing for period June to August 2016

The head of operations and learning presented the report. During discussion the officers referred to the report and answered members' questions.

The committee noted that Norwich Castle was one of only four venues chosen to host the British Art Show. The arrival of the show included a parade of Suffolk Punches from Gressenhall, all of which were stewarded by heavy horse experts.

A forthcoming exhibition on the photography of Olive Edis would occupy two of the main galleries from October and would be curated by Alistair Murphy of Cromer museum. This exhibition was complimenting the work at Cromer museum around improving the online catalogue of Olive Edis photographs. The learning team was developing a series of events around this exhibition and a publication catalogue supporting the exhibition would be available for sale. Amanda Geitner said that Liz Elmore (project assistant at Cromer museum) had created a blog on Olive Edis and her diaries.

The summer holidays had proved to be a good opportunity to engage with young people. The medieval madness event had run for the second year and was very well attended. Highlights included 'Shakespeare's soapbox' and a display of medieval fighting techniques. This had also enabled the testing of approaches to activities that could be developed to link with the Castle Keep project.

The head of operations and learning said that a detailed report on the discovery of part of a lost Rene Magritte painting, by staff of Norfolk Museums Service, would be brought to the next meeting. Members praised the due diligence shown by staff in uncovering this discovery and said that it was a great example of curatorial expertise being retained by the museums service.

It was reported that Jenni Williams, part of the learning team, had been engaging pro-actively with teachers around the new GCSE history syllabus and had been creating resources to be used at Key Stage 3 and GCSE level. The Edexcel syllabus (which was the most used in Norwich) asked teachers to explore a specific site and Jenni had contacted Edexcel and asked for Norwich Castle to be such a site. The head of operations and learning said that he was confident that visits from secondary schools would increase as a result of this.

Members discussed the use of Norwich Castle by the registrars for conducting civil ceremonies. They noted that this had also led to increased secondary spend in the museum shop and café.

The museums service was taking part in a 'mystery shopping' scheme organised by SHARE museums east. It was being run at Norwich Castle this year and some interesting feedback had been received. The digital officer was monitoring social media sites, such as Trip Advisor, and co-ordinating responses to enquiries received this way. The head of operations and learning said that social media responses held high priority and there was a robust mechanism for picking up comments and questions at an early stage.

There had been some correspondence with a gentleman who had recently visited the Anglo-Saxon and Viking gallery. He said that although he had a pleasant visit to the castle, he had concerns around one of the display boards. (A copy of the board was tabled at the meeting). The board depicted a woman with her face painted in a representation of the Union Jack. He felt that it was inappropriate to be displayed on the wall of a public building as St Patrick's Cross had not been included. As the gentleman was not satisfied with the responses he had received from the museums service so far, the head of operations and learning asked the committee for their views on whether the board should be taken down. Members discussed the board and commented that it was an abstraction of the flag that the lady had chosen to

paint on her face. They agreed that the board should be left for now but if the display were to change, it could be reviewed.

Members were updated on the progress of the Keep Project and were told that permission had been given to go ahead with the bid for funding. The deadline for this was October 2017.

Visitor figures were circulated to members and it was reported that the Heritage Open Days saw good visitor numbers. As there was no Easter bank holiday in the 2016-17 financial year, along with the warm weather, meant that the visitor figures could be slightly less than the previous year. A member commented on the large increase in visitor numbers to the Time and Tide museum. The head of operations and learning said that this was due to the great exhibitions on offer this year including one from the Victoria and Albert museum. The learning team in Yarmouth had also adapted one of their school sessions to link in with this exhibition.

The head of operations and learning introduced Jen Hooker, one of the teaching museums trainees, who updated the committee on the work she had been doing and her experiences as a trainee.

Jen said that she was one of six trainees across the region and was specialising in business development. She said that the programme was a way to gain both experience and understanding through a structured programme that included sessions with conservationists, learning experts and marketing exhibitions. In her yearlong traineeship, she was looking mainly at income generation. She had been working with the larger and smaller museum sites to gain an overview of the business and had researched areas such as visitor services, social media, marketing and the learning team. She had been working on several projects including contact lists for exhibitions, product lines for retail and cross-site marketing opportunities.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the Norwich Museums briefing for the period June to August 2016 to February 2016,
- (2) thank Jen Hooker for her presentation on her experience as a teaching museums trainee,
- (3) ask the head of operations and learning to invite Dr John Davis to the next meeting to update members on the Keep Project,
- (4) record the committee's thanks to all museums staff who worked on the exciting discovery of the Rene Magritte painting; and
- (5) leave the display board in the Anglo-Saxon and Viking gallery but to review it if the display were to change.

5. Norfolk Contemporary Art Society

Brenda Ferris, chair of the Norfolk Contemporary Art Society (NCAS) the report to update members on the activities of the society. She said that preparations for the exhibition on sixty years of NCAS were nearing completion. She thanked the staff at Norwich Castle who had helped to put the exhibition together and also thanked the East Anglian Arts Fund for their involvement.

A piece from the exhibition would be on tour in the city and there was a full inventory on the NCAS website which included all works around the city and not just those in the castle galleries.

Members would be able to take a tour of the exhibition after the next meeting of the Norwich Area Museums committee.

RESOLVED to note the report.

CHAIR