



MINUTES

Norwich Area Museums Committee

14:00 to 15:05

12 September 2017

Present:

City Councillors:

Bradford
 Herries
 Jones (Tim)
 Maxwell
 Price

County Councillors:

Nobbs (vice chair, in the chair)
 Clipsham
 Rumsby
 Watkins

Co-opted non-voting members:

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

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

Apologies:

City Councillor Brociek-Coulton (chair) and County Councillors Ward (other council business) and Jones (Brenda)

1. Membership

The committee noted that the county council had appointed Councillor Watkins to the committee and that he had replaced Councillor Butikofer.

2. Public questions/petitions

There were no public questions or petitions.

3. Declarations of interest

None.

4. Minutes

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2017, subjecting to amending the list of members present by replacing "Co-opted voting" with "Co-opted non-voting" members.

5. Norwich Museums Briefing July to August 2017

The head of operations and learning presented the report and answered members' questions.

Dr Francesca Vanke, keeper of art, gave an illustrated presentation on the "Rembrandt - Lightening the Darkness" exhibition (21 October to 7 January 2018). The exhibition would include Norwich Castle's collection of 93 prints and one drawing by Rembrandt and loans from British Museum, National Galleries of Scotland, National Gallery and the Royal Collection.

The committee noted the success of the family-focused day and the programme of lectures at Norwich Castle, which were part of the national Archaeology Festival. Members were pleased to note that this would be a feature on the Castle's annual events programme.

During discussion on the evaluation and impact of the free admission days from 25 July to 6 August funded by the Norwich Freeman as part of the programme of activities taking place across the city, a member asked that the information was shared with the Freeman. The publicity provided by the Freeman for the open days had been very successful with around 90 per cent of the visitors to Strangers Hall and the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell stating that they would make a return visit. There would be further analysis to see why 10 per cent would not be returning. The committee expressed its gratitude to the Freeman for the support given to the Norwich museums and appreciated that the Freeman supported the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell which promoted the city's industrial and commercial history.

Members were sad to learn of the death of Katrina Siliprandi, who had worked with the Norfolk Museum Service (NMS) for 30 years, and had left a significant legacy in the quality of the learning programme that was at the heart of the museums. This was demonstrated as the NMS learning team at Norwich Castle had yet again been awarded the Sandford Award for Heritage Education. Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse had also been awarded it and the Time and Tide Museum would be re-applying for it next year. The committee noted the learning team's work with schools, including GCSE and A'level students and Looked After children.

The committee received the news that a funding bid, expression of interest, had been submitted to Arts Council England for a grant under the Celebrating Age programme, for a project to be delivered over a three year period at the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell, in partnership with Norwich Writing Centre and Norfolk Libraries focused on older people.

The committee welcomed the award of Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Kick the Dust funding for the project, Norfolk Journeys to Norfolk Museums Service, as part of a consortium with YMCA Norfolk and Creative Collisions. The project would engage young people in a range of heritage activities to develop skills, experience and confidence. Further details would be reported to the next meeting of the committee.

Harriet Loffler, curator of modern and contemporary art, gave a power point presentation on the New Geographies for the East which would be a land mark project to nominate destinations of interest for art projects; the "We Came Here to Conquer: Eleven Artists Respond to the Print Collection at Norwich Castle" and the

“Women in the World” exhibition in the Timothy Gurney Gallery which would showcase women’s art in the Norwich Castle collection.

(Amanda Geitner left the meeting at this point.)

The operations manager circulated the attendance figures for the last quarter at the meeting. Visitor numbers at Norwich Castle in August were highest on record since 2001, and could be attributed to the success of the Nelson exhibition and the Pirates and Seafarers children’s activities. The Nelson exhibition was continuing to attract visitors this month as many people had waited for the school holidays to end. The Freeman open days had also made a dramatic impact on visitor numbers. The Heritage Open Days had also been very well attended with Norwich Castle reporting its busiest day ever on the Saturday (9 September 2017). In response to a question on the impact of such high visitor numbers, the operations manager said that there had been congestion at the café which had struggled to cope with the demand on that Saturday. He pointed out that it had also been a very wet day and the combination of free access had contributed to the high visitor numbers. An important aspect of the Keep Project would be to study the flow of visitors around the museum. There had been no negative comments on Trip Advisor, although one person had commented that Norwich Castle was “a nice place, not that old”.

Councillor Maxwell, as chair of the Mousehold Heath Conservators, said that the Conservators were interested in identifying links with the heath and Norwich Castle and could contribute to the Keep Project. Former tram lines were being marked and recorded on the heath.

The operations manager then presented the good news to members that Norfolk County Council had provided capital funding for major improvements to the external lift at the castle, alongside improvements to environmental controls within the main temporary exhibition galleries in the museum. The lift operating system needed to be replaced and should be operational by the end of March 2018. Environmental control was important and Norwich Castle had to meet standards to satisfy the rules to continue to receive exhibits on loan. This project should be completed by the end of 2019-20 when the Keep Project was also expected to open to visitors.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the report and thank the officers for their presentations;
- (2) ask the chair to write:
 - (a) a letter of condolence to the family of Katrina Siliprandi and express gratitude for her stewardship of the learning programme and that her influence will continue as a legacy into the future;
 - (b) to write to the chairman of the Freeman to pass on the committee’s vote of thanks for their generosity in supporting the Norwich museums;
- (3) note that at the next meeting there will be further reports/presentation on:

- (a) the current work of the Norwich Museums learning team with young people
- (b) the HLF Kick the Dust programme.

CHAIR