

Norwich Area Museums Committee 4 June 2019

Norwich Museums briefing: February to May 2019

1. Exhibitions at Norwich Castle

1.1 *Viking: Rediscover the Legend* (9 February – 8 September 2019)



This major partnership exhibition from the British Museum and York Museums Trust explores what it meant to be a Viking and how the Vikings transformed and shaped every aspect of life in Britain, featuring some of the most significant Viking discoveries ever made.

Over a thousand years since the Great Viking Army arrived in East Anglia in 865, the Vikings! *Viking: Rediscover the Legend* exhibition brings some of the most significant Anglo-Saxon and Viking treasures ever discovered in Britain to the Castle for an extended run from 9 February to 8 September 2019.

Featuring star objects from the British Museum and Yorkshire Museum, *Viking: Rediscover the Legend* offers a fresh perspective on how the Vikings shaped many aspects of life in Britain. The exhibition features a number of iconic objects including the Anglo-Saxon York Helmet - the most outstanding example of its type to survive, a knight from the Lewis Chessmen and the most significant Viking treasure ever found in the UK – the Vale of York, Cuerdale and Bedale Viking Hoards.

These finds are shown alongside highlights from Norwich Castle's own extensive collections, including many items on display for the first time, which help to tell the distinctive regional story of the Viking presence in East Anglia.

As well as providing a spectacular display, these fabulous objects are interpreted in new ways which challenge our perceptions of what it meant to be a Viking. The gallery features a range of different approaches to interpretation including interactives, making the exhibition accessible for visitors of all ages. A comprehensive programme of schools and other activities is being delivered alongside the exhibition including gallery tours led by the NMS exhibition curator Dr Tim Pestell.

1.2 Timothy Gurney Gallery - *Lines of Sight: Sebald's East Anglia* (10 May 2019 - 5 January 2020)

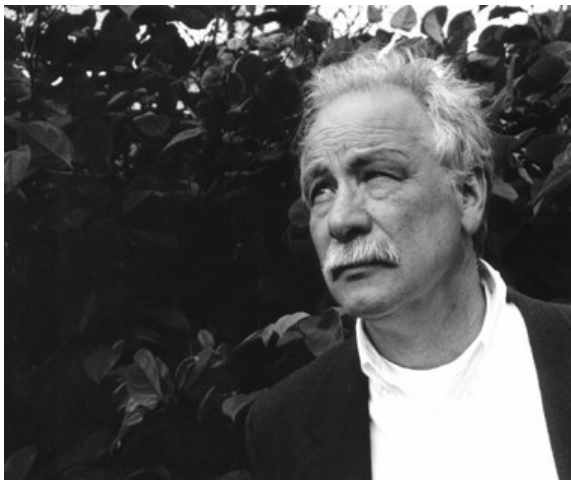
This exhibition brings together a diverse selection of celebrated artworks, curious objects, archive material and the author's own, unseen photographs to tell the story behind the creation of one of East Anglia's most famous literary masterpieces, *The Rings of Saturn* (1995).

From the mystery of Sir Thomas Browne's skull to the secret landscapes of the Cold War, from the ghostly vessels of the vanished Herring fleets to intricate pattern books of Norwich silk weavers, this exhibition gathers the threads of Sebald's enigmatic text to present a uniquely poetic visual portrait of East Anglia that will appeal to both those familiar and new to his work.

W.G. Sebald (1944 – 2001) – or Max to his friends – is one of the most revered, authors of the late 20th century. His evocative and unclassifiable prose works: *Vertigo* (1990), *The Emigrants* (1992), *The Rings of Saturn* (1995), and *Austerlitz* (2001) - continue to attract a remarkable international following. His reputation and the passionate devotion of readers to his work have grown significantly since his untimely death in 2001 at the age of 57.

The exhibition is a collaboration with the University of East Anglia and is sponsored by The East Anglia Art Fund and The Book Hive

A comprehensive programme of talks has been organised to complement this important exhibition.



W.G. Sebald ©University of East Anglia

1.3 Colman Gallery temporary displays (- 30 June 2019)

The current extended exhibition in the Colman Project Space is *Magritte: The Lost Painting*. This explores the story of the detective work recently undertaken on NMS' Magritte painting *La Condition Humaine*, where a quarter of a missing Magritte painting, *La Pose Enchantée* was discovered underneath the later work.



La Condition Humaine by Rene Magritte © NMS

1.4 John Sell Cotman in Norwich and London – until 9 June

A chance for visitors to explore the last two decades of Cotman's life through iconic late watercolours and rarely seen drawings.



John Sell Cotman, *Storm on Yarmouth Beach* 1831, watercolour on paper © NMS

2. Forthcoming exhibitions

2.1. Tor Falcon – Rivers of Norfolk (12 July 2019 – 12 January 2020)

This remarkable body of drawings is the result of a three-year project revealing the wonderful variety and beauty of Norfolk's rivers. This exhibition will be on show in the Colman Project Space and is supported by the East Anglia Art Fund.

3. Norwich Castle Events

3.1 LEGEND! A programme of visitor events at Norwich Castle

Norwich Castle's exhibition *Viking! Rediscover the Legend* has inspired 'LEGEND' a varied programme of exciting crafts, activities and trails for families visiting during school holidays. Highlights include:

- *Invasion!* A chance to meet Ordgar – the wild Vikings of *Norwic*. Visitors were encouraged to get into the Viking mood by wearing costumes and learning about Viking life.
- *Archaeology Day: Dig the Vikings*. Encouraging stimulating engagements with Viking age objects in NMS collections and the contribution of archaeology as a means of bringing the past into our modern lives.
- *Science Day: Masters of the Sea*. An exploration of the natural science of the Vikings' seafaring skills in partnership with Whitlingham Adventure and Active Norfolk.
- Inspired by Cressida Cowell's children's book *How to Train Your Dragon*, the story of Hiccup the Viking is brought to life in a story-telling drama suitable for all the family.
- *Warriors!* – demonstrations of Viking weapons and combat techniques by

stage and screen choreographer Keith Wallis with Keith Young.



Partnership working has been central to the development of this programme. Staff have worked with City College Norwich, bringing in students on the Level 2 and Level 3 Hairdressing course to run the very popular 'Viking Sassoon' pop up hair salon throughout February Half Term and Easter Holidays. Visitors were invited to enjoy the full salon experience, complete with a waiting area, copies of *Viking Vogue* to flip through and a selection of braiding styles to choose from. This was a

popular activity with our visitors, which even saw a couple of beards being

braided too, in 'Viking' styles inspired by TV characters. It provided a useful experience for the students also, who were able to strengthen and develop their customer service skills in a new environment and gain confidence and expertise in engaging with visitors of all ages over the course of the two holiday periods.

3.2 Museums at Night – 18th May 2019

This is a key date in the Castle's calendar, with the museum opening its doors after-hours to the local community for free. The event featured exceedingly popular demonstrations of medieval weapons collection, torchlit experiences of the Natural History Gallery in the dark, and plenty of opportunities for #Keepsakes selfies with costumes, props and more.

3.3 Norwich Castle 'Knight Club'

Norwich announced its inaugural '*Knight Club*' in September 2018 and a new 6-week training course for eager knights was run in January-February 2019. The Club is proving very popular and successful with its target audience (children aged 8-11), seeking to bring together historical knowledge and sports during six two-hour sessions held at Norwich Castle. Participants discover the secrets of medieval arms and armour, tournament combat, battle tactics and many other skills necessary to be a successful knight. Each session is led by a trained instructor, using specially designed protective equipment.

The theme of the medieval Knight is being developed in conjunction with the Norwich Castle Keep Project and the success of the 'Knight Club' initiative will be built upon during delivery of the Activity Plan over the coming four years.

3.4 ST*ART Masterclass

In March, in conjunction with the well-established ST*ART Club, artist Karl Foster facilitated an art session for children aged 8-12 years, inspired by the ancient hoards on display in the Viking! Exhibition. The day was well-attended by existing ST*ART-clubbers and new recruits.

3.5 Broadening Audiences – Open Doors

As part of NMS's commitment to broadening participation and ensuring access and inclusion for all, Norwich Castle hosted an Open Doors event at the museum in April 2019. The purpose of the event was to make adaptations to the programme and spaces to ensure a welcoming environment for visitors with a range of needs and requirements, and to encourage those who perhaps felt the museum was not a space they were able to enjoy, to visit for the first time. The team hosted BSL signed tours of the Castle Keep, the *Viking: Rediscover the Legend* exhibition and the *Female Voices* showcase for the Norwich BSL community; relaxed performances of the popular family drama *Hiccup the Viking*; a dedicated Quiet Space; an accessible tour of the Castle Keep using the main floor of the Castle and a Mobiloo Changing Places toilet facility. The event received press attention with a ten-minute interview on accessibility and inclusion

in the museum being broadcast on BBC Radio Norfolk on the morning of the event.

3.6 Taboo

In May Norwich Castle launched a new strand of visitor programming which explores hidden histories of the forbidden. The programme started with an illustrated talk exploring myths surrounding the medieval morality of chivalry, hyper-masculinity, brutality and gender identity. The series of events continues with 'Colonialism in the Decorative Arts' in June. This is an ambitious new strand of programming which directly addresses issues central to the Arts Council England's Creative Case for Diversity agenda across museums and heritage. Owing to the sensitivities of the topics developing high-quality, effective sessions requires a commitment and appropriate level of resourcing and as such staff will closely monitor and evaluate this series in consultation and collaboration with colleagues across the service and audiences.

4. Strangers' Hall

4.1 Activity update

NMS is pleased to welcome Tracey Mavor to Strangers' Hall to her new role as Building Services Supervisor. Tracey has been a member of the Visitor Services team for some while, and over the last few months has helped with the delivery of mini-tours and Christmas tours at Strangers. New Teaching Museum trainee Wednesday Batchelor from the Collections team is now working on auditing the children's toys collection.

Annual volunteer training to start the new season took place in March. The new NMS Volunteer Coordinator Michelle Gaskin had the opportunity to meet members of the volunteer steward and gardening teams and introduce her role.

Some welcome publicity for the Strangers' Hall Toy collection resulted from Curator Cathy Terry's BBC Radio Norfolk interview with Antiques expert Mike Hicks. March proved a particularly busy one for school visits with most available weekdays booked for formal sessions or day events. The new tour '*If Stones Could Speak*' given by the Learning Team's Jan Bensley and using structural evidence to show Strangers' Hall evolved over the centuries, was a sell-out. This year the Easter offer featured a hot-cross bun trail, with detail of the origin of the custom itself, recipes and tasting opportunities. From May 13th – 19th Strangers' Hall participated in the social media campaign *#MuseumWeek* with postings on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram themed around celebrating Women's role in Culture, and the popular Channel 4 series *Britain's Most Tudor Town* – Norwich is being re-broadcast this month.



Jan Bensley conducting an 'If Stones could speak' tour.

Current curatorial work at Strangers' Hall includes the conservation treatment and cleaning of the original upholstery from the Lord Mayor of Norwich's Coach, which is receiving specialist restoration at Fairbourne Carriages in Kent. The process has revealed a previous, probably original, covering underlying the moth-damaged top layer. This covering is an unusual and vivid raspberry Ottoman silk. New upholstery will feature synthetic fabrics and fillings which match the original but that are unlikely to be attractive to moth. Meanwhile the original upholstery has been returned to Strangers' Hall for freezing to kill moth larvae and cleaning. Each piece is being carefully recorded and an overall plan of its position within the coach recorded (an update on the conservation project will be given at the meeting by a member of the NMS Conservation Department).

4.2 English + Museum Club

A group from English+ (a charity set up to help people newly arriving in Norwich to learn English) is now meeting in Norwich museums on a monthly basis. Its aim is to build confidence to allow people with limited English to interact with the museum and museum staff, and to gain a sense of ownership of their community museums. Three months meetings have been held to date in the Museum of Norwich and Strangers' Hall, each consisting of an introductory tour and talk, followed by a session learning a craft together and time for tea, biscuits, and chat, as well as culinary delights from the countries from which our participants hail.



English + Museum tea party in Strangers Hall garden

5. Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell

5.1 The return of Samson to the Museum of Norwich.

In April the statue of Samson was returned to Norwich and installed at the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell, before being revealed to the public.

Samson had been in store in the care of Norfolk Museums Service for over twenty years. He and his partner Hercules were removed from the front of the nightclub building after Samson's arm fell off in 1993, and it was clear that a fine sculpture lay underneath the layers of paint.

Specialist conservators Plowden & Smith undertook a four-year restoration programme to remove 60 layers of paint and consolidate Samson's fragile crumbling central core. What was revealed was a beautiful carving of the Biblical hero, created from a single piece of oak and installed in central Norwich in 1657 by the Mayor Christopher Jay outside his grand house in Tombland.

Thanks to supporters of an Art Fund crowdfunding campaign, and other local charitable trusts and organisations including the Friends of the Norwich Museums, funds were raised to provide the newly conserved statue with a bespoke display case and digital interpretation.

The return of Samson generated significant local interest and coverage from the media including news reports by ITV Anglia, BBC Look East, EDP, Radio Norfolk and Radio Norwich. Many visitors have come to the museum just to see Samson installed in his new home.



Samson's face and upper body before and after conservation.



Samson secured on his bespoke mount

Conservators removed over sixty layers of lead paint, consolidated the rotten central core, and constructed a bespoke mount.

Staff at the Museum of Norwich along with Plowden & Smith were delighted to be nominated for a prestigious Museums and Heritage Award in the 'Restoration or

Conservation Project of the Year' category. The eventual winner was the £8.5 million restoration project of the painted hall at the Old Royal Naval College, London. Staff were delighted to have been shortlisted for this significant award within the heritage sector.

5.2 Snap comes to life!

The statue of Snap, on display in England's Second City gallery at the Museum of Norwich has recently 'come to life' courtesy of the *Talking Statues* Project.

Talking Statues is a trail of ten statues in Norwich which tell their own stories, which have been written and recorded by some eminent names from the world of literature and the arts including Stephen Fry, Olivia Colman, Sarah Perry and Karl Minns.

Snap's story was the subject of an under 16's writing competition, supported by the National Centre for Writing.



Snap at the Museum of Norwich



Winner of the Talking Statues creative writing project, Amelia Platt and the 'voice' of Snap – Joe Darbyshire.

This month, ten local schools have taken part in the Talking Statues trail, and completed their Arts Award in a day at the museum, thanks to support from the Norfolk and Norwich Festival Bridge team.

5.3 Norfolk and Norwich Festival - Will Teathers' globes

As part of the Norfolk and Norwich Festival internationally acclaimed artist Will Teather was commissioned to produce a series of site-specific spherical paintings, or 'globes'

After painstaking detailed photography, Will produced two globes for NMS, one is in the Norwich Castle Bird Gallery and the second is of the pharmacy at the Museum of Norwich. Visitors are invited to view the work as part of a trail around the city.



5.4 Summer exhibition – collaboration with Kick the Dust

The summer exhibition opening at the Museum of Norwich is ‘*Norwich in 1959*’. The exhibition will be the focus of city-wide celebrations of the 60th anniversary since Norwich twinned with Rouen in Northern France. The exhibition will feature contemporary photography of the two cities now, by local photographer Stefan Ebelewicz set against the story of the city in 1959. Stories about the background to the twinning, the glorious NCFC cup run, and the opening of Anglia TV all feature in the displays.

6. Learning Team activities and projects

6.1 Schools Visits to Norwich Museums

The Norwich Museums Learning team continue to facilitate and deliver high-class curriculum-based sessions for schools at the three Norwich museum sites to large numbers of school children (participation figures shown below)

	Castle	Museum of Norwich	Strangers' Hall
Feb-19	2090	181	46
Mar-19	2794	85	372
Apr-19	1086	212	33
May 19 (to 21.05.19)	1537	82	0
Total	7507	560	451

6.2 Snaplings

Learning Officer Steve Arber has developed and overseen delivery of an exciting new learning programme. ‘Snaplings’, the 0-2yr old group at Norwich Castle has taken off during the spring. After a very short social media campaign of 1 post, all three sessions each month are fully booked with several families now on waiting lists. The sessions offer sensory experiences for very young children through songs, rhymes and games. The themes of the sessions change monthly and they aim to help parents and carers to have a friendly and welcoming place to be with their babies and helps them learn skills to take away with them to use at home. Snaplings has been reported as being “...*The best group for babies in Norwich...*” by one of the mums.

Staff aim to expand the offer following the Keep redevelopment project in spring 2021 to accommodate the increasing number of visitors looking to engage with these events.

6.3 Developing the school offer

Learning Officer Jenni Williams has introduced a new Courtroom activity as part of the KS4 Crime and Punishment event, where students re-enact how defendants have been caught and put on trial from the Medieval era to the present day. Maintaining and building new relations with schools is an area of work the Learning team take very seriously and continue to provide CPD and training sessions. In the reporting period for this report, staff have worked with three new secondary schools – Witchford Village College for Medicine, Sir John Leman for Anglo-Saxon and Norman England, and Icenia Academy and Wayland Academy for Storming the Castle.

6.4 Teaching Museum Learning Trainee

George Baines joined the Norwich Learning Team in April 2019 and has rapidly become a valued member of the team. George explains in his own words what he has been doing: *'In my first month of being a teaching museum trainee in the learning team I have performed a varied array of tasks. From assisting with the half-term activities such as craft making sessions, to taking an active part in the Museums at Night event, in which I wore a full suit of armour and gave weapon and arms demonstrations, I have learnt many new skills as well as gained vital experience. I have also been working on developing the Norwich Castle Instagram account to try and increase engagement with our younger visitors. Alongside this I have observed multiple school visits as well as early year sessions and have been able to witness the varied work that the learning team perform on a daily basis.'*



George Baines (right) with Lee Warden during the Museum at Night medieval weapons displays

6.5 Heritage Fund ‘Kick the Dust’ programme

The National Lottery Heritage Fund (formerly known as the Heritage Lottery Fund) is providing a grant of £776,500 for the project *Norfolk Journeys*, under the HLF’s Kick the Dust programme. This consortium project is being delivered in partnership with YMCA Norfolk and Creative Collisions (a youth arts network based in Great Yarmouth). The project aims to engage with 11-25 year olds – including those most hard to reach - during a four year period from 2018-22. Through the project the young people will be able to participate in a range of structured heritage activities that will develop their skills, experience and confidence.

The project team is:

- Project Coordinator – Christine Marsden (based at Museum of Norwich)
- Project Worker (Norwich) – Rachel Daniel (based at Museum of Norwich)
- Project Worker (East) – Kate Cooper (based at Time & Tide)
- Project Workers (West) – Rachel Duffield (based at Gressenhall); Rachael Williams (based in King’s Lynn)

A summary of what the project aims to achieve:

“This project will create a model that will facilitate sustained engagement with the young people of Norfolk, including those most hard to reach. NMS will work with YMCA Norfolk and Creative Collisions, two organisations with a strong record of engaging the most vulnerable young people. Young people will create an individual journey into active engagement with Norfolk’s heritage, using structured progression pathways (*Player-Shaper-Leader*) based around a menu of options, tailored to meet individual needs. Specialise mentoring and the support of NMS will ensure young people reach their potential and achieve their aspirations. Outcomes for young people will include certificated skills and training, enhanced employment opportunities, active involvement in programming and a chance to shape the direction and governance of heritage organisations.”

Partnership working has been successful in terms of engaging with young people and in enhancing partners’ existing offers for young people. One of the key partners for ‘Kick the Dust’ is the YMCA. NMS funds an embedded youth engagement worker post in YMCA and this worker has been working alongside the three ‘Kick the Dust’ Project Workers around the county to deliver a range of heritage based activities. Up to the end of April, over 300 young people from the YMCA had taken part in the ‘Kick the Dust’ programme. Having built up trust with the ‘Kick the Dust’ Project Workers and other staff, the young people have gained in confidence and have started to move from ‘player’ to ‘shaper’ activity.

In April and May, YMCA activities in Norwich have been focused on all things Viking. An established group came to Norwich Castle Museum for a '*Viking Invasion*' day and were given an in-depth tour of the Viking exhibition as well as taking part in seafaring activities and making some Viking inspired metal art. The group developed their own tours of the Viking Exhibition, supported by the Learning Team, based around their favourite Viking artefacts and featuring costumed character and Viking story telling. They delivered these tours at a special event on 5 May where YMCA CEO's from across the UK attended their annual conference at Norwich Castle. To see the young people make such progress and gain in confidence is both inspiring and motivating, and shows that the approach we are taking is the right one.



YMCA CEO event hosted by young people on Kick the Dust

6.6 Norwich Learning Manager

Following Colly Mudie's retirement, Dr Helen Lunnon has now taken up the post of Norwich Learning Manager. Dr Lunnon was previously a lecturer for the UEA Cultural Heritage postgraduate programme.

7. Other Developments

7.1 Venue Hire Feb-May 2019

February saw a packed house for the opening of the blockbuster exhibition *Viking: Rediscover the Legend*, which is already proving to be a popular draw for visitors at Norwich Castle.

March's big event was again hosting the NCC OSCAs awards ceremony. This year's event had all the excitement of the circus with aerial hoop and acrobatics to impress the audience in the Castle Keep. With high quality catering from the

Castle Café it was an excellent evening celebrating the hard work and achievements of staff from across Norfolk County Council.



April saw significant changes in the Castle Keep, as collections and cases were removed in preparation for the major development works later this year. This brings exciting new opportunities to share the 'clear view Keep' this summer with visitors, particularly drawing attention to the architecture and features of the building that were previously concealed by displays. The Keep spaces were showcased in an event for UEA and the Aurora Network, which brings together research partners from universities across Europe. We also launched the first of a series of public talks and panel discussions with UEA entitled *Creative Now*, exploring the challenges and opportunities for the creative sector in our region.

May is one of the busiest months of the year for venue hire and evening events. The month began with a celebration for Cllr Margaret Stone to mark the end of her year as Chairman of Norfolk County Council. Following this, May also included the opening of the new exhibition *Lines of Sight: W.G. Sebald's East Anglia* as well as hosting the launch screening for UEA's Green Film Festival and two more discussion panels from the *Creative Now* series. May also saw the return of the popular annual *Museums at Night* event which provided members of the public with free access to enjoy the museum into the evening, as well as activities such as arms and armour demonstrations and the opportunity to explore the Natural History galleries by torchlight.



Finally, May also saw a number of collaborations as part of the Norfolk & Norwich Festival. As well as displaying one of Will Teather's amazing painted globes, and participating in the interactive experience *Reverse*, the Shirehall Courtroom hosted the story-telling show *Me & Robin Hood*. This was the first time this space has been used for an evening performance and it offered a unique and interesting space that worked well for both the audience and performer.

7.2 Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England project update

During the period covered by this report, work has been progressing well with the *Gateway to Medieval England* project. The primary focus has been to finalise the details and methodology of the construction programme, and the approach that building contractors will need to take to deliver this complex project. The tender for the main build contractor will be issued in June and all construction work will start after the closure and deinstallation of the exhibition *Viking: Rediscover the Legend* in October 2019.

In preparation for construction work to begin, staff from the NMS Collections, Design & Technical and Conservation teams have been working to empty the

Keep of all displays. Since the start of the year, they have safely removed, packed and stored over 1,300 objects. Visitors can currently appreciate the 'clear-view Keep' and an accompanying programme of events will help everyone make the most of this unique moment in the Keep's history.

Following the formal grant of Permission to Start by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, recruitment to the project funded posts has been underway. Interviews have been held for the project funded roles of Curator, Assistant Curator and Project Support Officer, and appointment of a Learning & Engagement Officer will shortly take place. Funding has been secured from Norfolk County Council capital funds to employ an additional Project Manager to support the construction phase and a Project Officer to facilitate the work of the Wider Impact Group. Recruitment for these roles is also underway.

7.3 Wider Impact Group

7.3.1 Keep decant

The Keep has been cleared of collections and nearly all cases and structures. This required collaboration between colleagues in conservation, collections management, a range of curatorial depts, design and building services, whilst colleagues in the learning and front of house teams have had to be flexible in the delivery of our services to the public. As noted above, over 1,300 objects have been carefully packed and moved, cases have been dismantled, structures removed, cases salvaged / stored / rehomed. Filming and photography has been recording the process throughout. The result is that the magnificent Keep is visible in all its structural glory for the next few months, prior to the handover to building contractors in the Autumn for the next phase in the project.

7.4 External Lift refurbishment

The refurbishment works to the Norwich Castle external lift funded through the NCC Capital programme are now complete and the lift is fully operational.

7.5 Rotunda and Rotunda toilets refurbishment.

A programme of works to refurbish both the Rotunda toilets and general Rotunda area is now complete, with the previous Rotunda basement toilets replaced with completely new facilities. With the assistance of local Interior Designers, Waldorf & Farrow, the main Rotunda areas have also been refurbished, including new décor, furniture and planting that helps to complement the Rotunda's 1960's architecture.

Both the toilet and Rotunda refurbishment programmes were funded through a successful bid made to the Landfill Communities Fund, WREN.

8. Visitor Numbers

Detailed visitor numbers will be circulated at the meeting.

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