



**Norwich Area Museums committee**

**14:00 to 16:20**

**8 March 2016**

Present:	<b>City Councillors:</b> Blunt Price Maxwell Thomas (Vi) Wright	<b>County Councillors:</b> Morgan (vice chair) (in the chair) Dearnley Hannah
Co-opted non-voting members:	Brenda Ferris (Norfolk Contemporary Art Society), Rory Quinn (Friends of Norwich Museums) (substitute),	
Apologies:	City Councillor Arthur (chair); County Councillors Bremner and Sands (M), Ceri Lamb (Friends of Norwich Museums), Amanda Geitner (East Anglia Arts Fund), Councillor Buck (Broadland District Council) and Councillor Hardy (South Norfolk District Council)	

**1. Public questions/petitions**

There were no public questions or petitions received.

**2. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Minutes**

**RESOLVED** to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2015.

**4. Norwich Museums briefing for period November 2015 to February 2016**

The head of operations and learning, together with the Norwich learning manager, and the Norwich area operations manager, presented the report and answered members' questions.

The committee commented on the innovative "Build on Your Own" exhibition and the innovative use of 3D printers to make prosthetics. A member said that his four year old son had enjoyed the exhibition, which showed children the world that they would inherit. Members also considered the potential use of 3D printers to enhance the interpretation of original material, such as using it to create scale versions of the West Runcton woolly mammoths. The committee noted that there had been record breaking attendances to the Vikings Guide to Deadly Dragons over the February half term holiday. A member commented on her experience when she visited the

exhibition with her grandsons and had found the staff in the shop very helpful. The committee asked for the employees in the museum, shop and café to be thanked for accommodating the extra visitors. The operations manager said that people often made repeat visits to exhibitions and visited the static exhibitions at the museum.

In reply to a question about the Viking exhibition, the Norwich learning manager confirmed that there would be interactive activities taking place at Easter. Members noted that arts and crafts events were popular with all ages.

The committee discussed the arrangements for Norwich Castle to be used as a wedding venue. Members were assured that Norwich Castle would remain principally as a museum but its use as a venue for weddings, conferences and banqueting would be beneficial and support income generation. In reply to a member's question, the operations manager said that weddings would be managed by the county council's registrars. More weddings tended to be held during the summer, whilst visitor numbers to the museum peaked during the February and October half-term holidays and at Easter. The operations manager said that there would be no need for wedding parties to queue as they would be shown into a waiting room before the ceremony. There would be no weddings on Mondays as the Benefactors Room would be reserved for meetings of the Friends of Norwich Museums and the East Anglia Arts Fund. The committee enjoyed a comment from Rory Quinn about the prisoners' treadmill being located in the Benefactors Room where couples would now be starting their married life. Members considered that a plaque to that effect should be placed near the exit door.

The operations manager circulated copies of the visitor numbers to members at the meeting and answered questions. He explained that school visitor numbers were still being collated. The record numbers of visitors in February demonstrated that Norwich Castle would be able to cater for the projected increase of visitor numbers once the Keep had been redeveloped. Visitor numbers demonstrated the importance of high quality exhibition and events programming. The Manet exhibition had a strong pull last year. Members were advised that although there had been record figures in February this year the figures were around 2,000 visitors less than last year. It was expected that there would be good visitor numbers in March as Easter was early this year and that this could be pulled back. Strangers' Hall had been closed in January to be deep cleaned. Members also noted that comparison of attendance figures for Strangers Hall' should take into account when it was closed for weddings on Saturdays which provided additional income.

**RESOLVED** to:

- (1) note the Norwich Museums briefing for the period November 2015 to February 2016;
- (2) ask the head of operations and learning to pass on the committee's congratulations to the museums staff who contributed to the smooth running of Norwich Castle, its shop and museum during the February half-term holidays when record-breaking visitor numbers were recorded.

## **5. Councillors Arthur and Blunt**

The vice chair (in the chair) said that as this would be the last meeting of the current civic year the committee should take the opportunity to thank the members who would be standing down at the city council's local election in May.

**RESOLVED** to record the committee's gratitude to Councillor Brenda Arthur as chair of the committee and Councillor Neil Blunt for their contribution to the work of the committee and support of Norfolk Museums Service.

## **6. Projects and partnership relating to the Medieval collections**

The curator of archaeology gave a power point presentation on the redevelopment project Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England, working in partnership with the British Museum and an advisory group of academics of differing disciplines to ensure the correct interpretation of the keep and collections. This included research into the changes made to Norwich Castle by Edward Boardman and North Sea trading in the Medieval period.

The committee also noted that the excavation of Carmelite graves and the discovery of a skeleton, which was being carbon dated as it was suggested to be that of Lady Eleanor Talbot, legal consort of King Edward IV. Other artefacts would be acquired or loaned from other museums.

Members considered the presentation highly interesting and particularly welcomed the high resolution photocopying of manuscripts of St Julian of Norwich and dissemblance through the internet to a wide audience.

**RESOLVED** to thank Dr Tim Pestell, curator of archaeology, for his presentation.

(Councillor Blunt left the meeting at this point.)

## **7. Norfolk Contemporary Art Society**

Brenda Ferris, Norfolk Contemporary Art Society (NCAS), presented the report to update members on the activities of the society and its preparations for its sixtieth anniversary. She confirmed that the exhibition of the paintings in Norwich Castle's collections which the society had either lent, gifted or part-funded would be held in September and opened by Sir Timothy Colman.

Brenda Ferris also referred to the NCAS spring 2016 programme of events which she circulated at the meeting. She pointed out that Assemble would be giving a talk in July 2016 and said that this was "great catch" for the society.

**RESOLVED** to note the report.

(Councillors Dearnley and Price left the meeting at this point)

## **9. Responding to the changing requirements of the National Curriculum**

The Norwich learning manager gave a power point presentation the museums services response to changes in the National Curriculum. She pointed out that the service also worked with young children, higher education and events on the visitor programme.

The committee noted that pre-history was on the curriculum for the first time and that the museum could link its activities to literacy and maths. School visits gave children the opportunity to dress up and touch artefacts. There was usually a character involved to bring history to life.

A local history option had been added to history GCSE. Norwich Castle had already been contacted by a couple of schools to progress this.

Members commented on drafts of the primary schools' programme as a folded A4 flyer or a A4 booklet. Members preferred the larger size document as the smaller size was difficult to read.

### **RESOLVED to:**

- (1) congratulate Colly Mudie, Norwich learning manager, for her presentation; and<
- (2) commend her and the team for adapting the museums service in response to the changes in the National Curriculum.

CHAIR