

Bridewell Museum redevelopment - Update

Report by the Norwich Museums Manager

Summary

The Bridewell Project will:

- build on the Bridewell's strengths in industrial history, and bring in social history, costume and textiles, art and archaeology collections to tell the wider story of Norwich people and their City.
- include oral testimony and contemporary collecting and recording to bring the Norwich story up to date.
- interpret a remarkable Grade 1 Listed 14th C building.
- provide a fully accessible museum experience, which minimises barriers to physical, sensory, and intellectual access, and enables all visitors to feel welcomed and engaged.
- develop and sustain local participation in the museum's development and operation.
- provide local people with access to their heritage.
- increase visitors' understanding and knowledge about the development of Norwich and the story of its people over time.
- identify and establish the position of the Bridewell within Norwich's heritage offer.
- contribute towards the development of Norwich as a heritage destination.
- enable outstanding schools and events programmes.

The scope of the Bridewell Project is relatively modest at just over £1.4m.

Public consultation is at the heart of developing the vision for the Bridewell displays and interpretation.

Architects, builders and display designers have been appointed through the NCC's tendering process.

Hannah Maddox, Project Curator and the Bridewell Community History Curator, will deliver a presentation on the overall museum and individual gallery design briefs, collections and display concepts and designs produced to date, and building plan proposals.

Recommendation:

That members consider this report and contribute their views on the proposals.

1 **Background**

- 1.1 The Bridewell began life as a house in the 14th Century. It has undergone many changes and been many things during its long life; a medieval merchant's house, a prison for women and beggars, a tobacco and snuff factory, and later a shoe factory. It was set up as a museum of trade and industry in 1925.

Since that time it has occupied a key place in Norwich's heritage "offer" and is much loved by a small but loyal audience. Consultation with users and potential users has confirmed that the displays are tired and that the story of Norwich trade and industry needs bringing up to date. The aim of the redevelopment is to use the strengths of the Bridewell collections to bring the story of how Norwich's industrial history to life.

- 1.2 In 2004/05 Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service became part of the Renaissance in the Regions Hub for the East of England in receipt of direct government revenue funding. A key element of its first business plan was to explore the development of the Bridewell Museum as a potential community museum. Funding was provided to create a Community History Curator post to consult with stakeholders, build partnerships, develop and evaluate modest displays and interpretation improvements, and to generate new activities, events and projects for museum visitors and outreach groups.
- 1.3 One of the key challenges in the redevelopment is the building's inaccessibility. Visitors have to negotiate several steps just to get into the building, and there are significant changes in floor levels once inside. A key part of the preparatory work included the commissioning of an access audit in May 2005, followed by a feasibility study in 2007. These investigated opportunities for accessibility improvements, including creating a new accessible entrance, lifts, level access around the museum and accessible toilets. A capital bid for £230,000 based on the Study's recommendations was subsequently approved by Norfolk County Council's Capital Works Programme in 2007.
- 1.4 The scope of the Bridewell Project is relatively modest, just over £1.4m:

FUNDING PROFILE	
Norfolk County Council Capital Programme	224,000
Norfolk County Council Building Maintenance Fund	20,000
Norwich City Council Building Maintenance Programme	76,000
Renaissance in the Regions	35,000
Friends of Norwich Museums	25,000
Other Trusts/funding sources (to be raised)	25,000
Heritage Lottery Fund	998,453
<i>Pre-application feasibility/development:</i>	
ISB (HEART) - <i>(for focus group consultation)</i>	4,391
Norfolk County Council Capital Funds <i>(building feasibility work)</i>	24,566
TOTAL AVAILABLE PROJECT FUNDING <i>including pre-application feasibility/development</i>	£1,432,410

2 Vision, Aims and Objectives

2.1 The aim of both the building and display programmes is to improve physical, sensory, intellectual and emotional access to the building and the displays. This will mean developing some new display schemes but will also mean retaining and augmenting many of the existing and well-loved displays through adaptation, enhancement and new interpretation.

2.2 The Bridewell Project will create the first ever museum dedicated to the story of Norwich people and their city. Norwich was historically one of England's most important cities. We want the Bridewell to be a source of pride in the City and to reflect and articulate a local sense of identity. To achieve this, the choice of collections and interpretation approaches will be generated through participation and consultation, involving people with a wide range of life experiences.

2.3 The Bridewell Project will:

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- include oral testimony and contemporary collecting and recording to bring the Norwich story up to date.
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To achieve these objectives, the project budget will be used to:

- create an accessible and welcoming new entrance to the museum, and level access throughout the public areas in the museum.
- carry out some improvements to the building and its basic services together with necessary repair and refurbishment.
- fund a thorough consultation process to inform the project at all stages.

redisplay many of the galleries and enhance and refurbish existing popular displays.

3 Museum display development and public consultation

The research findings demonstrated that there is considerable support from both Norwich residents and visitors to the City for the Bridewell to continue to concentrate on trade and industry, but to also provide an overview of the story of Norwich drawing on NMAS's rich social history, costume & textile and art collections. This would involve providing an historical context and acting as a reference point or hub giving people greater knowledge and understanding so that they are encouraged to go out into the City to explore the remaining historic built environment and other heritage attractions and museums.

4 Current Position

4.1 Building design and construction

4.1.1 The contract for architectural services to further develop and manage the building alterations and improvements was advertised in March 2009. 11 Tenders were received and local architects Lucas Hickman Smith, architects for the Dragon Hall redevelopment, were appointed on 21st April 2009.

4.1.2 A new entrance will be constructed between the large arched windows on Bridewell Alley. A small platform hoist will deal with the internal and external level differences and provide access to the new reception and shop area. One further lift will overcome height differences on the ground and first floors in addition to carrying disabled visitors and buggies to and from the first floor.

Further changes in the building include converting a window into a doorway from the new reception area into the courtyard, and new stairs from the courtyard to the undercroft in order to provide safe fire egress in order to be able to provide guided tours.

4.1.3 Plans and detailed specifications have been prepared to include the alterations described and necessary repair and refurbishment of the building as a whole, to include completion of roof repairs, rewiring, improvements to fire protection and security systems, general repairs and redecoration.

The plans have received Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent and the building contract tender was advertised in October 2009. Following the evaluation of expressions of interests on the basis of business viability, 4 contractors were invited to Tender in January 2010 and the building contract was awarded to local builders Draper & Nichols on 9th March 2010. The tender price is within the available budget for the building works.

4.1.4 Work will begin on site mid-April and will take up to 10 months. The project is particularly challenging as the museum is situated in a

crowded urban environment with pedestrian streets to two sides with only a small and difficult to access courtyard. Norwich City Council has agreed to allow the building contractors to use the alley between the church and the museum to place containers for storing materials and tools. Waste from the site will have to be managed carefully as there is no room for skips.

4.2 Display development, design, construction and installation

- 4.2.1 A Public Engagement Plan and an Interpretation Plan were prepared and submitted to HLF in April 2009 and September 2009 respectively, outlining a programme of public consultation and the project's interpretation strategy.
- 4.2.2 The development of the overall concept and the content of the museum displays, including themes and topics, key stories, object lists and interpretive approaches are being led by the Project Curator and monitored by an Interpretation Team comprising the Project Leader, Project Officer, Social History Curators and Display Department staff.

Historical research is being carried out and display briefs developed for individual galleries by small groups of 2-4 experienced curators, learning officers and other key museum staff, including the social history and access curators from the Bridewell, Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum, Carrow House Costume and Textile Study Centre, Norwich Castle Study Centre at the Shirehall, and Strangers' Hall.

- 4.2.3 The museum display designs will be developed through a combination of external designers and the in-house Display Department. Concept designs and gallery layouts will be designed by external designers and case design and installation, to include positioning and mounting of objects will be undertaken by in-house designers.
- 4.2.4 The display design contract was advertised in December, Tenders received in January and short listed candidates interviewed 29th January. After considerable deliberation to establish that the preferred designers were able to meet technical requirements, a local company, Ugly Studios were awarded the contract on 11th March 2010. They will begin working on the concept designs in mid-March.

4.3 Collections

The Bridewell displays have been dismantled and the collections have been packed and relocated to temporary storage facilities. A few large and heavy items, e.g wire netting and chocolate enrobing machine, have been left on site as they are too heavy to move and too complex to dismantle. They will be protected during the building works. The majority of the Bridewell collections will be moved back to the site following the completion of building works programme and initial display fit-out, along with additional objects from the Norwich Museums social history, costume and textile and art collections.

4.4 Project Management

- 4.4.1 The project is being managed according to NCC's project management guidelines using Prince 2 methodology. A Project Board has responsibility for championing and monitoring the project.

Membership includes:

- NMA officers including the Head of Museums, the Assistant Head of Museums, and the Norwich Museums Manager who acts as Project Leader
- Norfolk County Council Cultural Services Department's Head of Finance
- Norwich City Council officer
- An elected member representing the Norwich Area Museums Committee
- Heritage Lottery Fund Project Monitor

Regular reports will go to JMAC and Norwich Area Museums Committee.

- 4.4.2 Building work is scheduled to start in April 2010 and take 12 months. Meanwhile, work will start on the display concepts. Once the building has been handed over by the building contractors work will start on site to install the new displays. This phase is expected to take until the end of 2011.

A note of caution here. NMA has found with all museum refurbishments that there are usually problems associated with the historic buildings that could not have been foreseen until stripping out is undertaken by the builders, often uncovering major issues to do with unsafe structures or hitherto unknown wells. Although we have allowed an element of time contingency, the timetable outlined above may need to be modified during the course of the programme.

5 Resource Implications

- 5.1 **Finance:** The majority of funding has been raised. If the final target is not reached plans will be scaled back to match the available budget.
- 5.2 **Property:** All necessary planning consents are in hand. A party wall consultant will be involved.

6 Other Implications

6.1 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

NMA puts diversity, equality and community cohesion at the heart of service development and service delivery. It aims to ensure that activities included in the service plan are accessible to diverse groups in Norfolk and that all policies, practices and procedures undergo

equality impact assessment. These assessments help the service focus on meeting the needs of customers in relation to age, disability, gender, race, religion & belief and sexual orientation.

- 6.2 **Communications:** The windows of the former corner shop and entrance to the museum have been displayed with graphic panels providing information about the project and how people can have their say. Throughout the project the local press will be utilised to publish public interest stories associated with the museum displays, to invite people to contribute through sharing their own experiences and donating objects.

7 **Any Other implications**

Officers have considered all the implications which members should be aware of. Apart from those listed in the report (above), there are no other implications to take into account.

8 **Section 17 – Crime and Disorder Act**

All NMAS service plans take account of the need to address the issues of social exclusion, one of the key triggers for crime and disorder. Many of the museums are located in areas of social deprivation and their development is part of an integrated regeneration strategy. By providing services that are accessible to local people, by encouraging participation by young people at risk of offending, by assisting schools in improving pupil attainment, by generating pride in the local heritage, NMAS is making a substantial contribution towards reducing crime and disorder in Norfolk.

Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service offers opportunities for KS3 and 4 pupils to develop their learning for Citizenship through experience, participation and reflection. Several museums in the service, including the Bridewell, can support pupils' learning about crime and the criminal justice system. We can help develop understanding about the role of prisons and related institutions, like the workhouse, in the past and compare this with today.

9 **Action Required**

That members note and comment on this report.

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper please get in touch with:

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If you need this report in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact Glenis Wright on 0344 800 8020 or 0344 800 8011 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.