

NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN AND WEST NORFOLK

KING'S LYNN AND WEST NORFOLK AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

**Notes of a Meeting of the above Committee held on
Monday 4 January 2010 at 2.15 pm
in the Committee Suite, Ground Floor, King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn**

PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs E A Nockolds	- Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk
Councillor Mrs S Smeaton	- Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk
Councillor A Tyler	- Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk
Mr T Humphreys	- Tourism Manager, Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk
Mrs W Vincent	- Democratic Services Officer, Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk
County Councillor M Langwade	- Norfolk County Council
County Councillor M Chenery of Horsbrugh	- Norfolk County Council
County Councillor R Rockcliffe	- Norfolk County Council (<i>arrived at 3.02 pm</i>)
County Councillor A J Wright	- Norfolk County Council
Dr R Hanley	- Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service
Mr T Thorpe	- Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service
Mr M Dennis	- Green Quay
Mr D Higgins	- Friends of the Museum

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Borough Councillors J Murphy and R Searle and Vanessa Trevelyan, Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service.

2 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 November 2009 were confirmed as a correct record.

3 MATTERS ARISING

Appointment of Youth Representative

The Chairman reported that contact had been made with the Youth Representative of the West Norfolk Parliament. An email response was received stating that a new representative would be elected in February 2010.

It was therefore sensible to await the election of the new representative in February before inviting him/her to attend future meetings of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the newly elected representative of the West Norfolk Parliament be invited to attend future meetings of the Committee in February 2010.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

6 REPORTS OF WESTERN AREA MANAGER

(a) King's Lynn Museums Report – October to December 2009

The Western Area Manager presented a report which provided Members with information on King's Lynn Museums from October to December 2009.

The following points were highlighted by the Western Area Manager.

- A varied programme of site-based children's activities had been organised for the Town House and Lynn Museums for the period October to December, supported by a piece of marketing print. Christmas events included *Christmas through the Ages* on 21-22 December (over 100 people attended) and *Act-a-long a Christmas Carol* on 23 December. The Museums Service would therefore look to replicate these events in the future.
- From March 2010 King's Lynn Museums would be hosting a 6 month job under the Future Jobs Fund (FJF) Scheme targeted at unemployed young people. The successful candidate would work alongside the Community Outreach Officer and will be able to develop their skills and enhance their CV. 100% funding for the post comes from the FJF Scheme and Renaissance in the Regions. Eligible applicants would be identified by the local Job Centre.
- Return of the Seahenge Stump to the Lynn Museum – The stump had been handed over to the NMAS and was being held in temporary storage at Gressenhall, where further conservation and mount-making work was ongoing. A schedule for installation was being drafted. It was noted that it would be necessary to close the Lynn Museum for a period of approximately 3 months when the stump would be installed. During the closure period, other maintenance works would be undertaken in addition to the preparation of the display cases and mounts. The Town House Museum would be re-opened during the closure of the Lynn Museum to maintain the museum offer in the town, offering free admission to the end of March. The stump measured 2.5m in height and weighed approximately 1.5 tons. It is anticipated that the Museum would be re-opened in May 2010. Background information was provided on the process of commissioning the display cases and background mounts. Examples of the materials proposed would be available for Members to view at the next meeting of the Committee.

Additional graphics boards would be provided together, with an update of the audio guide.

- The Friends were continuing to offer a varied programme for members and membership levels remained strong. Work was underway planning the 2010 activity programme for members. The Friends had agreed to provide match funding towards the acquisition of two archaeological metalwork finds from West Norfolk. The Friends had also agreed to support a long-term programme to reframe and restore a number of paintings in the fine art collection.
- The Fenland Project Officer was supporting a Fenland Partnership working group in developing and scheduling the next Fenland exhibition on the theme of Fenland Stories. Work was progressing well on the travelling exhibition and linked event programme, which would explore the myths, legends and memories of Fenland folk. The exhibition was due for launch in April 2010 and would tour across the Fens to mid 2011.
- The Fenland exhibition would have a virtual dimension on the new Fenland partnership website. The site had been built and was undergoing testing. Partner museums were currently undertaking website editing training so that they would be able to update their site entries and upload their own collections information. The website would be launched in April 2010.
- The witchcraft project was being developed with Renaissance in the Regions partners and the University of East Anglia. The travelling exhibition would visit King's Lynn and a number of Fenland towns.
- School numbers had improved in recent months. During October to December 2009, 633 children visited King's Lynn Museums. During December, there had been strong interest in the Christmas events at the Town House, especially by Foundation teachers. NMAS were rebuilding the service offered to schools and the Learning Officer had been busy re-establishing networks with local schools.
- The Victorian Servants event took place on the 24 and 25 November, with classes from Whitefriars School attending on both days. The day included a visit to a prison cell and the children helped with the washing. The delivery of the event was supported by NMAS learning staff from Gressenhall.
- Eight young people aged 16-18 from King's Lynn who were categorised as NEET were taking part in a Renaissance-funded film-making project that explored how women had been treated in the past. The young people had researched the women in the local library and filmed at St Margaret's Church and the Greyfriars Tower.
- Following the successful funding bid for £25,000 to the HLF Young Roots Programme, the Picture This project was being taken forward by the Community Outreach Officer, who was working with eight local youth groups creating films about their local communities and heritage.

The visitor figures to King's Lynn Museums were tabled. The Western Area Manager reported that it was anticipated that visitor numbers would increase now the Lynn Museum was in the free admission period. The free admission scheme and the proximity of the bus station encouraged visitors during the

year. It was noted that there was a reduction in October 2009 compared to 2008, but there had been an increase in visitors during November and December compared to the previous year.

The Town House Museum was now closed to the public, but a number of school visits had taken place during November and December. The Town House Museum had also been pre-booked by a number of groups to hold courses, etc.

In response to questions regarding the Seahenge Stump and the presence of other seahenge(s), the Western Area Manager explained that there may well have been other similar monuments in the Bronze Age. This one, however, was unique as it had been preserved as the result of being sealed in a layer of peat. The importance of creating the correct display/mounts for the Seahenge stump was emphasised as it would be open to national scrutiny. The process for the conservation of the stump provided a long term solution and would be monitored closely. Work had been undertaken to map sites on the North Norfolk coast.

In response to questions from the Chairman, the Western Area Manager explained that the current opening hours of the Lynn Museum up to the end of March were Tuesday to Saturday, 10 am until 5 pm. A review of opening hours had been conducted two years ago and a decision was made to close the Town House Museum during the winter months. The opening hours of the Lynn Museum would be kept under review.

In response to a question regarding 2.5 of the report, the Western Area Manager explained that the Future Jobs Fund was a Government Scheme and the post offered would be for a 6 month job or a 12 month apprenticeship. The funding was currently a one off opportunity, but it could be assumed that if the scheme proved successful, further funding would follow in the same form or on a similar basis. The successful candidate would work alongside the Community Outreach Officer and be able to develop their skills and CV.

Following a further question, the Western Area Manager explained that Members could be circulated with a list of events organised by the Community Outreach Worker. If Members wished to attend any events, they were advised to contact the officer in advance. The Committee was also invited to attend any future events as a group.

The Chairman thanked the Western Area Manager for the detailed report.

RESOLVED: (1) That the report be noted.

(2) Consideration be given to the Committee as a group to attend a future event organised by the Community Outreach Worker.

(3) The Community Outreach Worker be invited to give a presentation at the next meeting of the Committee.

(4) Thanks be conveyed to the Friends of the King's Lynn Museums for their continued support.

(b) Review of Collections in King's Lynn Museums

The Curator of the Lynn Museum presented a report which provided information on the Phase 3 of the review of collections in King's Lynn Museums. It recommended the de-accessioning and rationalisation of a number of items that fell outside the NMAS Acquisition and Disposal Policy.

The stores at King's Lynn Museums contained a number of large social history objects which were brought into the collections during the 1970s at a time when museums generally were actively collecting items in a relatively uncontrolled manner, without reference to an official collecting policy or quality control. As a result many collections contained objects which were duplicated with other museums, of poor quality and now required large conservation resources to be of display standard. As a result access to other stored and better provenanced collections had been made difficult and on occasion impossible for health and safety reasons. Some objects showed signs of possible woodworm which might threaten other collections.

The rationalisation process at King's Lynn Museums began in 2007, and to date 88 objects had been rationalised and found new homes with organisations or original donors.

The priority for consideration in the third phase of the rationalisation process were large objects currently stored in North and South Warehouse, Aickman's Yard.

It was envisaged that a rationalisation programme would provide:

- Improved care and access to the collections stored at Aickman's Yard store.
- Creation of space to allow improved collections management of stored collections including the stored Seahenge Bronze Age timbers from Holme.
- Resources and storage space freed up to better care for and utilise other parts of the collection.
- Removal of any threats posed by items in the form of possible woodworm infestation.

It was noted that while finding a new home for the objects in another museum would be the ideal first priority, it may be that because of the poor quality and lack of provenance of the objects, destruction of the objects may be the only realistic outcome of the rationalisation process.

The Curator of the Lynn Museum advised that during the 2007-2009 rationalisation programmes, no objects were subject to destruction.

The methodology for identifying items for de-accessioning and potential disposal was outlined.

The Committee was informed of the process for the disposal of accessioned material, together with the timescale as detailed in the report.

In concluding, the Curator of the Lynn Museum advised that the collections review was proposing to remove items that were of minimal interest in interpreting the history of King's Lynn, and would free up space and resources for the benefit of the remaining collections.

The Curator of the Lynn Museum drew the Committee's attention to the recommendation.

In response to questions, the Curator advised that there would be a Phase 4 review of collections in King's Lynn Museums.

County Councillor Horsbrugh reported that Bryan Howling was currently looking for suitable objects and there may also be other similar groups seeking objects such as those listed in Appendix A.

In response to questions on the fairground models, the Curator explained that the models were in poor condition, produced in the 1960's, and were not of display quality. The Tourism Manager undertook to investigate the possibility of displaying these models at the Southgates in King's Lynn.

RESOLVED: (1) That the Area Museums Committee agreed that the objects listed in Appendix A were de-accessioned.

(2) The Committee was invited to advise the Curator of the Lynn Museum of any group/organisation who were interested in any of the items listed in Appendix A.

(3) The Tourism Manager to investigate the possibility of displaying the fairground models at the Southgates, King's Lynn.

6 REPORT OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Tourism Manager presented a report that updated Members of the Committee on the operation of the tourism and heritage facilities operated by the Borough Council.

The key points were highlighted as set out below:

- Adding to the contents of the report, the Tourism Manager reported that visitor numbers to the Borough Council's two main Tourist Information Centres in King's Lynn and Hunstanton during the period January – December 2009 had totalled over 245,000, around 11.5% more than in 2008. In Hunstanton, the total of just under 154,000 visitors was the highest recorded in recent years and 15.7% higher

than last year. In King's Lynn the total of 91,400 visitors was 5.1% higher than 2008 and the second highest since 2001.

- Downham Market TIC – To date in 2009 (January – November) a total of 1,914 enquiries had been made at the Tourist Information desk of the Council Information Centre at Downham Market. The December figures for Downham Market were not yet available.
- Tales of the Old Gaol House – Visitor numbers to Tales of The Old Gaol House for the period January – December 2009 were 6% higher compared with 2008.
- West Norfolk Holiday Guide – Delivery for distribution to take place from 4 January 2010.
- West Norfolk Advertising Campaign – The final total number of enquiries from the 2009 campaign was close to 38,000 enquiries. This was below the target of 42,000 enquiries. This in part reflected increased spending on locally based advertising and promotions to promote visits by local residents and day visitors to local attractions, offset by a reduced spend on national advertising aimed at generating enquiries for the main brochure. Looking to 2010 the planned increased use of on-line advertising media to generate requested for the 2010 holiday guide was expected to increase the level of enquiries to 46,000 based on the same level of advertising spend as in 2009.
- Other publications – Production of Where To Go and What To Do in West Norfolk was underway with publication due for early February. New editions of the Hunstanton mini guide and Downham Market mini guide and Discover King's Lynn would be produced by March 2010.
- King's Lynn Town Guides Leaflet – The Borough Council will again be organising design and production of the King's Lynn Town Guides guided walks leaflet in conjunction with the King's Lynn town guides.
- Hunstanton Promenade – Sea Change application. The application to the Seachange programme for a Promenade enhancement programme did not succeed in attracting one of the limited number of grants available. A total of 7 grants were awarded nationally. There were over 40 applications. Despite this outcome, work was continuing to take place to prioritise and develop further proposals for a number of schemes to enhance the promenade.
- The Town Hall – Further work in respect of the service review process including the future development of proposals at the Town Hall was continuing to take place in accordance with the actions reported to the Committee in November. There were no further outcomes to report.
- Service Reviews – The current service reviews being undertaken by the Borough Council may impact on net budgets and delivery of tourism and heritage facilities.

In response to questions on the delivery of the West Norfolk Guide, the Tourism Manager explained that the guides would be available at the TIC in Hunstanton on 4th January and at King's Lynn TIC 5 January. The guides would also be distributed via the Leisure Target Distribution Network within the local area

In response to a question on the increase in visitor numbers in Hunstanton, the Tourism Manager suggested that the reason for the increase had probably been mainly due to the favourable weather conditions during the summer period and the positive effect of the economic climate on UK tourism. Good feedback had been received from visitors via letters and emails.

The Tourism Manager confirmed that accommodation was featured in West Norfolk Holiday Guide. A single advertising charge for the coverage in the brochure and the website ranged from around £100 for the smallest entry to over £2000 for a double page entry.

The Chairman thanked the Tourism Manager for his informative report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Green Quay Update Report

The Manager of the Green Quay provided a verbal update for the period April to December 2009.

It was reported that it had been an extremely tough year for the Green Quay, the following figures were noted:

Café income increase of 4.8%
Shop income increase of 6.9%
Footfall increase of 5.3%

Due to a decrease in trade during the last two months, the decision had been taken to reduce the number of staff by one-third in order for the Centre to continue trading. It was anticipated that the Centre would be able to keep open for a further year. A reduction in service had meant that the income level had decreased.

The Green Quay was being used by groups during the evenings and also by the Paul Nicholas Acting School every Saturday, at which 75 children attended each week.

The Manager of the Green Quay highlighted that the centre was beginning to look “shabby” as it was now 10 years old. No money had been spent on improvements to the Centre and this did not create a good impression. He also raised concern of the lack of signage as the centre was open 361 days of the year.

Conference and training facilities were available at the Centre and additional bookings were required if the Centre was to survive.

In May 2010, the Green Quay was planning to celebrate its 10th Anniversary during the Bank Holiday weekend.

The Education Officer had been taken over by Natural England, but would remain based at the Green Quay for a 3 year period.

The Green Quay was in the current situation partly due to the loss of grant from Norfolk County Council and a grant reduction from the Borough Council. The Centre could not run on the café/shop alone.

In response to comments on the importance of the Green Quay, the Chairman suggested that Natural England be encouraged to help promote the facilities offered by the Green Quay.

In response to questions, the Green Quay Manager explained that the current situation of the centre would be reported to the Trustees at their meeting in 3 weeks time.

RESOLVED: (1) That the update report be noted.

(2) Thanks be expressed to the Green Quay Manager for the work undertaken by his team and himself.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 12 April 2010 at 2.15 pm in the Council Chamber, Ground Floor, King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn.

If any Member is unable to attend this meeting, please could they forward apologies to the Democratic Services Officer well in advance of the meeting.

The Meeting closed at 3.37 pm