

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 2nd June 2014 at 2.15pm in the
Heritage Room, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn**

PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs E A Nockolds (Chairman)	-	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
Councillor A J Wright	-	Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk
County Councillor M Chenery	-	Norfolk County Council
County Councillor H Humphrey	-	Norfolk County Council (Vice-Chairman)
J Bracey	-	Vice- Chairman, Joint Museums Committee
Dr R Hanley	-	Norfolk Museums Service
Rachael Edwards	-	Senior Democratic Services Officer, Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk

The Chairman, Councillor Mrs Nockolds welcomed J Bracey (Vice-Chairman of the Joint Museums Committee) to the meeting and thanked him for attending.

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Councillor Mrs E Nockolds be appointed Chairman for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That County Councillor H Humphrey be appointed Vice-Chairman for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Lindsey Bavin (Museum Manager, True's Yard), Councillor D J Collis, Steve Miller (Head of Norfolk Museums Service) and County Councillor J Ward.

4 MINUTES

The notes of the meeting held on 31 March 2014 were agreed as a correct record.

5 MATTERS ARISING

There were none.

6 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

7 REPORT OF WESTERN AREA MANAGER

King's Lynn Museums Report – March 2014 to April 2014

The Western Area Manager presented the report which provided Members with information on King's Lynn Museums for the period March 2014 to April 2014 as set out below:

(i) Temporary Exhibitions and Events at Lynn Museum

The Lynn Museum continued to host a series of temporary exhibitions produced by the Fens Museum Partnership through the Fenland Lives and Land project which had been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The exhibition "Constructing the Past – Ancient Fen Crafts and Engineering" had been on show until 22 March and "Living on Land and Water – Discover a World of Waterways" had run until 17 May. The final exhibition "The Wild Fens – A Journey back to Ancient Landscapes" would run from 23 May 2014 to 27 July 2014. Complimentary drop in events targeted at families had been organised and funded through the project, including "Living on Land and Water" on 5 April 2014 and "The Wild Fens" on 24 May 2014.

The major temporary exhibition for 2014 would be "1914-2014: King's Lynn and the First World War" which would run from 9 August 2014. Marking the centenary of the outbreak of the Great War, the exhibition would explore the town's experience, including damage caused by Zeppelin raids, the Home Front and the role that local businesses played in the war effort.

A programme of illustrated talks continued to be offered at Lynn Museum on Wednesday afternoons. Recent topics had included Suffolk Zeppelin Raids and Ancient Fenland Landscapes. Attendances averaged at 15-25 people and most talks had been delivered by Norfolk Museum Services' (NMS) staff.

A regular programme of informal family learning events continued to be offered at the Lynn Museum. Recent 'drop-in' format sessions had included "The Vikings are Coming" on 5 April with 35 participants and "Besieged: Lynn and the Civil War" on 15 April with 75 participants. The next event was "Pirates Ahoy" on 27 May.

(ii) Other Museum Developments

The refresh of the main exhibition gallery at the Lynn Museum was largely completed, utilising funding from the Arts Council England (ACE) Major Partner Museum Programme. The refresh had seen a range of displays re-displayed or enhanced with additional collections, to ensure the quality of the visitor experience at Lynn Museum was maintained. The improvements had been designed and delivered by NMS in-house design and technical team.

The Lynn Museum continued to develop its social media presence, with Twitter and Facebook accounts being maintained by staff, with the number of users on the increase.

The team of collections volunteers recruited and trained in 2013 continued to meet on a weekly basis in the NMS offices in Queen Street, supervised by the current Teaching Museum Trainee, Emily Shepperson. Volunteers had continued with a programme of work involving the scanning and cataloguing of the Henry Baines sketch collection. There were currently nine active volunteers.

Following the staff restructure which was reported at the previous meeting of the Committee, Dayna Woolbright had now taken up the post of Curatorial Assistant for King's Lynn Museums. The role included support for the management of the Town Hall regalia and other non-archive collections, delivered under the terms of the enhanced Service Level Agreement (SLA) between NMS and the Borough Council. Dayna Woolbright was a graduate of the NMS Teaching Museum Programme and was previously based in the NMS Collections Centre at Gressenhall. Dayna would be based at Lynn Museum, working alongside Curator Oliver Bone.

(iii) Friends of King's Lynn Museums

The Friends were continuing to offer a varied programme for members including lunchtime talks, trips and an annual lecture. The Friends continued to support the afternoon talks programme being offered at the Lynn Museum during 2014.

The Friends were continuing to fund a programme of painting conservation, with two works recently returned following specialist conservation work.

(iv) Partnerships

The Lynn Museum free admission period ran from October to March. The free admission period was provided under the terms of the SLA between the Borough Council and NMS, with part of the SLA funding contribution covering lost ticket income during the free admission period.

NMS continued to support the Borough Council with the HLF Round 2 funding bid for the Stories of Lynn project that was submitted in February 2014. As well as being part of the project steering group, NMS led on the development of the project Activity and Consultation Plans and the collections sections of the Conservation Management Plan. NMS also developed and managed the pilot programme of activities and events during 2013. NMS has recently assisted with the handling of clarification requests from the HLF, following bid submission. A decision was yet to be announced as to whether the bid submission had been successful.

The operation of NMS in King's Lynn & West Norfolk had been delivered under the terms of the 2014-15 SLA with the Borough Council. Under an extension to the agreement, NMS continued to provide curatorial advice, support and an enquiry service for those Borough collections currently held in the Town Hall including fine art and Civic Regalia. A new SLA (incorporating the extension) had been agreed for the period 2014-15.

At the request of the volunteer team that opened the South Gates in King's Lynn to the public, NMS staff had visited the site on 6th May to meet with the

organiser and to see the building and the displays. A short report of recommendations had been written including suggestions for improved interpretation of the landmark grade one listed building. A meeting would be arranged with Borough Council representatives to discuss the most appropriate way to take forward the recommendations. It was highlighted that the environment, along with security concerns, made South Gates unsuitable to display the museum collection. They had been advised that replicas could be used, and subsequently a number of brass rubbings had been loaned to them.

NMS staff had been supporting the Georgian Lynn & the Brilliant Burney Family Exhibition at the Custom House, due to open to the public on 6 June. Members of the museum team had been attending planning meetings and sourcing and preparing objects for loan to set the period context. These included two 18th century keyboard instruments, a black bonnet, a pocket watch and a wig stand. In addition Learning Officer Melissa Hawker would be supporting the Burney festival by giving a talk at the Lynn Museum on 18 June on the subject of Fanny Burney and the 18th century novel. The talk formed an addition to the museum's programme of Wednesday afternoon talks for adults.

NMS continued to lead the Greater Fens Museums Partnership through the development and delivery of the HLF funded partnership project; Fenland Lives and Land. The five exhibitions were co-produced by "clusters" of museums and community groups and were now touring a range of community venues across the Fens, including the Lynn Museum.

(v) Learning & Outreach

The Lynn Museum continued to host a 12 month Teaching Museum Traineeship through the NMS Teaching Museum Programme, funded by the ACE as part of the 2012-15 Major Partner Museum ACE Business Plan. The current trainee, Emily Shepperson, was working as Curatorial Assistant for King's Lynn (3 days per week) and Thetford (2 days per week).

As part of the HLF Skills for the Future Programme based at Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse, King's Lynn Museums and the Fenland Partnership were hosting a traineeship focussed on informal learning. Tabitha Runacres would be supporting the delivery of activities linked to the HLF-funded "Fenland Lives & Land Project", working with museums across the Fens.

Lynn Museum had continued to work with local schools to deliver a broad range of formal learning sessions. NMS learning staff were currently reviewing the implications of the recent changes to the History National Curriculum. Lynn Museum was seeing an increase in bookings for the Seahenge and Bronze Age workshops and sessions exploring local heroes such as Captain Vancouver and Frederick Savage. The Toys and Games event continued to be popular with local schools.

NMS was continuing to deliver a broad programme of youth engagement activities, funded as part of the ACE Major Partner Business Plan 2012-15. The programme focused on developing projects and engagement opportunities for young people including those categorised as "Not in Education, Employment or Training" (NEET).

The Youth Engagement Officer had continued to coordinate the Messy Museum Café programme at Lynn Museum, targeted at under 5's and young parents and was based on the Story Café model used in schools. Young parents were being reached through the local Sure Start group. Sessions were being delivered by the Youth Engagement Officer and Museum Learning Assistants from the Lynn Museum.

(vi) Visitor numbers

Robin Hanley explained that visitor figures were still to be finalised as a new ticketing system was being introduced however he updated the Committee on the provisional figures as per below:

Year 2013 – 2014 15,378 visitors

Year 2012 – 2013 14,256 visitors

April 2014 956 visitors

April 2013 890 visitors

May 2014 1091 visitors

May 2013 972 visitors

The provisional figures reflected an increase in numbers from the previous year as well an increase in the first two months of the new financial year. This mainly could be attributed to an increase in the number of family friendly events/activities which had been organised.

(viii) Norfolk Museums Service – 5 Year Strategy 2014 - 2018

A copy of the Norfolk Museums Service – 5 Year Strategy 2014-2018 was tabled. It was explained that a PDF copy was available on line.

In response to a question raised by the Chairman, it was confirmed that the team of collections volunteers were local residents. It was also confirmed that the Membership of the Friends of King's Lynn Museums currently stood at 100 – 120 with a revised membership leaflet having been produced.

Councillor A Tyler highlighted that some residents felt a degree of frustration that artefacts that had been donated were not being displayed, particular in relation to South Gates. Robin Hanley explained that discussions had been held with the volunteer team at South Gates when the Town House Museum had closed, and again more recently by Curator Oliver Bone. He reiterated that South Gates did not offer a suitable environment or the necessary security measures required to display the museum collection. Discussions could be held to discuss the potential to improve the interruption facilities and recreation of the space and there was also potentially some scope to submit a modest bid for funding.

In response to a further question from Councillor A Tyler as to how members of the public could ascertain what objects the museum service held, Robin Hanley explained the vast majority of items were logged and could be accessed on-line. He did however highlight that the current search facility

was in the process of being improved in the next few months to make it more user friendly and quicker. The facility would indicate whether the item was on display or in storage and in many cases, a picture would be displayed. King's Lynn Museum Service could also be contacted if further clarification was required. The NMS were also often approached with requests to loan out objects but consideration had to be given as to the suitability of the environment and whether appropriate security measures were in place.

In response to a question raised by J Bracey as to whether there were any plans for the partnership project "Fenland Lives and Land" to tour a wider area than just across the Fens, Robin Hanley explained that the funding awarded by the HLF for the project was focused on the Fens area, albeit Cambridge formed part of the Greater Fens Museums Partnership. He also confirmed that in terms of marketing the exhibition, the Partnership provided a degree of support centrally by providing an A5 glossy leaflet, assisting with Press Releases, publishing details on the Fen Museum Partnership website etc but ultimately promotion of the event was the responsibility of the various museums and community groups.

In response to a question raised by County Councillor Harry Humphrey, Robin Hanley confirmed that donors of artefacts were informed if there were plans to dispose of relevant items and were also given the opportunity to have the item returned to them.

County Councillor Harry Humphrey also questioned who was responsible for any bookings in respect of the Regalia Rooms. Robin Hanley clarified that bookings were taken via the Old Gaol House (responsibility of the Borough Council) and tours were likely to be hosted by the caretakers located at the Town Hall. NMS were however available to offer advice and answer any specific enquiries.

Robin Hanley confirmed that NMS learning staff were currently reviewing the implications of the recent changes to the History National Curriculum and were working closely with both Greyfriars Primary School and Whitefriars CE Primary School. There was an increase in bookings for the Seahenge and Bronze Age workshops which were attracting interest from schools further afield. He also explained that subject to the success of HLF bid to redevelop the Town Hall, NMS would work closely with the Borough Council to further increase and promote the offer along with the activities programme available to local schools. Robin Hanley confirmed that subsidised travel had been offered albeit it had proved to be a challenge given the large number of schools situated in rural areas across the Borough.

Councillor A Tyler referred to the Georgian Lynn & the Brilliant Burney Family Exhibition that was due to open shortly and suggested that a modest bust of Dr Charles Burney to support the exhibition would be appropriate. He explained that he had discussed the idea with the Mayor who had expressed interest and had also mentioned it to the Committee responsible for organising the exhibition. Quotes were being obtained to ascertain costs. Councillor A Tyler further proposed that any such costs could be met by means of sponsorship from various organisations.

County Councillor Chenery suggested that there appeared some confusion in terms of the King John Cup in that some thought that the origin to be French.

The Chairman suggested that once the outcome of the bid submitted to HLF for funding to help make its collections more accessible was known, any subsequent display could be reviewed.

County Councillor Chenery also made reference to the attendance at the meeting by the County Council representatives albeit it was acknowledged that the meeting coincided with the monthly Planning Committee meeting at the Borough Council.

RESOLVED: The Area Museums Committee noted the report.

8 SITE UPDATE REPORT

True's Yard Museum Six-Monthly Activity Report

In the absence of Lindsey Bavin, Museum Manager, the six monthly activity report was noted. The Chairman highlighted that the Borough Council did allocate funding to True's Yard and also drew attention to the visitor numbers for the year 2013 – 2014 which were encouraging at 10,411.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Monday 27 October 2014, 2.15pm in the Committee Suite, King's Court, Chapel Street.

The Meeting closed at 3.25pm