
BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

BRECKLAND AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

**Held on Friday, 24 July 2009 at 11.00 am in
The Council Chamber, King's House, Thetford**

PRESENT

Mr P.J. Duigan
Mrs J. Ball
Mrs P.A. Spencer

Mr M. Brindle
Mrs D. Irving
Mr J.D. Rogers

Also Present

Mr R. Key
Mr D. Blackburn
Mr H. Stephens

In Attendance

Mr Oliver Bone

- Curator of the Ancient House, Museum of Thetford Life
- County Archaeologist
- Western Area Manager
- New Communities Project Officer
- Member Services Officer

Mr David Gurney
Dr Robin Hanley
Laura Matthews
Helen McAleer

Action By

7/09 TOUR OF THOMAS PAINE EXHIBITION AT ANCIENT HOUSE MUSEUM

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, some Members enjoyed a tour of the Thomas Paine exhibition at the Ancient House Museum with Oliver Bone.

8/09 GROWING COMMUNITIES PROJECT.

Laura Matthews gave Members a presentation of the work she had been involved in as the Growing Communities Project Officer.

She explained that museums had an important part to play in bringing people together and helping to develop an identity and sense of place. For the past year a pilot project had been run in partnership with other museums located within Growth Areas and Points, including Peterborough, Bedford and Bury St Edmunds, exploring the potential for museums to contribute to building sustainable communities.

Following a meeting with the planning team for Moving Thetford Forward the museum had agreed to present an exhibition called 'Thetford: Yesterday and Tomorrow'. The museum was involved in all stages of the planning process which covered consultation; planning (assisting with archives, maps and knowledge of the history and archaeology of places); and then working to build sustainable communities.

Action By

Work had been done to involve Year 8 pupils from the Charles Burrell Humanities School in the consultation process, including model making, and this had been a very creative way of engaging young people.

Another scheme had worked with children in a new school at Queens Hills in Norwich (a new estate of 1400 houses) to give them a sense of identity. It was hoped that this pilot could be used in Thetford.

Looking forward to 2009 – 2011 the museum would continue to contribute to the growth process and community engagement and to build partnerships with other areas. A follow-up Museums, Sustainability and Growth conference was planned for June 2010.

9/09 CHAIRMAN

After being duly proposed and seconded it was

RESOLVED to re-elect Mr P Duigan as Chairman.

10/09 VICE-CHAIRMAN

After being duly proposed and seconded it was

RESOLVED to elect Mr M Kiddle-Morris as Vice-Chairman, subject to his agreement (as he was not present at the meeting).

11/09 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2009 were agreed as a correct record.

12/09 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Mr R Kybird, Mr M Kiddle-Morris, Mrs B Ravencroft, Mr J Bracey, Mr S Dunn and Ms V Trevelyan.

13/09 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed the new Members; Mrs J Ball, Mrs D Irving and Mr M Brindle to the Committee.

He was sad to announce the death of Miss Rose Prior who had died in April. She had been a staunch supporter of the Bishop Bonner's Cottage museum in Dereham. The Chairman asked that a letter of condolence be sent to Tony Jones of the Dereham Antiquarians Society for forwarding to Miss Prior's family (believed to live in Canada).

The Chairman also noted that he had received a request from Mrs Ravencroft that she should be taken off the Committee as she was no longer able to attend. Robin Hanley agreed to approach the Friends of Gressenhall to nominate a replacement.

Helen McAleer

Robin Hanley

Action By

Finally he thanked Oliver Bone for an interesting tour of the Thomas Paine exhibition and Mrs Spencer, as mayor of Thetford, for allowing the meeting to take place in the Thetford Town Council chamber.

14/09 ANCIENT HOUSE MUSEUM OF THETFORD LIFE

Oliver Bone started by thanking Laura for all her hard work. He then ran through the main points of his report.

The two clubs for young people were proving successful and work was being done on waste. The children had brought in examples of their own rubbish and had been encouraged to think about how it could be recycled.

Members discussed this subject and how waste had been dealt with historically. David Gurney mentioned an interesting example of early recycling discovered at a Roman fort in Swanton Morley which showed that iron-age metal work found on the battlefields had been recycled.

Oliver concluded his presentation by giving Members a slideshow of photographs from the Thomas Paine weekend. This had gone very well and had involved many individuals and organisations. It had been a very busy weekend. Events had taken place at various locations around the town and had included historical re-enactments, readings of Thomas Paine's works and music and dancing.

A Member mentioned that in the minutes of the previous meeting it had been noted that the work of John Weeks should be acknowledged. He asked if this had been done. Oliver Bone confirmed that John had worked like a full time volunteer organising the events.

After discussion it was **AGREED** that a letter should be sent to Mr Weeks thanking him for the work he had done so far and that further acknowledgement of his contribution should be made at the end of the Thomas Paine celebrations in the autumn.

David Blackburn echoed what had been said. He was also appreciative of the work of the Dad's Army museum in getting volunteers for all three museums in the town. He suggested that it might be appropriate for the Committee to visit in the future.

David then mentioned that he was in the process of withdrawing from an active role at the Charles Burrell and he was no longer a Trustee and would be standing down as Chairman of the Friends. However he would retain his interest in the museum and would be happy to continue attending the Committee.

The Chairman was pleased with this as he felt it was important to have people from the local community on the Committee. He said that if the Charles Burrell museum wished to nominate a replacement there would still be room on the Committee for David as there was a vacant Co-optee position.

Helen McAleer

Action By

The Chairman thanked Oliver and the report was noted.

15/09 GRESSENHALL FARM AND WORKHOUSE, THE MUSEUM OF RURAL LIFE

Robin Hanley gave everyone a pack of marketing flyers for the remaining events at Gressenhall for the year. The events that had already taken place had been successful with good numbers attending and reasonably good weather.

More use was being made of the 'arena area' for demonstrations and a store room had been refurbished to provide a local crafts shop which was staffed on event days.

They were looking at ways to extend the use of the site, especially in the evenings. The 'bat evening' when visitors had enjoyed a meal, followed by a talk and then a look round the site for bats, had been very successful and showed the potential to extend the range of activities with specialist events.

The café continued to work well following its refurbishment and congestion had been reduced and seating capacity increased.

The Friends had successfully raised the money to buy, equip, train and support the two new Suffolk Punch horses, Jimbo and Harvey who were both doing well. Harvey was currently undergoing training.

The Friends' second-hand bookshop had been refurbished and new volunteers with experience had been recruited. The shop would be staffed on event days and would use the honesty box system at other times.

Work was being done in conjunction with other museums, to develop a range of sustainability projects and the project officer would attend the next meeting to give Members a detailed update.

A Member asked why there were three separate roles to take the museums out to the community. Robin explained that the Learning Officer was focussed primarily on schools and adult education on-site. The Outreach Officer delivered off-site informal learning services and encouraged new visitors to the museum and the Bookings Officer focussed on schools visiting the sites. There were some grey areas, but having the separate roles allowed for flexibility.

A Member asked about the 'Homes on the Road' event and asked if it was tied in with the Gypsy history month. *(Robin has subsequently confirmed that the event did tie in).*

Robin explained that this event had been developed in conjunction with the Traveller Education Service. It was hoped that it could be extended to other high schools and general visitors next year. It was a fascinating event and helped to dispel prejudice.

The Chairman thanked Robin and the report was noted.

Action By

16/09 ARCHAEOLOGY UPDATE

David Gurney presented his report to the Committee and tabled a copy of the Annual Review.

He told Members that there had been over 22,000 objects found in the previous year which had been identified and recorded. There are limited funds to acquire these for museum collections so in the main they are photographed and returned to the finders.

Most surveys and excavations are initiated through the planning process, either during the pre-application stage when investigatory work was being carried out, or during the construction stage when archaeological involvement could be conditioned as part of the planning permission.

The Thetford Historic Environment Survey (THES) was progressing well and would be coming to a conclusion shortly. It would complement the Thetford Historic Buildings Survey which was also currently being carried out.

The new Heritage Protection Bill would not be progressing as no parliamentary time had been allocated to it. English Heritage was working on reforms that could be progressed without the need for legislation.

A new Planning Policy Statement was to be issued. This would replace existing Planning Policy Guidance 15 and 16 and would be a high level document outlining the broad principles and guidance.

14 sites in Breckland were listed in the Heritage at Risk Register. This list aimed to focus attention and bring funding to these sites, rather than to 'name and shame' them.

The issue of metal detecting was discussed. Although there was a problem with 'Nighthawking', it was acknowledged that without metal detectors many finds would remain undiscovered. Norfolk had been at the forefront of encouraging finders to register their discoveries and it was one of the reasons that almost 22,000 finds had been registered last year. Of those finds, 108 had been 'treasure' which worked out at 10% of the National total.

A copy of the Thetford edition of the NCC Norfolk Health, Heritage and Biodiversity walks booklet was circulated, with heritage information supplied by NM&AS. The contact to receive a free supply of the booklets was Kirsty Webber-Walton on 01603 228923. A Dereham booklet was being developed.

The Norfolk Heritage Explorer website continues to be very successful with about 56 people visiting it each day. Following its success in the BAA Awards it had been entered for a CPRE Award this year.

Action By

There had been no let up in the work as a result of the recession and the team were busy dealing with a lot of enquiries about future development projects.

The Iron Age enclosures at Fison Way were in an area where significant growth point development might take place. NLA had been campaigning since 1982 to get the site designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. After a lot of work this was now progressing through the process at English Heritage and DCMS and the site was getting close to receiving the protection it needed.

The Chairman thanked David for his report which was noted.

17/09 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was **AGREED** that the next meeting of the Committee would be on Friday 2 October 2009 at 10.00am at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse Museum. Members were invited to participate in a tour of the site following the meeting.

The meeting closed at 12.55 pm

CHAIRMAN