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**BRECKLAND
AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE**

17 December 2010 Item No. 7

GRESSENHALL FARM & WORKHOUSE REPORT

Report by the Western Area Manager

This report provides information on activities at Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse from October to December 2010

1. Events

- 1.1 Gressenhall closed to the public at the end of the October half term. During the winter closure period, the site remains open for schools, pre-booked group and room hire bookings.
- 1.2 The large event *Apple Day* took place on Sunday 24 October, with 2,675 visitors on site. This event was affected by poor weather at the start of the day and visitor numbers were down on the record-breaking 3,442 reached in 2009.
- 1.3 The large event *A Christmas Experience* took place on Sunday 5 December. Due to the severe weather, the farm and playground remained closed, but staff made a significant effort to bring the main museum site to a condition where it was safe to open. In very cold weather, 1,470 visitors were on site, compared to 1,859 in 2009.
- 1.4 The smaller event *Heavy Horse Day* ran on Sunday 10 October, focussed on the farm. 842 visitors were on site, compared to 480 for the same event in the previous year. Visitors were able to see a range of heavy horse breeds working on the fields and were also able to talk to the owners. Evaluation interviews were carried out with a large number of visitors on this day – a verbal summary of the evaluation findings will be provided at the meeting.
- 1.5 The event programme for 2011 is currently in development, following a detailed review and evaluation of the 2010 programme. The smaller event days format piloted successfully in 2009-10 will be branded as

Days with a Difference in future, to distinguish them from the traditional large event days such as *Apple Day* and *Village at War*.

2. Other Museum Developments

- 2.1 Detailed design work is now taking place for the Women's Land Army Gallery at Gressenhall, with funding of £50,000 from the Wolfson Foundation/DCMS already in place. The Friends continue to fundraise for this new gallery, which is scheduled to open for Spring 2011.
- 2.2 The Workhouse Treasures room has been redisplayed during the closed season. Workhouse history and resource files have also been relocated to this space.
- 2.3 A range of site maintenance and improvement projects continue to be undertaken. These include a programme of carbon-reduction works funded by Norfolk County Council's Carbon Energy Reduction Fund, involving the replacement of display lighting with low energy LED units and the installation of a biomass boiler. Improvement works have been carried out to the spaces used for external room hire, including the Boardroom.
- 2.4 Following improvement works to key spaces and an active marketing campaign, Gressenhall has seen a significant increase in room bookings from both NCC and external users. The site hosted the NCC Chairman's Norfolk tourism marketing event on 10 November.
- 2.5 Planning permission is awaited for the Green Gateway, the new sustainable building at Gressenhall that will provide event day ticketing facilities alongside additional toilets accessible from both the adventure playground and the parking field. This project is funded through the NCC capital programme and will dramatically improve core visitor facilities at Gressenhall.

3. Friends and Volunteers

- 3.1 The Friends continue to actively raise funds for the Suffolk Punch Horse Appeal and continue to use this funding to support a range of horse activities across the site. The Friends have recently confirmed the purchase of Caspar, who is already providing valuable backup for our two working horses Trojan and Bowler.
- 3.2 The Friends second-hand bookshop continues to perform well, including excellent takings on both *Apple Day* and the recent *Christmas Experience*.

- 3.3 The Gressenhall Curator continues to co-ordinate, manage and develop the volunteer teams at Gressenhall. Some 120 volunteers continue to be active on the site.
- 3.4 The volunteer team has recently suffered a sad loss, following the death of Mike Vincent, leader of Team Panhard. A number of Gressenhall staff, volunteers and Friends attended Mike's funeral.

4. Renaissance in the Regions

- 4.1 Gressenhall is continuing to benefit from significant funding delivered through the Renaissance in the Regions programme, under the 2009-11 East of England Hub Business Plan.
- 4.2 Gressenhall continues to lead on the regional Sustainability Project for the East of England, working in partnership with a number of sites including the Museum of East Anglian Life. This regional project has recently been selected by the Museums Libraries & Archives Council as a national evaluation project. As part of the sustainability programme, a number of green audits has been undertaken and green action grants have been allocated to museums across the region.

5. Learning & Outreach

- 5.1 Levels of school visits are being sustained at Gressenhall. The Learning Team continues to deliver a broad and creative learning programme for schools, ranging from reception age to secondary.
- 5.2 In the run-up to Christmas, Gressenhall has delivered a revised *Victorian Christmas* programme for primary schools, for which bookings have been oversubscribed. This event makes full use of the workhouse to engage children in a range of lively hands-on learning activities.
- 5.3 Gressenhall continues to host a Renaissance-funded 18-month Farm Apprenticeship post in partnership with Easton College.
- 5.4 Gressenhall has been provisionally awarded £620,000 under the Heritage Lottery Fund's Skills for the Future programme. This programme will deliver accredited training in traditional skills over four years and will also support volunteer and staff development. Gressenhall will be working in partnership with the Museum of East Anglian Life, Easton College and Otley College. A detailed Training Plan and budget has recently been submitted to HLF for approval. The project is due to commence in April 2011.

6. Visitor Numbers

- 6.1 Up to date visitor figures will be circulated at the meeting.

7. Resource implications

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| (a) | <u>Finance</u> | None |
| (b) | <u>Property</u> | None |
| (c) | <u>Staff</u> | None |
| (d) | <u>Information Technology</u> | None |

8. Recommendations:

That the Area Museums Committee notes the report

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