
BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

BRECKLAND AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

**Held on Monday, 20 June 2022 at 10.00 am in
The Beech Room, the Environmental Hub, Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse,
Gressenhall, Beetley, Dereham, NR20 4DR**

PRESENT

Cllr Robert Kybird (Chairman)

Cllr Phillip Duigan (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Terry Jermy

Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris

Cllr William Richmond

Also Present

Cllr John Ward

Helen Bainbridge

In Attendance

Andrew Smith

Oliver Bone

Ruth Tudge

Operations Manager for East and West

Curator of Kings Lynn and Thetford Museums

Democratic Services Officer

10/22CHAIRMAN

Due to the meeting not being quorate it was agreed by those present to adjourn the matters of the AGM until the next meeting on 26 September 2022. It was agreed the reports would still be heard.

11/22VICE-CHAIRMAN

Due to the meeting not being quorate it was agreed by those present to adjourn the matters of the AGM until the next meeting on 26 September 2022.

12/22MINUTES

Due to the meeting not being quorate the minutes would be confirmed at the next meeting.

13/22APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Eagle, Clarke, Bushell, Harvey, Dr Hanley and Dr Robinson.

14/22CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman said he had received notification from David Blackburn that for personal reasons he would be retiring from his Co-opted position on the committee. The Chairman would write a letter of thanks to Mr Blackburn for all his hard work, dedication and

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contribution to the committee.

15/22 URGENT BUSINESS

None.

16/22 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

17/22 ANCIENT HOUSE MUSEUM REPORT

The Curator of Kings Lynn and Thetford Museums, Oliver Bone presented the report on activities at Ancient House, Museum of Thetford Life covering the period from March to May 2022.

Despite the ending of legal Covid restrictions, a number of the Covid secure systems and procedures implemented across Norfolk Museums Service (NMS) sites during the pandemic remained in place with a focus on keeping staff and visitors safe through minimising any risk of transmission. The museum continued to provide hand sanitiser and directional sign posting. Pre-booking remained an option although it was not a requirement, the wearing of face coverings was optional, and the museum was well ventilated with staff following a good cleaning regime.

Building works at the former King's Head public house, a listed building next door to the Ancient House continued to cause some disruption, it remained shrouded in scaffolding but there was light at the end of the tunnel as a new application for development had been proposed which seemed a better scheme than that which had previously been applied for and would have less of an effect on Ancient House. They continued to work with Breckland Council's Historic Buildings Officer, Andrew Gayton to ensure that the proposed building works did not have an impact on Ancient House. The Chairman would add a consultee comment to the current planning application to voice the committee's concerns on any impact of the proposed properties including the storage, placing and collection of waste bins for any new properties to ensure they did encroach in front of the museum and potentially block access.

The Museum had marked the 150th birth anniversary of Princess Catherine Duleep Singh with an exhibition featuring items on loan including a newly commissioned portrait of the Princess by leading contemporary artist Amandeep Singh, also known as Inkquisitive. Also on display were artefacts associated with Princess Catherine and pull up banners telling her story including her work championing rights for women and helping refugees escape from Nazi Germany. The TV programme, Antiques Road Trip had filmed at the Museum recently with an interview with Peter Bance the Sikh Historian to talk about Princess Catherine which would be broadcast in Autumn.

The current exhibition at Ancient House in the Changing Displays room was Thetford Treasure which featured items from the late

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Roman hoard of inscribed and decorated silver spoons and gold jewellery. Replicas had been made for permanent display in Thetford as a result of the Thetford Treasure Replica Appeal, led by the then Mayor of Thetford, Mike Edmond. There was also a lovely hoard of glass and pewter ware, a very rare collection, painstakingly pieced together by Debbie Harris.

The Ancient House is part of the National Lottery Heritage Fund-funded Brecks River and Fen Edge (BFER) landscape project. The Scheme won a £2m National Lottery Heritage Fund grant as part of the proposal for a £3.5m landscape conservation scheme. The project would be engaging local communities, schools and like-minded organisations to understand, reveal, celebrate and protect the lost heritage of the Brecks' Fen Edge & Rivers over the next 5 years. The Ancient House Museum would receive funding as a partner organisation to produce exhibitions and activities in 2022 and 2023 on the themes of Vikings and Riverside Heritage. The project would also involve members of the Teenage History Club who would assist in choosing artefacts and themes for display.

The Museum had a long-standing ambition to do more towards the Duleep Singh story and make more of the unusual connections between the Maharajah Duleep Singh and his family and proposed to approach the National Lottery Heritage Fund to help make this possible by creating new displays at the Museum. The Chairman would write a letter of support for this proposal.

Councillor Jermy said that there was very little information at the Maharajah Duleep Singh statue at Butten Island in Thetford and that the proposal was very encouraging and could be an opportunity to expand the area surrounding the statue and make more of the area.

The Learning Officer, Melissa Hawker had worked closely with local teachers to develop new workshops and history units using an innovative and flexible approach for schools which included developing a new history unit focusing on India, Empire and the Maharajah Duleep Singh with a programme of digital and on-site workshops and work in partnership with Thetford Town Council's Guildhall project to support learning about Dr Minns, the first black mayor in Britain and Princess Sophia Duleep Singh.

Ancient House had supported local children to achieve The Platinum Jubilee Norfolk Challenge Awards. The awards had been developed in tribute to the late Duke of Edinburgh, whose own Award scheme had been so influential on the lives of generations of young people and recognised children and young people's contribution to the Norfolk community as part of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations and beyond. The Ancient House History Club completed the award over the last half term and their progress was featured in the Norfolk Platinum Jubilee newsletter (<https://mailchi.mp/platinumjubileenorfolk/schoolsscouts-and-brownies>).

Volunteers were returning to the Museum; they were currently

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arranging for IT equipment to be updated. An initial project for some volunteers would be the scanning and documentation of the recently acquired postcard collection working with the Assistant Curator of Lynn Museum, Dayna Woolbright.

The Ancient House had been hosting trainees since 2013, the current trainee was Katie Crowson, and it was hoped to bring Katie along to a committee meeting to gain experience and update the committee on projects she would be involved with.

The Ancient House continues to feature on Radio Norfolk and with a regular slot in the monthly About Thetford magazine.

The Ancient House team is working in partnership with Dr Priya Atwal from Oxford University as part of the Torch Knowledge Exchange programme from the History Faculty. They would be working to research the religious identity of the Maharajah Duleep Singh.

John Ward explained that the Torch Knowledge Exchange History Faculty provided a fellowship grant project to encourage collaborations between post PhD students and organisations like Norfolk Museums Service and provided the funding for projects.

Members of the Committee noted the report.

18/22GRESSENHALL FARM & WORKHOUSE REPORT

The Operations Manager for East and West, Andrew Smith presented the report that covered the period from February to May 2022.

Despite the ending of legal restrictions in terms of Covid-19 a number of the Covid-secure systems and procedures remained in place with a focus on keeping staff and visitors safe through minimising risk of transmission. The priorities remained:

- Ventilation – maintaining existing ventilations arrangements to maximise fresh air flow including supplementary air purifiers and CO2 monitors at relevant sites
- Cleaning regimes – maintaining enhanced cleaning arrangements including toilets and regular touch points
- Hand sanitisation – maintaining existing sanitiser stations and encouraging regular hand sanitisation/hand washing. Additional hand sanitiser stations have been introduced where required e.g. near interactives.

CO2 monitors provided through Norfolk County Council had been introduced into a number of rooms and spaces where there was limited natural ventilation, these were the Library, the Learning Centre, First Farmers Gallery, Women's Land Army Gallery, the Training Room, Board Room, Environment Hub – main meeting room, the Café and the Chapel. The detectors were monitored by the staff using those spaces and they also linked into the LoRaWAN network, facilitating the use of monitoring dashboards to track live data and spot trends. This has enabled a number of spaces to be brought back

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into use and increased capacity for schools and other visitors.

A new Events Officer, Fiona Ashley had been recruited and had been making lots of plans in assisting with current events and planning future events.

The four operational models included:

- Special Event days – major events which required full event staffing and set up, including the use of large parking fields. A premium ticket price applies for these event days to reflect the high level of activities taking place. Free admission continued to be provided to Norfolk Museums Pass holders.
- Days with a Difference – smaller themed events. These required smaller staffing complement and utilised core parking. They were aimed at attracting audiences of 500-800 visitors. Free to Norfolk Museums Pass holders. Bank Holiday 29 Monday on 2 May featured Yoga for Kids - a yoga session for families, getting messy with Art Attack, and trying the I-Spy trail. Sundays in May featured Art Attack sessions including Make a bookmark on 1 May, Discover cottage gardens on 8 May, Try your hand at macrame on 15 May and Make a peg doll on 22 May.
- Norfolk School Holiday activities – extra themed activities delivered each day of the Norfolk School holidays, with minimal increase in staffing. Free to Norfolk Museums Pass holders. During the Easter holiday period in April the theme was Senses in Nature – based on getting outside and discovering the wonders of the natural world. This included trails and activities, making a musical shaker and exploring the musical woods and the adventure playground. May half-term (28 May – 5 June) activities were Jubilee themed. Create Like a Royal celebrated the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and activities included making a medal, creating your own flag and crown, riding a hobby horse, completing the royal stamper trail and making a paper flower to decorate the chapel.
- Ticketed Events – pre-booked and pre-paid events. These events, held outside of standard opening hours or out of the main season, offer a reduced charge to Norfolk Museums Pass holders.

Held annually, Open Farm Sunday was a successful day with just under 3,000 people on site. Held on 12 June this was a free admission day for all visitors and was part of a national event run by LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming).

During this reporting period there continued to be a focus on digital delivery as an alternative means of engaging with both existing and new audiences. This included social media posts following a dedicated programme of themes. Digital resources created by the Events, Learning and Curatorial teams were continuing to be uploaded on a regular basis to social media platforms and the Gressenhall website.

A new temporary exhibition, Georgie Meadows: Stitched Drawings

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opened in May and will run until the end of the 2022 season. The exhibition explored experience of ageing and dementia with uniquely crafted portraits translating line drawings into stitched works. In line with this, a pop-up display titled 'Nothing about us without us' is also on show, linked to the themes in the work by Georgie Meadows. The display was about the History of Disability told through 13 objects in Norfolk Museums' collections. It was created by young and disabled people living in Norfolk through the Kick the Dust project and has toured libraries and other venues.

The refurbishment on the new Environment Hub was now complete and would highlight the environmental works being showcased at Gressenhall beginning with the new community tree nursery where the rooms had been named after trees.

The Farmer's Foundry steam engine had been fully restored and up and running at Open Farm Sunday. Additional checks were now taking place to the indoor pipework due to the increased power of the new engine, following which the Farmer's Foundry will be used to power and demonstrate stationary engines in the Engineering Gallery. A new interpretation panel had been installed with input from the Kick the Dust project trainees.

The two new Suffolk Punch colts Jack, aged two and Kingsman, aged one were settling in well and getting used to the sights and sounds of the farm and visitors and being handled and getting used to wearing a harness. These additions were purchased with donations from the Friends of Gressenhall.

The community tree nursery which formed part of the Gressenhall Environment Hub had now evolved from a small grass paddock to a defined area with the infrastructure being put into place. Raised beds now had seedlings growing on from seed gathered in the autumn and a team of new volunteers lead by project officer Emma Cross were making an important contribution to the project. The long-term aim was to supply young trees to be planted at various sites around the county and tied in to the NCC ambition to plant a million trees for Norfolk as well as the DEFRA Trees Outside Woodlands scheme.

Also linking in with the Environmental Hub was the Wendling Beck project. Gressenhall were working in partnership with NCC and neighbouring landowners on this project which included creating an arboretum, managing a wetland and improving public access to the whole area.

The Friends of Gressenhall continued to be a vital resource providing funding for the two Suffolk Punch horses and were pleased to inform that the second-hand bookshop had now re-opened to visitors and were working hard on new initiatives.

The Family Fun Day, held in partnership with NCC's Fostering and Adoption Service, would run again on 16 July 2022 after a two-year gap. The event provided an opportunity for carers and council

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staff to meet each other in a safe and neutral environment, and for the Museum to say thank you for the work that they do. This year's theme will be Once Upon a Time, with Cinderella, the Wicked Witch and Peter Pan amongst other characters running a series of accessible activities. Any councillors wishing to attend the day would be most welcome, please contact jan.pitman@norfolk.gov.uk to be added to the invite list.

The Kick the Dust: Norfolk project, funded through the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) delivered in partnership with a range of organisations including YMCA Norfolk, continued to engage with young people aged 11-25 throughout the period of the pandemic. The project team adapted their activities to support existing groups across Norfolk, in particular YMCA groups, using digital means. The team were now delivering mostly face-to-face sessions which continued to have a positive impact on young people.

As opportunities were now open to volunteers, a further 37 young volunteers had taken part in training. Kick the Dust has supported a total of seven young people on its bursary traineeship programme, the last cohort finishing on 31 May 22. One Kick the Dust participant progressed onto the NMS Teaching Museum traineeship programme, and a further seven Young Ambassadors had been recruited to support Institutional Change within NMS and to join the strategic Youth Board and Project Board.

The Chairman asked if there would be a follow on to this project and if it would continue. The Operations Manager for East and West said it was hoped that this would be regenerated again with a further bid and that Dr Hanley would update members on this project at the next meeting. The launch of the new Kick the dust web pages could be found on the MNS site:
<https://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk/join-and-support/kick-the-dust>

Members of the Committee noted the report.

19/22NEXT MEETING

The arrangements for the next meeting to be held on Monday, 26 September 2022 were noted. Venue to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 11.45 am

CHAIRMAN