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**BRECKLAND  
AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE**

**27 November 2017                      Item No.**

**GRESSENHALL FARM AND WORKHOUSE REPORT**

**Report by the Operations Manager – West**

**This report provides information on activities at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse from July 2017 to October 2017.**

**1. Events and Activities**

- 1.1 Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse closed for the season on Sunday 29 October 2017. The museum will reopen from Monday 12 to Friday 16 February 2018, 10am to 4pm. The 2018 main season will commence on Sunday 11 March, after which the museum will be open daily 10am to 5pm.
- 1.2 Gressenhall continues to offer a broad programme of events based around the four operational models:
  - Special Event days – major events which require full event staffing and set up, including the use of large parking fields. For 2017, these were: *Spring Fair, Rock 'n' Roll at Gressenhall, Village at War* and *Apple Day*. A premium ticket price applies on these days to reflect the high level of activities taking place. Free admission continues to be provided to Norfolk Museums Pass holders.
  - Days with a Difference – smaller themed events such as *Mother's Day* and *Gressenhall Goes Wild*. These require smaller staffing complement and utilise core parking. They are aimed at attracting audiences of 500-800 visitors. Again, they are offered free to Norfolk Museums Pass holders.
  - 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.
  - Ticketed Events – pre-booked and pre-paid events. For 2017, these included the murder mystery event *A Murder Most Novel*. These style of events, held outside of standard opening hours or of the main season, offer a reduced charge to Norfolk Museums Pass holders.

1.3 During the period covered by this report, these events have included:  
Special Event Days:

- *Village at War* (2,878 visitors over the two-day event)
- *Apple Day* (2,585 visitors)

Days with a Difference:

- *Story Festival* (419 visitors)
- *Heritage Open Day* – free admission (1,940 visitors)

Norfolk School Holiday Activities:

- Summer holidays – *Oh, What a Picture; Harness Up!; Workhouse Cluedo* (12,755 visitors)
- October Half Term – *Create!* (2,035 visitors)

In addition to these activities, the museum organised two special events to acknowledge its gratitude to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the financial support given to the *Voices from the Workhouse* project. *Workhouse After Dark* offered free admission to players of The National Lottery between 6pm and 8pm on Friday 27 and Saturday 28 October. A total of 761 visitors explored the museum by LED candlelight, tasted gruel, helped with the laundry and met costumed characters from the Workhouse.

- 1.4 Planning has already started on the 2018 events programme which is likely to follow a similar structure, with new event themes planned and some firm favourites returning such as *Horse Power* and a *Victorian Family Christmas*. Prior to the start of the new season, there will be a Preview Day aimed at Norfolk Pass Holders, Friends of Gressenhall and Players of The National Lottery on Saturday 10 March 2018. This will also be promoted to all groups, organisations and individuals who have helped to create and support the *Voices from the Workhouse* Project, and form a celebration of the end of this redevelopment.
- 1.5 These events continue to attract Norfolk Museums Pass holders and to act as a driver to further pass sales. By way of an example, at the *Apple Day* event, 44% of visitors were Norfolk Museums Pass holders. During the day, a further 27 Norfolk Museums Passes were sold.
- 1.6 The costs of delivering and marketing the Gressenhall event programme continues to be subsidised with funding from the Arts Council England (ACE) as part of the 2015-18 Major Partner Museum ACE business plan.
- 1.7 The Gressenhall events programme is promoted via a specific piece of print, as well as an increased programme of digital marketing including Facebook adverts and the museums own social media presence.

## 2. Other Museum Developments

- 2.1 Following the successful grant award of £1.47m (79%) from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the *Voices from the Workhouse* project, the redeveloped workhouse spaces were formally launched July 2016. A further marketing push was made at the start of the 2017 main season, with the creation and distribution of a specific piece of print. The second phase of this project is progressing, focusing on the first floor Collections Gallery. The gallery was opened as a 'work in progress' to visitors for May Half Term 2017, since which work has continued whilst remaining open. During the 2017-18 winter closure, the finishing touches will be made to the gallery including the completion of the display and labelling of the 2,000+ objects from the museum's rural life collections.
- 2.2 To help families to access the Collections Gallery, a number of *Gallery Challenges* have been created, aimed at Key Stage One and Two children. These encourage children to interpret and explore the objects in the gallery in new and exciting ways. Key Stage One cards encourage younger children to find items related to tradition tales: for example, they pretend to be the three pigs and need to find something made of straw, wood and a brick. Key Stage Two children are invited to find items to help fight off a zombie invasion, mend their intergalactic spaceship or prepare a meal for a hungry T-rex.
- 2.3 As part of the new Collections Gallery, a dedicated temporary exhibition space has been created to house an annual show. The 2017 exhibition *Rural Lives* included photographs of Norfolk people from the past and also from today through the work of contemporary photographer J. A. Mortram. The 2018 exhibition *Beer and Brewing - Norfolk's Rural Pubs* will open for the start of the new season. This will look at the changing roles of pubs and the relationships they have with their local communities. Family visitors will be able to play traditional pub games including the Norfolk favourite 'twizzler'. A plaster panel created by the artist John Moray-Smith will be one of the objects on display.
- 2.4 Building on the success of last year's *Collaborate* programme, which saw the museum working with a wide range of creative individuals and groups, *Collaborate 2017* was themed on Rural Lives, taking inspiration from the temporary exhibition as well as the wider displays in the Collections Gallery. The results, which included textile work, sculpture, paintings and poetry, were included within the Collections Gallery during October Half Term. More information can be found on the *Collaborate* blog <https://collaboratewithgressenhall.wordpress.com>
- 2.5 Partnership development of the digital offer at Gressenhall has continued, including the creation of new content for the Collections Gallery and Workhouse galleries on Ipad tablets available to visitors. University of East Anglia PIPs placements, three month internships

with science Ph.D. students, have led to the development of a range of digital tools for the interpretation of historical graffiti, medical and costume and textile collections. These have demonstrated the museum's ability to use the flexible content management system *Darwin* to constantly update and re-refresh the digital offer. The system enables the museum to add or remove activities before publishing the new version of the tablet tool for updating to our suite of iPads for visitor use. Following the successful integration of WiFi to key areas of the site and on-site testing, these will be formally launched for the 2018 season.

- 2.6 Gressenhall's Curator Dr Megan Dennis continues to develop links with the Digital Humanities Forum at Carleton College, Minnesota. This innovative liberal arts college have created a 3D virtual model of the workhouse as it was in 1779. New work on a joint museum and collage taught work-based module will take place in Spring Semester 2018. This will see Carleton students creating additional material for the Gressenhall tablet, and developing new digital material for display on the permanent projectors including an evolving 3D cartoon of the changing building from the House of Industry period to the present day, animated journeys through the virtual rooms and additional "play" pins for the *Darwin* tablet framework.
- 2.7 The use of cutting edge technology allowing visitors to 'meet' real people from the workhouse's history have been well received. However, for some visitors they have the potential to cause sensory overload. The Gressenhall team recognised the need to make adjustments for autistic visitors, and piloted a programme of "early bird" openings for families visiting with autistic children. A close partnership was formed with Autism Anglia, and Gressenhall formally signed the Autism Charter to show its commitment to being autism friendly. Training sessions were held for staff and volunteers, and a "visual story" was created and circulated to all families in advance. Three "early bird" openings were held during the Summer Holidays with adjustments made to the museum displays during this time. 41 people attended these events, with positive comments received from all participants. Further dates are now planned for 2018.
- 2.8 During recent years, the Norfolk Collections Centre has opened more frequently to support Gressenhall events and activities. This followed the reorganisation of these large object stores during the *Shine a Light* project funded by The Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund. During 2016 and 2017, the Norfolk Collections Centre was open to the public on 38 separate occasions, welcoming 1,074 visitors. A variety of events have been offered, including Behind the Scenes tours, themed tours (including printing and brewing), children's storytelling sessions, craft activities and trails during half-term holidays and West Runton Mammoth tours on the most recent Heritage Open Day. In 2017, chargeable events were introduced, that offer visitors additional extras. These include Behind the Scenes tours for private group bookings,

West Runton Mammoth tours, and an art class in a museum store. Open dates for 2018 have already been planned and more information can be found on the Norfolk Museums Service Collections Management Twitter feed Twitter account @NMSCollMan.

- 2.9 Maintaining and growing a strong Social Media presence remains a key priority for Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse and the site has four Social Media Champions to ensure the regular publishing of interesting content on Facebook and Twitter. All staff are encouraged to support this, supplying content and images. These Champions also respond to enquiries and reviews made via these channels, Trip Advisor and Google Reviews. At the end of October 2017 the museum had 3,766 Facebook likes and 5,142 Twitter followers. A Pinterest account has also been established with a wide range of boards including 'Weddings at Gressenhall'. An Instagram page has also been established and currently has 718 followers. Furthermore, Gressenhall continues to generate regular blogs about work taking place at the museum. The site has been awarded a Certificate of Excellence from the influential TripAdvisor website.

To connect with Gressenhall, please visit:

<https://www.facebook.com/GressenhallFW>

<https://twitter.com/GressenhallFW>

<https://www.pinterest.com/gressenhallfwh/>

[https://www.instagram.com/gressenhall\\_fw/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/gressenhall_fw/?hl=en)

<https://gressenhallfw.wordpress.com/>

[http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse](http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Gressenhall_Farm_and_Workhouse)

- 2.10 Gressenhall continues to develop a range of commercial activities as a means of generating income, including room and venue hire. Five weddings are already booked for the 2018 season, and negotiations are underway to work with an events management company to develop this offer further. The aim is to deliver a high quality offer whilst ensuring that such bookings do not detract from key museum activities.

### **3. Friends and Volunteers**

- 3.1 The Friends of Gressenhall AGM took place on 15 June 2017 at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse with bi-monthly Committee Meetings held at the museum.
- 3.2 The Friends of Gressenhall continue to support a range of activities across the site including significant levels of funding towards the upkeep of the Suffolk Punch horses. In recent months, the Friends have generously agreed to support a project to restore the Farmers' Foundry engine boiler (formerly part of the Bygones Collection at Holkham) back to working use. This is in addition to a grant of £19,788 from the Arts Council England Preservation of Industrial and Scientific Material PRISM fund. Work is currently underway to assess the level of work required to make the

engine fully operational. This engine was manufactured by the Farmer's Foundry Company, Great Ryburgh, just seven miles from Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse. The portable steam engine was used to power a range of different processes including threshing work, corn-mills, centrifugal pumps, stone-crushers, dynamos, chaff-cutters, hay-balers and saw benches.

3.3 The Friends continue to operate the Gressenhall second hand bookshop, generating income for the Friends. Recruitment of a new team of active Bookshop volunteers has helped to ensure that new donations throughout the 2017 season were processed daily and the shelves tidied. Income from this shop continues to grow.

3.4 The Gressenhall Curator Dr Megan Dennis continues to co-ordinate, manage and develop the volunteer teams at Gressenhall. Around 120 volunteers are currently active on site, organised into a number of specialist teams. Volunteer hours are currently being recorded to provide HLF contribution in kind match funding for the *Voices from the Workhouse* project. Between January and September 2017, these volunteers gave over 7,700 hours of time on site to support the museum, with additional volunteers working from home on digitalisation projects.

3.5 We have continued to develop our commitment to community volunteering within the Collections Gallery, building on the popular family volunteering carried out last year. Community-chosen objects form part of the displays, with family volunteers selecting their favourite object for display and writing labels for them. We hope that these families will be able to join us to celebrate the launch of the new space in the special preview day at the start of the 2018 season.

## **4 Learning & Outreach**

4.1 The museum continues to be popular with school visits and over 10,500 children from across Norfolk and beyond visited in 2016-17. Bookings for the autumn have been strong and in line with previous years, which is positive given the additional budgetary pressures being felt by schools.

4.2 In August, the Gressenhall Learning Team were pleased to welcome members of the Norfolk Virtual School Sensory Support team (teachers, support assistants, rehabilitation officers, an educational audiologist, child psychotherapist, technical support officer and ICT specialist trainer) and pupils from pre-school to Year 4 and their families to Gressenhall for an exploration day. This proved extremely popular and nearly 60 families (275 people of all ages) attended. Working together, the museum organised a range of activities across the site for the families, as well as taking the opportunity to evaluate the new displays and galleries for those with sensory support needs. As a result, an action plan for improving accessibility for these visitors has been created.

4.3 The format of the event for the Norfolk Virtual School Sensory Support Team mirrors that delivered in partnership with the Norfolk Fostering and Adoption Services. The Gressenhall Learning Team are currently exploring options to use this model to create a new special day aimed at young people, exploring issues surrounding mental health.

4.4 Gressenhall continues to be registered with NCC as a Care Farm. The site is currently offering funded work-based placements to a number of adults with learning difficulties.

## **5 Visitor numbers**

5.1 Visitor figures for the period will be circulated at the meeting.

## **6 Resource implications**

### **(a) Finance**

Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse receives funding to support core operations and activities from Norfolk County Council. A number of activities are financed as part of funding to Norfolk Museums Service from Arts Council England as a Major Partner Museum under the terms of the current 2015-18 Business Plan. Project activities are funded from a range of external sources including the Heritage Lottery Fund. The source of these funds are detailed within the report. The above report includes no additional or unfunded financial implications.

### **(b) Property**

Unless specified, the above activities relate to the Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse and Norfolk Collections Centre site. The above report includes no additional implications relating to property.

### **(c) Staff**

The team at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse are supported by a wider team of colleagues within Norfolk Museums Service. Some current posts are funded by external project funding. The above report includes no additional implications relating to staffing and personnel resources.

### **(d) Information Technology**

Digital operations at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse are supported by Norfolk County Council's IMT department. Social media is delivered by the Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse team. The above report includes no additional implications relating to Information Technology.

## **7 Recommendations:**

7.1 That the Area Museums Committee notes the report

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