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**BRECKLAND
AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE**

26 February 2018

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 November 2017 to January 2018.

1. Events and Activities

- 1.1 Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse closed for the season on Sunday 29 October 2017. The museum reopened 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 2018, these will be: *Retro Revival*, *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 including *Mothering Sunday*, *Futuristic Farming* and *Horse Power*. 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 2018, these include the murder mystery event *The Devil at the Door* and *Victorian Family Christmas*. These events, held outside of standard opening hours or of the main season, offer a reduced charge to Norfolk Museums Pass holders.

- 1.3 The museum will reopen for February Half Term, with a programme of activities exploring the theme of Spring cleaning. Visitors will help prepare for the new season and discover what happens behind the scenes when the museum is closed. Families can discover how museum objects are cleaned and go behind the scenes at the Norfolk Collection Centre.
- 1.4 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.
- 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. From April 2018, the events programme will be supported as part of the 2018-2022 National Portfolio Organisation 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 museum's 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 are being 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 As part of the new Collections Gallery, a dedicated temporary exhibition space has been created to house an annual show. The 2018 exhibition *Beer and Brewing - Norfolk's Rural Pubs* will open for the start of the main 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.

- 2.3 Building on the success of the 2016 and 2017 *Collaborate* programmes, which saw the museum working with a wide range of creative individuals and groups, *Collaborate 2018* will be themed around the temporary exhibition's subject of pubs and brewing. An inspiration day is planned for 23 March, to enable interested individuals and groups to explore more of the museum's collections and stories. Their creative outputs will then be displayed within the museum in October. An accompanying programme of outreach to local groups and pub quizzes, will encourage more individuals to engage with the theme, to be inspired, and to create their own beer mat to add to the displays. During the year, updates will be available through the *Collaborate* blog <https://collaboratewithgressenhall.wordpress.com>
- 2.4 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. During January/February 2018, Carleton College fully funded Megan to enable her to visit the college for one week. This enabled her to work with the Carleton students to create additional material for the suite of iPads for visitor use and for display on the permanent projectors within the gallery spaces. This project has demonstrated the museum's ability to use the flexible content management system *Darwin* to constantly update and re-refresh the digital offer at the museum. Following the successful integration of WiFi to key areas of the site and on-site testing, these iPads will be formally launched for the main 2018 season.
- 2.5 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 in 2017. 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. Building upon this pilot, further "early bird" openings have been planned for 2018 and promoted through Autism Anglia and the museum's marketing.
- 2.6 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. In 2017, chargeable events were introduced, that offer visitors additional extras.

These include Behind the Scenes tours for private group bookings and highly popular pre-booked West Runton Mammoth tours. Further events during 2018 have already been planned and the Norfolk Collections Centre opened for the museum's enhanced offer during February Half Term.

- 2.7 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 December 2017 the museum had 3,788 Facebook likes and 5,220 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 786 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://gressenhallfw.wordpress.com/>

http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Gressenhall_Farm_and_Workhouse

- 2.8 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 remain active, with bi-monthly Committee Meetings held at the museum. 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.
- 3.2 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. 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. Initial conservation work has identified that additional resources will be required to make the engine fully operational, and an additional funding plan has been created to deliver this project.

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. During 2017, these volunteers gave over 9,327 hours of time on site to support the museum, with additional volunteers working from home on digitalisation projects.

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. Recent bookings have been strong and in line with previous years, which is positive given the additional budgetary pressures being felt by schools.

4.2 The format of events held in partnership with the Norfolk Virtual School Sensory Support Team and the Norfolk Fostering and Adoption Services has proved highly successful and beneficial for participants and stakeholders alike. The Gressenhall Learning Team are consequently planning to use this model to create a new special day aimed at young people, exploring issues surrounding mental health. This will take place in June 2018.

4.3 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

Originator of report:

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