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BRECKLAND AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

18 March 2019

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 August 2018 to February 2019.

1. Events and Activities

- 1.1 The 2018 main season continued at Gressenhall until Sunday 28 October. The museum reopened for *Victorian Family Christmas* on 20 and 21 December 2018 and for Half Term between Monday 18 and Friday 22 February 2019.
- 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 2019, 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 *Winging It!* and *Horse Power*. These require smaller staffing complement and utilise core parking. They are aimed at attracting audiences of 500-800 visitors and are 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 2019, these include the murder mystery event *A Pound of Flesh* and *Victorian Family Christmas*. These events, held outside of standard opening hours and offer a reduced charge to Pass holders.
- 1.3 The events delivered in the period covered by this report include:
 - Special Event Days:
 - Village at War 26-27 August – 2 day event (2,785 visitors)
 - *Apple Day* 14 October (1,326 visitors)
 - Days with a Difference:

- *Heritage Open Day* – Free admission 9 September (2,418 visitors)
- *Horse Power* 30 September (792 visitors)

Pre-booked events:

- *Victorian Family Christmas* 20-21 December – 2 day event (437 visitors)

Norfolk School Holiday Activities:

- Summer Holidays – *A Walk in the Woods and Teddy Bear's Picnic* (9,410 visitors)
- October Half Term - *Rats Cats Bats and* (2,755 visitors)
- February Half Term – *I'm in the Workhouse: Get Me Out of Here!* (1,605 visitors)

- 1.4 The 2019 events programme is now finalised and being advertised to visitors in print and online. This programme includes firm favourites such as *Horse Power* and *Apple Day* as well as new events such as a day devoted to birds entitled '*Winging It*'. The ever-popular murder mystery will be focused on a home front scenario. Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse will also participate in national programmes offering free admission: *Open Farm Sunday* in June, working with the County Farms team, and *Heritage Open Day* in September.
- 1.5 These events continue to attract Norfolk Museums Pass holders and to act as a driver to further pass sales. Throughout the 2018 programme, there was strong promotion of the scheme to event day visitors. A similar promotion is planned for the 2019 programme.
- 1.6 Gressenhall also organises leisure learning short courses. These have included a fully-booked apple tree pruning course and a session learning how to make Christmas-themed needlefelt decorations.
- 1.7 The costs of delivering and marketing the Gressenhall event programme are supported by Arts Council England (ACE) as part of the 2018-22 ACE National Portfolio Organisation business plan.
- 1.8 The Gressenhall events programme is promoted via a specific piece of print, as well as an increased programme of digital marketing including Facebook and Google adverts and the museum's own social media.

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. The final new displays within the first floor Collections Gallery were formally launched on 10 March 2018, with the gallery having been opened as a 'work in progress' since May 2017. This gallery incorporates over 2,000 objects from the museum's rural life collections. This event marked the end of the main activity plan relating to the *Voices from the Workhouse* project although, a number of

discrete projects have continued over the summer following conversations with the Heritage Lottery Fund. These include a digital marketing campaign, additional interactives for the Collections Gallery and some minor display improvements to the Transport Gallery in the Back Hall, adjacent to the new Workhouse Galleries. These display improvements included new panels, barriers and a refreshed layout of the large wheeled vehicles. This work enhances the interpretation within the space, allowing it to sit proudly alongside the other displays within the main building. The last HLF funding claim was submitted in December 2018, formally bringing this project to a close.

- 2.2 As part of the new Collections Gallery, a dedicated temporary exhibition space has been created to house an annual show. The 2018 season exhibition *Beer and Brewing - Norfolk's Rural Pubs* was very popular, including a real bar and objects relating to beer and brewing in Norfolk, alongside contemporary thoughts about the future of rural pubs. The 2019 exhibition, *Once Upon a Time*, opens on 10 March 2019. This co-curated exhibition has been created by volunteers, staff, visitors and local library users. It asks the same question of visitors across all age ranges – what's your favourite children's book? Filled with nostalgic favourites, modern classics and strange new worlds, *Once Upon a Time* celebrates Norfolk authors past and present, has a Reading Forest and Story Den with interactives, stories and multi-sensory toys, offering a family friendly experience.
- 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* was themed around the temporary exhibition subject of pubs and brewing. This programme was launched with an inspiration day in March 2018, to enable interested individuals and groups to explore more of the museum's collections and stories. An informal meeting was arranged for participating groups and individuals in early July, to allow them to share their ideas and increase their knowledge and understanding of the subject and museum collections. Their creative outputs were then displayed within the museum during October 2018. An accompanying programme of outreach to local groups and pub quizzes has been delivered to enable more individuals to engage with the theme, to be inspired, and to create their own beer mat to add to the displays. Updates are available through the *Collaborate* blog <https://collaboratewithgreshenhall.wordpress.com/share/>
- 2.4 The use of cutting-edge technology in the new *Voices from the Workhouse* galleries including projections and sound that allows 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. Therefore, "early bird" openings were delivered in partnership with Autism Anglia. These sessions allow staff to make adjustments for autistic visitors. The dates in April, July and October all went well. Building on this success, three more early bird

openings have been planned for 2019: Sunday 28 April, Monday 29 July and Tuesday 22 October.

- 2.5 During recent years, the Norfolk Collections Centre has opened more frequently to support Gressenhall events and activities, following the reorganisation of these large object stores during the *Shine a Light* project funded by The Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund. During the period covered by this report, the centre was open for three days during October half term and again for February half term. In addition, the centre held more tours of the West Runton Mammoth on Tuesday 16 October 2018 with the opportunity to hear more about this spectacular object from Dr David Waterhouse, Senior Curator of Natural History. The February 2019 half term was particularly strong with 130 visitors exploring the Collections centre over a three day period (a record for this school holiday). This year, more West Runton Mammoth tours are planned for 11am and 2pm on Thursday 11 April, Friday 5 July, Tuesday 13 August and Thursday 17 October 2019. These tours are booked in advance.
- 2.6 Maintaining and growing a strong Social Media presence remains a key priority for Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse and the site has three 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 February 2019, the museum had 4,792 Facebook likes and 5,612 Twitter followers. A Pinterest account is also supported with a wide range of boards including 'Weddings at Gressenhall' and an Instagram page is established and currently has 1,066 followers. 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

- 2.7 Gressenhall continues to develop a range of commercial activities as a means of generating income, including room and venue hire. Five weddings have successfully taken place during the 2018 season, organised by the museum team. Our events partner, The Norfolk Events Company have launched a promotional campaign across social media sites for Gressenhall to develop our offer further. The aim is to deliver a high quality offer whilst ensuring that such bookings do not detract from key museum activities. The company has made good progress in marketing the, including a new website:

<https://thenorfolkeventscompany.co.uk/gressenhall-norfolk/>

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 2017, the Friends 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. The engine was manufactured by the Farmer's Foundry Company, Great Ryburgh, just seven miles from Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse. This 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.

The Friends funding supplemented a grant of £19,788 from the Arts Council England Preservation of Industrial and Scientific Material (PRISM) fund. Initial conservation work identified that additional resources were required to make the engine fully operational and an application to the Arts Council England Investment Fund has since been successful. This will enable additional conservation work to be carried out and the volunteer team supported to create a portfolio of volunteering opportunities which in turn delivers more diversity within the teams working with the engine during 2019. The engine should be back in steam at Gressenhall in 2020.

- 3.3 The Friends continue to operate the Gressenhall second hand bookshop, generating income for the Friends. Recruitment of a team of active bookshop volunteers has helped to ensure that new donations are processed daily and the shelves tidied. As a result, 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 have recently been recorded in detail as part of the match-funding for the *Voices from the Workhouse* HLF project.

4 Learning & Outreach

- 4.1 School visits to Gressenhall have been strong and the site is on target to receive visits from about 10,600 school children by the end of March 2019, effectively matching the previous year. Maintaining school visit numbers in the current challenging environment for schools is testament to hard work from a wide team including the Gressenhall: learning team, volunteers and front of house staff. Feedback from events continues to be excellent, with particular praise going to our literacy focused events for primary school children.

- 4.2 Learning staff have been working with NCC Early Help, CAMHS and members of the Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT) community to offer a wellbeing day for GRT families on the 15th May. The day will offer free entry to GRT families to the museum to engage in a series of family-friendly activities delivered by museum and local service providers. These activities will be accompanied by information detailing the services which members of the GRT community are able to access.
- 4.3 Plans are being developed for the 13th annual Family Fun event in partnership with NCC Family Placement and Adoption Services, to be held in June 2019. To run an event for thirteen consecutive years is a very positive achievement in a climate of considerable change and illustrates the event's importance as a means to allow foster families to meet family placement staff and each other in a safe environment. Staff hope to use the event as a means to gather publicity material and press coverage to publicise fostering.
- 4.4 Gressenhall will be repeating the events for children in receipt of support from NCC Virtual School Sensory Support in September 2019, again offering engaging activities to allow families and children to have a safe space in which they can meet each other and their support staff. The learning team will also be running an event day for KS2 children from mainstream schools who are hearing impaired in April. The aim would be to allow these children, who are frequently the only children in their class wearing hearing technology, the chance to meet and work alongside other children with similar technology.
- 4.5 The Learning Team is working on the next *Murder Mystery* event for the general public. After last year's Victorian offer, this year will be set in May 1940 and is titled *A Pound of Flesh*. Not surprisingly, the murder revolves around a rehearsal for a morale-lifting performance of *The Merchant of Venice*. The event will run for two nights at the end of May.
- 4.6 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 National Portfolio Organisation under the terms of the current 2018-22 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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