

St George's Guildhall & Creative Hub Advisory Group

Meeting Minutes

Date: 3rd May 2022	Location: Town Hall and Via MS Teams (Hybrid)
Time: 2 – 4pm	Chair: Michael Baldwin

Attendees	Apologies
Cllr Graham Middleton Mark Fuller Wendy Fisher Sally Turff Mike Carter-Rowlands Richard Morley Michael De Whalley Ken hill Margaret Clarke Lesley bowers Robert Bowers Jan Clutterbuck Niki Jenkins Amanda Arterton Penny Jenner Ema Holman Rachael Williams Dayna Woolbright Penny Dossetor Cllr Elizabeth Nockolds Michael Baldwin Tim FitzHigham Arian Parker Hetty Thornton Cllr Lesley Bambridge Peter Wilson	Jemma Curtis Beryl Rayner Natalie Jode Philip Bayfield Mary Muir Andrew Jarvis Paul Gibson Ivor Rowlands A. Goodwin

Minutes	Actions
1. Apologies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As noted above. 	
2. Minutes of last meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All agreed. ACTION: To re-circulate minutes of previous meeting. 	LG
3. General update and letter writing ideas for the NLHF Round 1 bid <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Project Team includes members from the council, the Norfolk Museum Service, National Trust, and the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership. Dayna Woolbright (Norfolk Museum Service) and with Rachael Williams (Stories of Lynn) have been assisting with the interpretation for the site. The Business Case for the Towns Fund along with supporting documentation is being completed ready for submission to the Government to unlock the funding for the project. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The National Lottery Heritage Fund submission is also being prepared. Memorandums of Understanding are being produced in readiness.• Letters of support can be provided for the NLHF submission, these can come from anybody who is generally supportive of the project or is a stakeholder.• If the Advisory Group is interested in providing a letter of support, it would be most welcomed.• Ivor Rowlands has sent a letter of support on behalf of the Shakespeare Guildhall Trust. Individual groups are welcome to send letters of support, however all the groups sending a collective letter would show unity.• It was noted that the letter of support from Ivor Rowlands has yet to reach the project team.• Concern was raised that the Advisory Group had not met enough to be familiar with the plans for the site and that for the Advisory Group to write a joint letter of support would be impractical.• DECISION: Individual letters will be written.• Michael Baldwin assured the group that he is available to speak to any member regarding the project if they would like to know more and that this offer is extended outside of official meetings also.• Historic England are unable to provide letters of support generally, however as a Statutory Authority, a letter will be provided by David Eve.• If the individual groups have any queries about the project prior to writing a letter of support, the Project Team will be happy to answer.• It is hoped that the overall consensus is that the stakeholders continue to be supportive of the project.• The timeline is tight, and letters would be required by the 13th May 2022.	
<p>4. Discussion on events on site for the next 12 months</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The project is a long-term endeavour, and it is not expected to be completed until 2026. Construction is not expected to commence until 2024 and therefore there is a period of time where there are still opportunities to do things on site.• Meanwhile use activity on site will not be funded by the Towns Fund but the site should continue to work. Collaborative working is needed to agree what will happen. Tours, exhibitions, and performances can still happen.• It is hoped that the Advisory Group will be invited to a meeting once every two months going forward.• Philip Bayfield will continue to hold the diary for the Guildhall and bookings will still need to be arranged with him.• The food and drink offering needs to be improved, it is found that people attending performances in the Guildhall must venture elsewhere for food and drink which often makes them late to attend the performance.• The Volunteer Guides have offered to open the undercroft on a daily basis so that they can show visitors, but also to avoid it getting damp.• Commercial leasing is very complicated, however a resolution to the leasing issue is being sought. There are commercial sensitivities, and these cannot be discussed, however public liability on the lease means	

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that other organisations are unable to take the keys to show the space to the general public as if there were an accident, it would be the leaseholder that was liable, not the tour guides.

- A resolution is being sought for the food and drink offering in the meantime, but this is not likely to happen in the short term, however The Riverside Restaurant is on site and is still open, so if events sell enough tickets, a dialogue could be had with the proprietors of the Riverside to provide food and drink.
- A query was raised over the opening of gates to the rear of the site so that visitors could view the river, however this area is also privately leased and therefore public liability would again cause issue.
- Smartening up the foyer of the Guildhall with a fresh coat of paint is not possible with funds raised by the volunteers and SGT and any painting would need to be approved by the National Trust. **ACTION:** To discuss what could be done to improve first impressions of the site.
- Peeling paint around the stage is caused by damp which is one of the first issues expected to be repaired when physical works start on site in 2024.
- The toilet facilities will be temporarily improved with a new toilet seat and air fresheners where necessary. **ACTION:** The toilet seat in the ladies toilet will be fixed.
- The responsibility for repairs to the building is not with the National Trust. There is a capital funding to repair all the buildings, including even things like the wiring. There is still 5 years of use with the building before urgent works will be needed. The Capital budget will repair the roof, improve the brickwork etc. Some urgent works will be undertaken in the meantime.
- Meanwhile uses will be difficult, there is no current wheelchair access or comfy seats, but it is hoped that the site can still welcome visitors.
- It is important to attract families into the Guildhall, young people could then be engaged. Over August, 5 days will be taken for activities for young people inspired by William Shakespeare plays, using a different play each week. There will 3 workshops on each of these days. Families will be asked to pay for the sessions.
- Thursdays will be for older Children, a 'Play in a Day', props will be made, make-up and costume also provided to perform on stage later in the day.
- There is a lot of work that could be undertaken with schools and the primary schools use the Norfolk Museum Service, they could be taught about life around Shakespeare's time.
- Stories of Lynn, the Town Hall and St Georges Guildhall could all be utilised, Stories and the Town Hall as 'break-out' spaces coming together in the afternoon for performances on stage at the Guildhall.
- Road to River looking at the civic heart of Lynn, looking at trading, the river and the marketplaces and their roles in the town moving onto the theatre at the Guildhall to experience entertainment.
- The Volunteers have offered assistance with the young person days to undertake tours of the site.
- The more the idea's link with current school syllabus, the more schools will be interested in the offer. There are specific links to King's Lynn and

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<p>Armin (Shakespeare's comedian) and the Shakespeare stories which are on the syllabus at the moment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Guides and Scouts are often looking for sites for meetings and this could also be a possibility.• King's Lynn Players are performing Sunset Boulevard May 19th – 21st May. The Musical 'Calendar Girls' is booked for November and 'The Accused' by Geoffrey Archer next March.• Dates when the Theatre will be unavailable will need to be shared in advance.• It should also be an agenda item for future meetings for the individual groups to discuss with others what they are planning and when so that performances don't overlap, and the same plays are not performed by different groups. ACTION: To add to the agenda for bi-monthly meetings.• The plan is to keep the volunteers at the heart of everything that is being done and they should continue to be involved as they are currently.• The Guildhall will continue to be used for the Festival. The exhibition areas will continue to be booked.• There are more organisations who have an interest in the Arts who would be able to work in partnership with stakeholders to bring joined up thinking and bring the arts to King's Lynn.• There has not been a promotor of the Guildhall to link all of the exhibitions and shows together. The venue has never been promoted as a venue for touring companies etc.• A CIO will be founded for the Guildhall Site. It is a charity to promote the Guildhall from Road to River and it is a good step forward for the Guildhall. They will be a central promotor of all activities on the site. As soon as it goes through the Charity Commission it is hoped that the CIO will start.• All the heritage sites should feed into each other, the Custom House, the Guildhall etc.• These issues are being discussed by the Towns Fund Board and the Council. The links haven't been there but there is an aspiration that they will be going forward.• The Custom House forms part of the Riverfront Regeneration projects which is one of the other Towns Fund projects. There is a group that are currently looking at meanwhile uses for that. It is being looked at and ideas are being bought forward.• The Vaccination Centre will not be there forever; however, it has increased the footfall on site, and it needs to be examined, how can the footfall be utilised for other parts of the site. ACTION: To get an update on how long the vaccination centre will be there.• The Festival are planning a large 2023 exhibition and therefore they need to know the date the vaccination centre will be moved.• The Rotary Club are hoping to organise a music festival this year but didn't know who to contact. Tim FitzHigham agreed to be a contact.• It was suggest that the storage space used by King's Lynn Players could become a workshop for education, showing how to build props and make costumes etc. At RIBA Stage 1, there are a variety of flexible	<p>LG/MB/TF</p> <p>MF</p>
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<p>spaces in the plan. Their usage is not currently defined. In 4 years' time when it is planned to open the site, a workshop might not be needed. The Council may work with the groups to find alternative space for storing props.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signage on the roads pointing to the Guildhall should occur later in the project. Visitors can be confused when they see the Guildhall in its current guise, a 1950's layout, when it is marketed as 'Britain's oldest working theatre.' • It was suggested that 90% of visitors to the Guildhall wanted to know why the site wasn't signposted. • There is only a commitment to programme 50 days of theatre at the Guildhall. The Business Plan provides for a significant uplift of programming, between 250-300 shows a year. • The additional programming should perhaps not happen until the site is bought up to date, with wheelchair access included. This is included in the plans, to make the entire site accessible to all. • Marketing within the business plan will focus on the future for the site rather than what is currently on site, activities could be mentioned but this needs to be examined further. • Volunteers regularly hand out brochures which narrate the future of the site put forward by one organisation, but offered to change this to ensure that the vision portrayed is a collective vision and that logos of the delivery partners are included. • The volunteer co-ordinator stated volunteers at the Guildhall would hand out the newly collated vision leaflets as soon as they were provided and suggested they had handed out perhaps around 2000 to date. • It is hoped that ideas from Oxborough's 'Raise the Roof' scheme can be emulated with the Guildhall Centre project. • Questions were raised around why the Guildhall was not in the National Trust handbook. Some suggestions were made as to possible reasons but a National Trust representative was not at the meeting. ACTION: To try and understand from the National Trust exactly why the Guildhall is not in their handbook and see if it is possible to include it in their 2023 book. • By the end of 2026 more appropriate wheelchair access will be available. 	<p>TF</p>
<p>5. Any other business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collusion have expressed interest in using the White Barn to support their latest project. They are likely to be in there for 6 months or so. They might run some workshops from there. • The plans for the site show a better arrangement of access to the river which also includes wheelchair access to the site and to the terrace. • It was suggested that some felt the Riverside Restaurant cannot be expected to cooperate with the rest of the site when they are running a business for profit. • The vision for the site has one part of the site with catering run by the CIO. Having an 'in-house' restaurant adds risk, however having the additional third-party operator, mitigates this risk. The vision for the site has both. 	

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- A card facility to take donations would be very useful and allow people to donate even when they don't have cash in hand.
- The CIO will manage the site, they will have Charitable Status which will allow them to have a bank account which could take donations in this way. When they are created and there is an approach from an individual, they should be directed to the CIO and their bank account.
- It needs to be very clear about what members of the public are donating money for and where it needs to be spent. If people are donating for the capital costs of the building, this must then be spent for the capital cost of the building. The CIO will keep the fabric of the building safe and therefore funding can be used by them for this purpose.
- Concern was raised about the high levels of footfall in the business plan. Experts have been contacted and a large marketing budget has been put in place as well as staff to market the site. Comparable sites have been looked at and the numbers of house owners in the vicinity who are members of the National Trust. Everything possible has been included to entice visitors to the site. It's the best educated guess following consultation.
- Concern was raised regarding the increase in hire charges for events and whether it was for a commercial hire. A lot of the current users of the site would not find it financially viable to continue operating from the site with the proposed hire charges. The figures for hire are similar to those of the Corn Exchange who have a larger capacity.
- The hire charge was deemed to be reasonable for a site of this nature when looking at comparable sites, projected uplift in footfall and increase in what is provided for the hire. The market may be different in 4 years' time, and it may be possible to look at the figures again in the future.
- The future CIO will work with the Charities on site, it may be a wedding or corporate company who may have to pay a higher charge where the smaller charities would work with the CIO to put on events at a smaller charge.
- One user felt that the business plan appears to have been written without regard to the community usage.
- The CIO is keeping at its core, the community usage. The user was directed to the relevant sections of the business plan to assist.
- The ticket price in 4 years' time for specific events should not be the primary focus of the group at this stage.
- 1947 the Guildhall was saved by the community, and they raised the money.
- Visit West Norfolk website has a page where people can put their events.
<https://www.visitwestnorfolk.com/events/>