

**JOINT COMMITTEE FOR THE NORTH OF ENGLAND
OPEN-AIR MUSEUM**

At a Meeting of the Joint Committee for the North of England Open-Air Museum held in the Collections Study Room, Regional Resource Centre, Beamish Museum on Friday 9 September 2011 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT:

Councillor D Marshall in the Chair

Members of the Joint Committee

Councillors Bailey, Carr, Gittins, Iveson, Shuttleworth, Thomson, Todd, Wilkinson, Wilson and Wright (Durham County Council) Craig, Goldsworthy and Green (Gateshead MBC) Cunningham, Gibson and Maxwell (South Tyneside MBC) and R Bell, Foster, Kelly and Richardson (Sunderland City Council)

Co-opted Members (Non-Voting)

Friends – Mr A Ashburner

Beamish Development Trust – Mrs E Hunter

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Bell, D Marshall, May and Naylor (Durham County Council), Mortimer (North Tyneside MBC), Kerr (South Tyneside MBC) Walker (Sunderland City Council), Mrs Stewart (Beamish Development Trust) and Mr Dix (Friends)

1 Minutes of the Meetings held on 24 June and 8 July 2011

The minutes of the meetings held on 24 June and 8 July 2011 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2 Museum Update

The Joint Committee received a report from the Museum Director giving an update on Museum business (for copy see file of Minutes).

Performance – Visitor numbers from February to July were 12.5% up on the previous year and an additional 82,000 visitors were received in August

2011 against a budget of 78,000. Figures for early September were also encouraging with the 'Power from the Past' event attracting just under 13,000 over a four day period.

A report on the recent growth in employment at the Museum would be prepared and presented at a later date, to show how recent developments including the Fish and Chip Shop have led to a marked increase in the number of full time equivalent employees at Beamish.

In terms of fundraising, the Beamish Development Trust continued to raise vital funds, particularly to support the costs of the museum's work with local schools and community groups. The Friends of the Museum has decided to adopt the Hetton Silver Band Hall restoration as a fundraising project and planned to introduced a scheme to encourage people to 'Buy a Brick'.

Long term development plan progress report – feedback would be reported to the Joint Committee following working group reports from staff throughout the Museum. 12 themes of the plan were being explored including the development of existing period areas, the potential for developing new period areas in the future, accommodation and evening use. As well as talking to stakeholders and surveying the public, other Museums were being looked at that have developed similar ideas.

The future for Renaissance in the Regions – latest developments from the Arts Council – The Arts Council has announced that they are moving away from the 'core museums' and 'challenge funding' models of support for regional museums that they had inherited from the MLA. ACE was replacing this with a new scheme of 'major funding' and 'strategic funding'. Once guidance is received a report would be prepared for the Joint Committee.

Resolved:-

That progress with the delivery of the Business and Operational Improvement Plan as outlined in the report, be noted.

3 Audited Accounts

The Joint Committee considered a report of the Treasurer outlining the communications received from the External Auditors concerning the Annual Return for 2010/2011 and to provide the Audited Statement of Accounts for 2010/2011 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Treasurer informed Members that the external auditor had provided an unqualified audit opinion of the Annual Return for the year ended 31st March 2011 and also that the Statement of Accounts 2010/2011 had required no amendment from those previously presented to the Committee in June. No major issues had been identified by the External Auditors although two small matters, that were not considered material, were highlighted in their audit report for the attention of the Committee, which needed to be addressed. The Treasurer reported that these minor issues were in fact in hand and would be addressed as required.

Resolved:

- (i) That the unqualified audited Annual Return from External Auditors, BDO LLP (Chartered Accountants), be noted.
- (ii) That the Audited Statement of Accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2011, be approved.

4 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved:-

That under Section 100 A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the said Act.

5 Prioritisation of Capital Projects

The Joint Committee received a report from the Museum Director that considered further investments, a revised cost plan and funding profile for projects within the Business and Operational Improvement Plan (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:-

That the recommendations contained within the report, be approved.

6 Business and Operational Improvement Plan – Capital Programme Project Report No. 7

The Joint Committee received a report from the Museum Director that provided an update on the variations and funding for Capital Projects (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:-
That the report be noted.