

Cornwall Museums Group

Meeting One Minutes

The meeting was held on the 3rd September 2008 at the Royal Cornwall Museum, Truro

Chair : Libby Buckley (Porthcurno Telegraph Museum)

Minutes: Sarah Cooper (Royal Cornwall Museum)

Attendance

Elisabeth Chard (Grampound with Creed Heritage Project); Tremar Menendez (Lostwithiel museum); Pat Gregory (Lostwithiel museum); Barbara Fraser (Lostwithiel museum); Gillian Parsons (Lostwithiel museum); John Buckingham (Padstow Museum); Chris Borkett (Newquay Old Cornwall Society); Chris Shinner (Newquay Old Cornwall Society); Hilary Bracegirdle (Royal Cornwall Museum); Cilla George (Trevarno National Museum of Gardening and Soap); Stephanie Meads (MDO North Cornwall); John Baxter (The Castle, Bude); Gordon Kane (Mevagissey Museum); Derek Giles (Wheal Martyn China Clay Country Park); Kevin Baker (King Edward Mine); Jo Warburton (Geevor Tin Mine); Linda Miners (Perranzabuloe Museum); Richard Howe (Perranzabuloe Museum); Ed Bremner (SW Fed); Jake Jackson (Lawrence House Museum); Lesley Barker (Lawrence House Museum); Carol Bunbury (BAFM SW Co-ordinator); Jeremy Rice (Penlee House Gallery and Museum); Amanda Martin (Isles of Scilly Museum); Helen Luther (Fowey Museum); Tamsin Daniel (Penwith District Council and Creative Unit); Alison Bevan (Penlee House Gallery and Museum).

Apologies

Barbara & Neil Birchwood-Harper (Looe Museum); Janet Axton (St Ives Archive); Graham King (Museum of Witchcraft); Jo Moore (National Trust); Tate St Ives; Alan Elliot (Polperro Museum); Bodmin Museum; Hilda Court (Fowey Museum); Sarah Riddle (National Maritime Museum, Falmouth); Kate Johnson (MDO SE Cornwall); Janet Spargo (Helston Museum); George Barnes (Padstow Museum); Tracey Clowes (Constantine Museum); Sally Holden (North Cornwall Museum and Gallery, Camelford); Falmouth Art Gallery

The meeting was opened at 11.05 by Hilary Bracegirdle. She welcomed everyone to the Royal Cornwall Museum and gave a summary of what is happening in the County at the moment regarding lobbying. Libby Buckley then explained the rationale behind the group and introduced possible ideas as to how the group should function.

It was unanimously decided that the idea of having a group for the museums of Cornwall was a good one.

It was then discussed how this group should be defined and who should be allowed to join. An initial point was raised by Amanda Martin as to whether the group would be open to the Isles of Scilly Museum as this is not included within Cornwall County

Council. However it was felt that geographical location alone should not be a consideration, experience was of more importance and the emphasis at this meeting on One Cornwall was merely due to timing and would not be a defining point of the group. It was then considered as to whether the holding of a historic collection was to be a requirement. Ed Bremner said that whilst this is a feature of other County groups most do not define membership too closely and are happy to welcome all who wish to attend. Tamsin Daniel suggested that historical societies, trusts and collections which are not yet in museums should also be free to join. It was therefore decided that it would be best to be inclusive and to deal with any problems with this should they arise in the future.

It was then considered how formal the group should be and if it should have a constitution stating why it is in existence. Kevin Baker suggested that the group be better able to promote its worth if it was formally organised. Tamsin Daniel supported the idea of becoming a constituted body as no-one knows at this stage what the structure of One Cornwall will be and so there may be a place for the group within this. The constitution can still be fairly loose and flexible. Ed Bremner offered to provide a template for a constitution and provide advice. He also commented that those groups elsewhere in the region which have people running them and a defined mechanism run better than those without. It was also suggested by other members of the group that a constitution would provide strength to the smaller museums and be a good tool for advocacy and to help maintain existing networks, MDO posts, and current funding or financial assistance (including those who may not get direct funding but do get rate relief). It may also enable us to help embrace with tourism. It was pointed out that we should not get sidelined by money and that there are other very important reasons to have the group. Working together is key and being able to share knowledge and communicate with each other. It was unanimously decided to have a formal structure and Libby Buckley and Sarah Cooper agreed to look into this, put a document together and circulate it to the group.

At this point Alison Bevan proposed that Libby Buckley should formally Chair all meetings – this was unanimously agreed.

Funding was then discussed. Libby Buckley explained how Devon Museums Group receive about £3,000 per year from Devon County Council which pays for an administrator to write the minutes, maintain the mailing list and send the mail outs. It was suggested that this would be a good thing to have for Cornwall. Hilary Bracegirdle suggested Paul Brough should be approached and would potentially be keen to assist. However if this was not successful she would undertake to provide funding for the group. Libby asked for anyone who would be interested in taking the minutes or undertaking this role to contact her. Ideally we would like to keep the role within the group.

The method of communication was raised at this point. Carol Bunbury suggested e-mails would be better than postage as this can be expensive. Ed Bremner offered to create a mail list through the SW Fed. This would protect peoples e-mail addresses and would be a constant unchanging address. Alison Bevan also suggested that the minutes be kept on the Cornwall page of the SW Fed which Ed Bremner agreed to do. It was emphasised

that it would not be a requirement to be a member of the SW Fed to use the site or be in the Cornwall group.

The locations of the meetings were then considered. Should we always meet in a central location or move around the county? It was suggested that moving would enable everyone to make at least one meeting a year without having to travel too far. It was also felt that if something was offered in addition to the meeting it would encourage people to travel, for example if the day combined training or a site visit. Amanda Martin also mentioned that video conferencing is used a lot on the Isles of Scilly and most Council offices and universities have such facilities. Derek Giles offered the new conference facilities at Wheal Martyn to the group to be used free of charge. It was agreed that moving the meeting around should be trialled.

The length and contents of the meetings was then discussed, should it be a whole day and include an additional activity to the meeting? Alison Bevan suggested that by including a training session or site visit this can make it easier to justify travelling to a meeting. It was pointed out that networking is a key function of the group. Libby Buckley asked if people would like to include a round table session in the meetings. It was felt that whilst these are useful and a good way to solve problems and share information it is important that they are chaired as they can overrun. It was suggested that if the day includes a training session a different person may be attending the meeting than who should attend the training day. However it was felt that it would be possible for them to travel together or that this could provide professional development and networking opportunities to a larger number of staff at one museum. The organisation of training days was questioned however Ed Bremner said that the training opportunities available through the fed could be geared to work through the county group.

It was suggested however by Carol Bunbury that if the group only meets a few times a year this means that there is not a very immediate response to a problem a museum may have. Many museums do not know to whom they should go for advice as numbers and organisations regularly change. Ed Bremner said that the SW Fed can help with this and are feeding back on this issue to MLA SW. The MLA SW skills sharing network was suggested as a good place to go for advice. Subject specialist networks were also suggested as good places to go for advice. Kevin Baker raised the possibility of creating a discussion forum potentially hosted by the SW Fed. It was pointed out however that this can be difficult to maintain as they require everyone to regularly access them to see if there has been any questions posed. The advantage of an e-mail list would work best – especially if the SW Fed are used to host the list as this will give one e-mail address for everyone. A blog site was suggested however this requires someone to maintain it. Ed Bremner said that if a forum was wanted he would assist with the creation and would help to make it work. It was also said that e-mail alerts can be sent every time something is posted which would help to make the forum work as it would not require everyone to remember to check the page. It was decided to start with an e-mail list and then review in 6 months time.

The format of the meetings was then discussed and it was decided the meetings would last all day with the meeting held in the morning and a training session / speaker / site visit / briefing session in the afternoon.

The frequency of the meetings was then considered. Quarterly was suggested possibly with three meetings and an AGM. The potential of having more meetings initially was suggested to discuss the issue of funding.

The inclusion of a round table at the future meetings was again raised. It was suggested that if a museum has a problem this should be raised in advance and included on the agenda. It was however pointed out that it can be very useful to know about future projects museums are planning as this can provide opportunities to work together and to make sure people do not duplicate funding applications. Libby Buckley suggested that the issue of how we share information at meetings is discussed at the next meeting. It was suggested that a central pool of policies etc should be held which other museums can refer to. However the issue of intellectual property rights was raised and Hilary Bracegirdle suggested that a lot of this is already covered by Collections Link.

The length and time of the meetings was discussed and it was decided to start at 11 o'clock to enable people plenty of time to travel to the meetings and lunch should be included with the afternoon session optional.

Libby Buckley suggested that at further meetings it should be discussed what else the group could be used for, e.g. marketing, websites. The 24 hour museum was suggested and Libby said that she had already spoken to them about the possibility of something being included on their site for the region. They are in the process of redeveloping their site and are considering creating regional areas. They have funding to do this and there is the possibility they could test it with Cornwall. Tamsin Daniel suggested that Miranda Bird, Cornwall Arts Marketing, should be invited to the next meeting to talk about our possible inclusion on www.cornwallculture.co.uk. Amanda Martin said that museums need to work closer with other bodies than museums. Libby Buckley suggested that individual museums are already doing this but we should look at how we can do this as a group. Helen Luther pointed out that we should share our needs and requirements so that should funding become available we already know what we want. Alison Bevan suggested that this could also be used to joint purchase resources.

Tamsin Daniel suggested that if we were able to put together a 'wish list' we could take this to One Cornwall and show them what we could do if they provide us with the funding to do it. She suggested it is important to understand how fragile something's are but also to know the best way to use funding should it become available. It is important to look to the future and know how different bodies funding is used, what is available and how to get a part of it. Derek Giles suggested that if we are to become a pressure group it is important we represent every museum in Cornwall. Alison Bevan suggested that we cannot represent everyone if they do not want to be a part of the group but we should give everyone a chance to be a member. Tamsin Daniel and Ed Bremner suggested that the

membership should be a part of the constitution. It will give our group a stronger voice if we are able to say we represent all the museums in Cornwall.

Libby Buckley raised the possibility of our having a presence at the Royal Cornwall Show in 2009. It is a good opportunity to meet staff of other organisations and a good showcase to present ourselves to Cornwall as a united force. Hilary Bracegirdle did say that this can be expensive in staff time. Stephanie Meads suggested a tourism show may be a better option. Amanda Martin suggested that it may potentially be of more use to get into Cornwall tourist boards websites and that if the information is in several languages it will get included on other countries search engines. Carol Banbury said that we need to make sure the group remains practical.

We stopped for lunch at this point at 12.35 and resumed at 13.30.

Afternoon Session

At this point in the meeting we were joined by Chris Ramsey (representing One Cornwall); Victoria Harding (Programme and Projects Manager, MLA SW); Georgia Butters (Royal Cornwall Museum).

Brief presentations were then given.

Chris Ramsey – One Cornwall.

From the 1st April 2009 Cornwall will become a unitary authority. It is likely that elections will be held in May/June of that year as an interim arrangement whilst it is decided on the number of councillors there will be. They are currently gradually evaluating potential changes and deciding on the structure.

A copy of the proposed structure of the new council was passed out. It will include 5 directorates. Museums will be included in Cultural Services which will fall in the Communities directorate. Cultural Services will be further divided to include Historic Collections (records office, archives, museums) and Creative Services (CC Creative unit and cultural officers from the district councils e.g. Tamsin Daniel, Jonathan Aberdeen and Stephanie Thomas).

Proposed timescale of appointments:

The Chief executive – September

5 Directors – Children, schools and Families will be simply transferred as this remains the same

other 4 advertised nationally and appointed October

Heads of Service – advertised before end September appointed by end October

The service design leads will continue what they are doing and will gradually transfer work as the heads of service are appointed.

20 community network areas will be created which will provide a local input into what local services are delivered in their areas and how they are delivered. It is expected that

they will take a view of cultural services in their area. This will be at local discretion. Allied to these will be one stop shops which will provide advice on county services.

On the 12th September a report will be submitted which will state that all usual grants will be honoured in 2009/10. This will include things like low rents.

The emphasis in April 2009 will be 'Business as usual'. All services will be continued so that the transition is seamless. The new council elected in 2009 will make the decisions on new policies; everything will be looked at however significant changes are unlikely even in 2011/12 however the changes are likely to begin in 2010/11.

After some questions and discussion Chris Ramsey agreed to raise issues we requested including the importance to many museums that they have rate relief and that we would like to be included in a review of tourism.

When asked what we can/should do Chris Ramsey replied that timing would be key and that until the necessary appointments had been made there is nothing we can do at this stage. At this point we are in a transition stage during which it is important that everything keeps going. We need to have patience as the transformation will take several years to achieve. Therefore we do not need to make sure that everything we want / need / require is ready and in place from April 2009. He said that it would be a good idea to make good contacts with people elected in your area and that community network areas will be key.

Hilary Bracegirdle & Georgia Butters – Renaissance

We are currently in a transitional year, therefore are working from the same business plan as last year. This is due to a national review of Renaissance that is currently taking place which is likely to result in changes to the scheme. The review is currently running behind schedule as is the national strategy of museums (to be launched at the Museum Association conference in October). It is therefore expected that next year may be another transition year.

From next year there are likely to be changes within the hubs due to the changes within MLA, however the funding across all the regions is currently being harmonised between phase 1 and phase 2 hubs. This means that the SW, as a phase one hub, will have a reduction in funding. However some aspects will increase for example the Museum Development Fund has increased by £10,000.

Plymouth Museum and Art Gallery are creating a new full time MDO post covering South Hams and SE Cornwall. This will be based in Plymouth until at least March 2010 and will be in place by Christmas.

The Royal Cornwall Museum will continue their support of museums in Cornwall and will continue to work with them to uplift the museums sector in Cornwall. We will not allot specific amounts of time to work with other museums but are expecting and happy to provide advice and support as required.

This group will provide potential for working together to produce co-ordinated efforts e.g. volunteer recruitment.

The MDF fund will transfer from the MLA SW from April 2009 and will be managed by the Hub.

Victoria Harding – MLA SW

The HLF are introducing a new strategic plan. This will have a new application process and post-grant support. There will be a training day in Plymouth for this on the 11th September.

There is a new element to the training available from the MLA called sharing skills. This is an opportunity to get advice and support on specific things. You need to fill in a form to request the support you would like and send it to the MLA who will then arrange the support from one of the 5 hubs. The next deadline is the 17th September.

From April 2009 MLA SW is closing. From this date MLA Central will operate from Birmingham and there will be one person for the whole of the south west region who will work at a strategic level.

Accreditation will continue to operate. All completed applications will be sent straight to MLA central. However pre application advice will be available from the MDOs or through the regional hub.

A new source of funding has become available through the MLA SW. £100,000 is available for museums to commission artists to create a new piece of art. Grants for £5-£20,000 are available but will require match funding. A launch event is being held in Exeter on the 7th September and deadlines for applications is the 10th October.

Alison Bevan – SW MA council member

Mark Taylor, director of the MA, visited Cornwall last month for his annual visit to the southwest. Alison took him to meet the portfolio holder for communities and economic development for One Cornwall.

The National BAFM conference will be held at Penlee House Museum and Art Gallery from 3rd – 5th October. Alison plans to leave the delegates with an impression of the richness of Cornwall's heritage. She is willing to put leaflets for other museums in the delegates packs (there will be about 120 delegates) please send any you wish to be included directly to her.

There is a complete review of the AMA at the moment. They are especially looking at the entry requirements and the professional review.

Ed Bremner – SW Fed co-ordinator.

The AGM was held in June at Torquay. Liz Neathy has been elected as the new chair, Alison Bevan is the vice chair and Sarah Cooper is Cornwall rep.

The purpose of the SW Fed is to feed information in both directions from museums to larger institutions like MLA SW and the hub. If you have any problems or questions contact your Cornwall rep who will then relay this on.

The fed are running some skills sharing workshops. These will be small hands-on practical workshops of which there are two planned so far in Cornwall.

1. 14th October – A smashing day on packing and handling at Penlee House
2. 18th November – Dealing with Finds: Archaeological Artefact Handling at the RCM

Both are free and are aimed for small numbers of people. If you are interested contact Ed Bremner on 01822 832574 or co-ordinator@swfed.org.uk

The Autumn meeting of the SW Fed will be held in Geevor on November 10th.

He also reminded everyone that bursaries are available through MLA SW for volunteer run museums to attend training. Also that a part of the Museum Groups role should be that it is used as a vehicle to request training.

The meeting ended at 2.55

Actions from the meeting

- **LB to invite Miranda Bird to December meeting**
- **EB to set up email list etc.**
- **LB to speak to Paul Brough about funding**
- **Start a wishlist ...**
- **Investigate video conferencing....**
- **LB and SC to look into constitutions from similar groups**

Date of next meeting : Monday 1st December at the Royal Cornwall Museum.