

Date of meeting		THE	
Agenda and briefing		NATIONAL	
name of meeting		ARCHIVES	

Meeting: The National Archives – visit to The Hold (Suffolk Archives)

Date and time: Friday 11th November 2022

Location: Suffolk Archives, The Hold, 131 Fore Street, Ipswich, IP4 1LR

Attendees: Jeff James, Val Johnson, Baroness Ros Scott, [REDACTED]
Lead contact at Suffolk Archives is [REDACTED], Strategic Manager

Items for discussion (if applicable)

Not applicable

Desired outcome

This is an opportunity to tour Suffolk Archives' new flagship building, The Hold, in Ipswich. The visit will also feature the presentation of Suffolk Archives' certificate for Archive Service Accreditation in front of an audience of around 35 invited guests.

Briefing notes

This visit was originally scheduled to take place in May 2020, but had to be postponed due to the pandemic.

The Hold is Suffolk Archives' flagship new building on the Ipswich waterfront. It opened to the public in October 2020. Suffolk Archives previously occupied a renovated Victorian school on the other side of Ipswich, but their service offer was significantly constrained by the layout of the listed building. The Hold is a partnership between Suffolk Archives and the University of Suffolk, and the building is located alongside several other University of Suffolk buildings. University facilities include a 200-seat lecture theatre and a series of seminar rooms. The building also features the archives reading room and separate local studies library, archive storage for approximately 85% of Suffolk Archives' overall collection, conservation and digitisation studios, a café, exhibition gallery, and a range of adaptable spaces for activities and engagement. The building was financed by Suffolk County Council, University of Suffolk and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Suffolk Archives operate another two branches across the county: Bury St Edmunds and Lowestoft.

As well as viewing the new building, the event will also feature the presentation of Suffolk

Date of meeting		THE	
Agenda and briefing		NATIONAL	
name of meeting		ARCHIVES	

Archives' certificate for Archive Service Accreditation. The presentation (speech to be circulated separately) will be conducted by Baroness Ros Scott, and the certificate will be presented to Cllr. Bobby Bennett on behalf of Suffolk County Council. There will be around 35 invited guests and stakeholders for this event; invitations are being co-ordinated by Suffolk Archives. Attendees will include:

- Andrew Cook – Executive Director for Growth, Highways and Infrastructure, Suffolk County Council
- Councillor Bobby Bennett, Cabinet Member for Equality and Communities, Suffolk County Council
- Councillor Robert Everitt, Chairman, Suffolk County Council
- Professor Helen Langton, Vice Chancellor, University of Suffolk
- Tim Greenacre, Chief Operating Officer, University of Suffolk
- Clare, Countess of Euston, Lord-Lieutenant of Suffolk
- [Sir Christopher and] Lady Clare Howes, Deputy Lieutenant
- Mark Pendlington, Deputy Lieutenant
- Geoffrey Probert, Deputy Lieutenant

And a range of stakeholders and project partners. There will also be a Suffolk County Council photographer in attendance throughout the day.

Although The Hold is located in Ipswich, Suffolk Archives have demonstrated an impressive commitment to engagement across the county. As well as their branches in Bury St Edmunds and Lowestoft, the service engages with multiple communities and organisations throughout Suffolk. Partnership working and community engagement were key strands of Suffolk Archives' application to NLHF to build The Hold, and the service has subsequently restructured to ensure that the community engagement roles – originally intended to be fixed-term project roles – are maintained as a permanent part of the staffing structure.

Current discussions/ Liaison

Not applicable

Issues

1) Suffolk Archives took a decision in 2018 to remove the archives from their Lowestoft branch, and change it to a Local Studies service point. This was part of a strategic restructure across their three branches in response to lower visitor numbers and issues around the storage conditions in Lowestoft Library, where the archive service was located. This decision received significant pushback from local residents. One group in particular, 'Save Our Record Office' (SORO) have carried out a sustained campaign criticising the

Date of meeting		THE	
Agenda and briefing		NATIONAL	
name of meeting		ARCHIVES	

decision and, on some occasions, circulating inflammatory or unsubstantiated comments about Suffolk Archives and individual staff members. Their actions have also included several Freedom of Information requests to Suffolk County Council and TNA about the decision.

2) Suffolk Archives is currently exploring options for their Bury St Edmunds branch. The branch is currently located in a 1930s former-library; the building and multiple internal features including the flooring, staircase and shelving is listed, constraining how the building can be used. Access for disabled visitors is very limited. The Bury branch holds just under 15% of the overall Suffolk Archives collection, but storage space is limited and distribution of material across the branches has to be carefully co-ordinated. Local amenities such as parking are also limited. The service has recently been presented with the possibility of re-locating to a new 'hub' building on the outskirts of Bury St Edmunds. Other services onsite would include a leisure centre and NHS resources, presenting Suffolk Archives with a range of opportunities for enhanced engagement, collaborative or wellbeing work. There are also 3 secondary schools and a Further Education college nearby, again presenting opportunities to engage with a range of new audiences. Suffolk Archives will be making a decision in late-2022 on whether to proceed with this option, or whether to remain in their existing premises and try to make adaptations to the building. Suffolk County Council have expressed a firm commitment to maintain the Bury St Edmunds branch, regardless of its location.

In both instances above, Suffolk Archives have been proactive in keeping TNA updated on developments and potential issues.

Lines to take

I don't think we have been asked to comment publicly on the response to the Lowestoft closure, but we did agree a standard response in discussion with Media & Communications office: that TNA was aware of the issue but was not going to comment further.

Itinerary for the day

Arrangements on the day will be co-ordinated by [REDACTED], Sector Development Manager East & Arts. [REDACTED] can be contacted on [REDACTED] if there are any queries.

Parking is available on-site (see map at <https://www.suffolkarchives.co.uk/how-to-get-started-at-suffolk-archives/plan-your-visit/suffolk-archives-branches/ipswich-branch/>) but will need to be pre-booked with Suffolk Archives. Please send car registrations to [REDACTED] in advance so this can be arranged.

Date of meeting		THE	
Agenda and briefing		NATIONAL	
name of meeting		ARCHIVES	

10:45 Arrive. Introductions and coffee.

11:00 Suffolk Archives will invite staff and visitors to participate in the two minute silence for Remembrance Day.

11:15 Tour of The Hold. There will be the opportunity to meet members of staff on the way round the building.

13:15 Lunch (provided) with invited guests and stakeholders

13:45 Screening of video demonstrating partnership working at The Hold (approx. 10 mins)

14:00 Presentation of Archives Service Accreditation certificate to Cllr. Bobby Bennett and members of Suffolk Archives team. Followed by photographs and tea.

15:30 Close

END OF BRIEFING

--	--