



Lynn Art Culture Heritage

Meeting 5 of LArCH Group (Lynn Arts, Culture and Heritage)

Tuesday 27th November 2018 7.00 at Thoresby College

Present: *Ivor Rowlands (Chair) Sally Turff (Ward Forum) Chris Fox (Kings Lynn Players) Anne Roberts (WNAA, Greyfriars Art Space, Minutes) Adrian Parker (Friends of St. Nicholas Chapel) Michael Hankinson, Nick Balaam (Chair, KL Preservation Trust), Tim FitzHigham, Veronica Sekules (GroundWork Gallery), Martin Little (TMKL), Brian Falconbridge*

Apologies received from: Robert Anderson, Roland Metcalfe, Julian Litten, Esther Boehm, Amanda Arterton, Lesley Bambridge, Darren Taylor, Ema Holman

Amendments to previous minutes: It was clarified that Alison Croose was not involved in the previous LArCH meeting and that comments that were incorrectly attributed to her, were in fact made by Adrian.

Ivor reported on progress, and the response to the 1st November LArCH letter. The NT responded by return, but with no more than an acknowledgement. No response was received from either Ray Assirati or the Council until yesterday when, following a reminder from Ivor, Brian Long replied saying that no further information could be provided. Following rumours that the lease had already been signed, Ivor queried this process with the National Trust. The reply from Russell Clement was unhelpful as he said "I am reluctant to discuss detail which is not based in fact". There is to be a meeting between the Trust and the Borough Council on December 11th.

Other responses: Robert Anderson has pointed us towards the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington D.C. (Director Michael Witmore):

The Folger Shakespeare Library is an independent research library on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., in the United States. It holds the world's largest collection of the printed works of William Shakespeare, and is a primary repository for rare materials from the early modern period.

Tony Penrose has written to Ivor saying that he would like his name added to the letter. Unfortunately, this arrived too late for inclusion.

After being sent a copy of the 1st November LArCH letter, **Sir Henry Bellingham** has written to Ivor saying that he has spoken to both the Borough Council and Ray Assirati and urging that any area of concern should be picked up with them.

The 1st November letter was sent to **Mayor Nick Daubney**, referring to his previous comments that he is interested in the "cultural health" of the town. No response has been received.

There was concern raised that Mr. Assirati is still very active as a property developer in King's Lynn and whether this leads to the potential for a conflict of interest. Three recent planning applications – for Lidl and Greggs at Morston Point, and by Camno investments at Freebridge Farm, are all on land



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owned by Mr Assirati. It is understood that further proposals are also under consideration for the Hanse House and the Library.

It is thought that Mr. Assirati may now have accepted some continued use of the Guildhall as a performance venue. The King's Lynn Players have been told that the Guildhall will now be available throughout 2020. The Players are to discuss their plans this Thursday.

Plans to establish a cinema within the Corn Exchange. Contrary to reports that the Cinema Club had been consulted and were supportive of this proposal, this was not the case. The Cinema Club have written to the Council to make this clear. It was also reported by the Council that the Majestic Cinema were happy because the competition would be within the town centre rather than earlier plans for a multiplex cinema at Morston Point. Sally will contact Paul Jervis, owner of the Majestic, to clarify the position.

On December 11th the Council will be meeting with the National Trust, the owners of the Guildhall. When the NT made over the lease there was no funding or legal obligations to house different activities. There are 30 years left on the lease, which the Trust have offered to take back at a cost to the Council of one million pounds. It was decided that we should invite the National Trust to also meet with us on the 11th.

There is currently no information about the pace at which the Council is proceeding. Martin Little has an opportunity at this Thursday's Council Meeting to put a question on this in support of Michael de Whalley.

Future Planning

The Guildhall building is unique and its heritage is a potential goldmine. An interesting comparison, Wells Maltings, has been transformed and a recent Open Day was packed out.

Tim made clear that a body has to be formed for the theatrical community to get behind. The Council are unlikely to respond without a positive alternative plan on offer. A theatre school could also be established on the premises. We would need to commission an article in a national paper, such as The Eye or The Times. It was also felt that "The Stage" would be willing to run an article. We need to find a high-profile patron – such as Sir Ian McKellen? The link with American scholarship is also significant - the love of Shakespeare is both national and international. We should also made immediate use of social media and prepare a press release.

It was agreed to set up a new organisation, to be launched in the next few weeks:

"Shakespeare's Guildhall Trust"

Creating a trust means registering as a charity. We need to be able to attract and receive funding as well as inviting membership. Martin reported that there are over 500 charitable trusts with arts



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interests. In the long-term people with business expertise would need to commit to establish the trust on a sound footing.

Tasks agreed:

Nick will write and circulate a draft constitution.

Tim will Email potential patrons.

Ivor will request a meeting on the 11th.

Veronica will write up an education and learning statement.

The meeting ended at 9.30.

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 4th December 7.00 p.m. upstairs at Thoresby College

Since the meeting Ivor has written to:

- Borough Council and National Trust – requesting a meeting on 11th December.
- Lady Jane Fellowes and Antony Penrose – to update on progress and ask for any recommendations on patrons.
- Robert Anderson – to request contact details for the Folger.