

## **DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL**

### **DORCHESTER JOINT HERITAGE COMMITTEE**

**17 OCTOBER 2023**

At a Meeting of the Dorchester Joint Heritage Committee held on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2023:

#### **PRESENT:**

Dorchester Town Council	Councillors:	G. Jones (Chairman) A. Chisholm F. Hogwood
	Officers:	T. Hurley M. Manley
Dorset Council	Councillors:	R. Biggs S. Jones
Dorchester Association		M. Rice
Local Nature Reserve		L. Poulsen
Dorset Museum & Art Gallery		C. Dixon
The Keep Military Museum		F. Scott
Dorset Council - Archaeology		S. Wallis
Thomas Hardy Society		M. Chutter

#### 1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S. Biles and D. Taylor (Dorchester Town Council), I. Gosling (Dorchester Civic Society) and N. Corey (Shire Hall Historic Courthouse Museum)

#### 2. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2023, a copy of which had been circulated, were confirmed and signed.

Cllr Biggs asked that a request be made to Dorset Council for an update on the repair of the wall on the corner of West Walks and North Walks.

#### 3. **ELECTION OF CHAIR**

##### **RESOLVED**

That Cllr Gareth Jones be elected as chair.

#### 4. **BUDGET UPDATE**

A report on the budget position as at 1<sup>st</sup> October was presented. With regard to the expenditure on road closures, Cllr Jones asked that officers enquire whether Dorset Council can provide these at a lower cost as a contribution in kind to the work of the Joint Committee. Cllr Chisholm also asked if road closure signs owned by Dorchester BID could be used to reduce costs. Officers agreed to follow up on these suggestions.

#### **RESOLVED**

That the budget update be noted.

#### 5. **HERITAGE TOURISM STRATEGY - UPDATE**

Matilda Manley provided an update on the work of the Tourism Partnership and circulated the detailed proposal for the Events & Experiences small grant fund. Once the scheme details are agreed, it will be launched as soon as possible and applications assessed before Christmas.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (a) The Committee received the notes of the Tourism Partnership meeting held on 3 October 2023.
- (b) That Cllr Gareth Jones represent the Joint Committee on the evaluation panel for the Events & Experiences grant scheme.
- (c) That requests for heritage tourism funding of £250 for the BrewDorch festival and £500 for the Walking Festival in 2024 be agreed.
- (d) That Mark Chutter be nominated to attend the Tourism Partnership as the Committee's representative.

#### 6. **HERITAGE OPEN DAY – EVALUATION REPORT**

The committee received the report from the Tourism Development Officer (DTC) on Heritage Open Day 2023. Feedback from businesses was discussed and efforts should be made in future to improve signage for access to Princes Street.

Mark Chutter mentioned that the owners of the Oak Room (Antelope Walk) would be prepared to open it to the public next year.

Flora Scott stated that, in terms of expenditure, the cost of the road closure was far greater than that spent on promotion / publicity. Given that the heritage institutions were sacrificing income on that day, more should be spent to promote the event and there could also be investment in portable microphones and headsets to help with tours if the road wasn't closed. High quality images of the day could also be commissioned. Steve Wallis also highlighted the benefit of giving an introductory talk at an indoor venue before starting a walk.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (a) That the cost of portable microphones and headsets to help with guided walks be investigated.

- (b) That a proposal for Heritage Open Day 2024 be brought before the committee early in 2024.

7. **ONGOING PROJECTS:**

Verbal updates on the following were received:

- a) Information board at Poundbury. No further progress had been made.
- b) Millstream Paths information boards – the proposed locations for the first three boards were agreed but before installation, officers were asked to pursue Dorset Council and the Environment Agency with regard to tackling weeds and shrubs. Mark Chutter also asked that the Millstreet Housing Association be asked to refurbish their heritage information board.
- c) Roman mosaic project – Matilda Manley stated that this project was on hold subject to staff capacity.

**RESOLVED**

- (a) That the updates be noted.
- (b) That the locations of the Millstream information boards were agreed but both Dorset Council and the Environment Agency be asked to clear the overgrown path before installation.
- (c) That the Millstreet Housing Association be requested to refurbish its heritage information panel.

8. **FUTURE PROJECTS**

The committee discussed the following potential projects:

- a) **Roman baths.** The issue of how best to interpret and present the remains of the Roman baths in the area of Wollaston Field car park. Cllr Gareth Jones proposed a small working group to discuss options. Linda Poulson highlighted the pavement art (trompe-l'oeil) used in Gloucester to interpret Roman archaeology. It was agreed to find more information about this approach. It was also mentioned that a heritage information panel had been produced for the Roman baths but not installed. Tony Hurley agreed to locate the designs.
- b) **Water meadows.** Cllr Gareth Jones proposed that there should be an information board to explain the importance of the water meadows. Cllr Stella Jones suggested that Stinsford Parish Council be invited to contribute to the cost of the board given that most of the meadows lie in that parish.
- c) **History of Dorchester display.** Matilda Manley reported that she was filming / photographing artefacts and objects from the main heritage organisations for Discover Dorchester's social media channels. These would portray highlights in the history of the town – and promote the heritage attractions.
- d) **Tourist information centre.** Cllr Chisholm highlighted the need for better tourist

information in the town – given the success of the TIC in Bridport. There was a debate as to whether such facilities were mainly used by residents rather than visitors. Matilda Manley highlighted the success of the Tourist Information Point in the reception area at Shire Hall. Cllr Gareth Jones asked that information on the use of this TIP be presented to the Committee in future. Cllr Stella Jones suggested that perhaps some tourist information could be included in Dorchester Arts' plan for converting an area of the Corn Exchange to a café /community area.

- e) **List of major events.** Cllr Chisholm suggested that a single list of the key/major events throughout the year would be very useful. Matilda Manley agreed to produce this.
- f) **List of experienced guides.** Matilda Manley reported that a list of guides was available on Discover Dorchester.
- g) **Proposed statues.** The committee was joined by Anya Pearson of the Mary Anning Rocks organisation. Mark Chutter explained that as part of his interest in erecting a statue of Henry Moule he had contacted Anya and asked for support. This had led to a discussion about the lack of statues to named, non-royal / non-fictional women in the public realm. There was a need, therefore, to address this as a priority. Mark Chutter suggested Mary Channing and Martha Brown whose personal stories reflected important social issues. Linda Poulson highlighted that Mary Moule had played an important role in helping the Mill Street community. It was agreed that this was an interesting project and that more historical research could reveal more women who had played an important role in the history of Dorchester. Mark Chutter agreed to undertake more research to develop the project further for future consideration by the committee.

## **RESOLVED**

- a) That the updates be noted.
- b) That Stinsford Parish Council be approached regard the partnership funding of a water meadows information board.
- c) That information on the use/popularity of the tourist information point in Shire Hall be presented to a future meeting of the committee.
- d) That Dorchester Arts be requested to consider including tourist information in plans for the refurbishment of the downstairs of the Corn Exchange.

## 9. **ROUND-UP FROM HERITAGE ORGANISATIONS**

The chairman invited the heritage attractions (museums) to provide a brief update on their activities:

**Dorset Museum & Art Gallery** – Claire Dixon outlined the aim to triple footfall and better promote the art exhibitions. The new Frink exhibition would be used to help relaunch the museum with better publicity and promotion.

**The Keep** – Flora Scott informed the committee that the museum was doing well and preparing for several significant 80<sup>th</sup> anniversaries in 2024, including D-Day. However,

Flora was leaving the museum but would be replaced soon. The committee thanked Flora for her contribution and hard work.

10. **QUESTIONS**

Mark Chutter highlighted the poor condition of Nappers Mite and need for better maintenance. It was agreed that the agents for the property would be approached.

Claire Dixon asked if future meetings of the committee could start at 5.30pm to make it easier to attend straight from work. Others agreed with this suggestion and it was decided to change the start time of future meetings.

11. **URGENT ITEMS**

None were raised.

Chairman.....