

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

DORCHESTER JOINT HERITAGE COMMITTEE

22nd JULY 2025

At a Meeting of the Dorchester Joint Heritage Committee held on 22nd July 2025:

PRESENT:

Dorchester Town Council

Councillors: S. Biles
L. Fry

Officers: T. Hurley
M. Manley

Dorset Council

Councillors: R. Biggs
S. Jones
D. Taylor

Dorset Museum & Art Gallery
Dorchester Association
Local Nature Reserve
Dorset Council - Archaeology
Dorchester Civic Society / Town Crier
Dorchester Civic Society
Dorset History Centre
Blue Badge Tour Guide
Dorchester Heritage Magazine
Thomas Hardy Society
Keep 106 / New Hardy Players

C. Dixon
M. Rice
L. Poulsen
S. Wallis
A. Harrison
I. Gosling
M. Gayton
J. Wallis
M. Woodgate
M. Chutter
A. Worth

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr G. Jones, Cllr F. Kent-Ledger, Cllr R. Major, R. White (National Trust) and V. Smith (Shire Hall Historic Courthouse Museum).

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR

As the chair (Cllr G. Jones) had given his apologies for the meeting a chair was elected to stand-in during his absence. Cllr Sue Biles was nominated by Cllrs S. Jones and seconded by Cllr L. Fry and unanimously elected by members as chair for the meeting.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th April 2025, a copy of which had been circulated, were confirmed and signed.

4. DECLARATION OF PREDETERMINATION

None were declared.

5. **BUDGET UPDATE**

An update report on the committee's budget was presented by the Assistant Town Clerk.

RESOLVED

That the budget update be noted.

6. **HERITAGE TOURISM STRATEGY - UPDATE**

Matilda Manley presented an update on progress with the Heritage Tourism Strategy and the work of the Tourism Partnership. The Partnership's review of tourism leaflets had resulted in a future focus on a two-sided 'teaser' leaflet and a more detailed Town Guide. The Partnership has also agreed to support a new Kite Festival in 2026, with the Roman festival likely to return in 2027. Mark Chutter suggested that future Dorchester Arts' brochures could highlight the new tourist information point in the Corn Exchange. Cllr Stella Jones asked how tourism leaflets were being promoted/distributed at train stations in the region. Matilda reported that she was working with Southern Railways and GWR to place tourism posters at stations in the region and there would hopefully be interactive information on a new digital screen in Dorchester South Station. It was agreed to investigate which company was responsible for distributing tourism leaflets at stations in the region.

RESOLVED

That the report on the activities of the Tourism Partnership was noted.

7. **PROPOSAL FOR MOULE PROJECT**

Mark Chutter and Maria Gayton presented their outline proposal for a project to celebrate the life and achievements of Reverend Moule and which would be the subject of a funding bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The project could be multi-disciplinary (e.g. history, science and music) and involve a range of partners. Cllr S. Jones stated that there already information plaques/signs about Moule in Fordington and the replica of the water closet in Dorset Museum, however the plaque that used to be on the Moule Institute was in storage somewhere a could be reinstated close to the site of the Institute. M. Manley suggested that the project could link with the annual science festival in Dorchester. Cllr S. Biles suggested that the project could be developed further via a small task & finish group and the following volunteered to join the group: M. Gayton, M. Chutter, A. Worth, Cllr S. Jones, and Cllr S. Biles.

The Task & Finish Group would report back to the next Committee meeting with a refined project proposal and suggested funding sources.

RESOLVED

That a Task & Finish Group be established to develop the Moule interpretation project further.

8. **HERITAGE INFORMATION PANELS**

The Assistant Town Clerk presented proposals for the replacement of a weathered heritage information panel outside The Keep. It was also noted by Cllr Taylor that the Poundbury Camp information panel had been damaged. It was agreed that both panels should be replaced using the Committee's budget.

RESOLVED

That both 'The Keep & Marabout Barracks' and 'Poundbury Camp' heritage information panel be replaced.

9. **ON-GOING PROJECTS**

Updates on the following were received:

- a) **Heritage Open Day 2025.** Ian Gosling noted that the Civic Society would have a stall at the Town Pump on HOD. Andy Worth mentioned that the New Hardy Players would be performing at Max Gate on that weekend.
- b) **Town Pump enhancement proposals.** Ian Gosling presented the Civic Society's plans for the restoration of the Town Pump. The work would depend on the condition of the iron pins within the structure and a cover meter survey was being commissioned to 'scan' the structure. The cost of the survey would be £580.

RESOLVED

That a grant of £580 be allocated towards the cost of the cover meter survey of the Town Pump.

- c) **The Dorchester Story project.** Ian Gosling reported that the students had completed their research and it will be uploaded to Discover Dorchester by October.
- d) **Sylvia Townsend Warner stature project.** Mark Chutter reported that the statue will be unveiled on Cracker Night followed by a reception at the Kings Arms.
- e) **Moynton Road commemorative stone.** The Assistant Town Clerk reported that Grassby's Memorials had offered to refurbish the stone at their own expense given the family's long association with the Thomas Hardy School. This generous offer by the Grassbys was welcomed by the Committee.

10. **UPDATES FROM MEMBERS**

Riverside Reserve: Linda Poulsen reported on conservation work at the reserve and recent incidents of anti-social behaviour.

Dorchester Association: Michael Rice circulated the Association's autumn lecture programme.

Thomas Hardy Society: Miranda Woodgate reported on the Society's War Poetry conference at the Dorford Centre from 7th to 9th November followed by a concert at St Mary's Church. Mark Chutter asked if there could be a discussion at the next meeting regarding the reorientation of the Thomas Hardy statue at Top o' Town so that it would face the Walks rather than the road

Dorset Museum & Art Gallery. Claire Dixon reported that Austen exhibition was going well and overall attendance is up compared to previous years. In the autumn, there will be a Dorset Open Art exhibition in partnership with Dorset Visual Arts. Works to the Victorian Gallery roof will take place in 2026.

Cllr Richard Biggs reported that as a result of establishing a Local Visitor Economy Partnership, Dorset Council and BCP Council will be funding a destination management plan.

Dorset History Centre – Maria Gayton reported on plans for Rail 200 conference and ongoing work on a funding bid for capital improvements. Research on Dorchester in Boston would be reported to the next meeting.

Dorset Council archaeology service – Steve Wallis reported that the annual cleaning of the Roman town house mosaic was planned.

Dorchester Civic Society: Ian Gosling, in response to a question from Cllr S. Jones, reported that the society was involved in surveying the water meadows with the aim of enabling Dorset Council to designate them as a Local Heritage Asset.

11. **QUESTIONS**

None were raised.

12. **URGENT ITEMS**

None were raised.

Chair.....