

## **DORCHESTER JOINT HERITAGE COMMITTEE**

### **NOTES OF THE OPEN HERITAGE FORUM HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER OF THE MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, DORCHESTER ON 3 OCTOBER 2016**

The meeting was Chaired by Councillor Andy Canning, Chairman of the Dorchester Joint Heritage Committee and had an attendance of thirty four.

#### **1. INTRODUCTION AND PROGRESS SINCE THE LAST FORUM MEETING**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanked them for coming and explained why the Forum had been established.

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that at the last meeting of the Forum a wide number of issues had been discussed and a clear message given that the time was right to pull together a town wide tourism strategy. Following the Forum the Town Council prepared and submitted an application for Local Enterprise Partnership funding to cover four important strands:-

- Co-ordinating the heritage and tourism sectors to develop a vision for the promotion of Dorchester's heritage to maximise tourism numbers and spend in the town.
- To develop and deliver a strategy to promote that vision over a two year period and look to mainstream it beyond the first two years.
- Improve access and appearance of informal heritage sites in the town.
- Work with education providers to ensure a supply of workers with the necessary skills to support and enhance the heritage tourism economy in the town.

Unfortunately the application for funding was unsuccessful. The Town Council was however pursuing the four strands with grant applications to the new HLF/Arts Council Great Places scheme, the Dorset Local Action Group (specifically for pedestrian wayfinding signage) and a smaller HLF grant scheme for heritage tourism apprentices.

The Deputy Town Clerk also reported that the 'you are here' boards, presently located in the main car parks were being updated and new ones would be located at the two railway stations.

The Town Council had also appointed a Community Development Officer who had a remit to develop heritage tourism in the town, again in order to develop the four strands. She would be contacting Forum representatives over the next few months.

## **2. THE FUTURE OF DORCHESTER'S TIC**

The Chairman updated the Forum in respect of the consultation regarding the future of Dorchester's TIC. The consultation identified two options, a cut down version of the TIC operating from Dorchester Library or an unmanned tourist information point based in an as yet unidentified location.

West Dorset District Councillor Nigel Bundy addressed the Forum in support of retaining the TIC in its present location. The Forum expressed concern regarding the fact that it appeared that the District Council had not fully considered all available options including the possibility of securing funding from other organisations within the town, seeking to negotiate better rental terms and increasing income from services already provided to name but a few. The consultation also did not take account of the intangibles provided by the service.

The Forum felt that before any decision was made that those responsible for making the decision should spend some time actually in the TIC so they could see first-hand how the service operated and how valuable it was to both local residents and visitors to the town.

It was reported that the recent Dorset LEP Western Dorset Growth Corridor Museums and Heritage Report stated that having a TIC in the town was a strength.

Individuals were urged to respond to the consultation, the closing date for which was later on in the month.

It was agreed that the Forum's views, as set out above, should be forwarded to West Dorset District Council.

## **3. HERITAGE TOURISM VISION FOR DORCHESTER**

Dr J Murden, Director of the Dorset County Museum circulated a draft heritage tourism vision for the town as follows:-

### ***"Dorchester's Vision***

*We will protect and enhance the natural, built, archaeological and cultural heritage of Dorchester so it can be better understood and enjoyed by current and future generations. Residents and visitors alike will be able to appreciate and use Dorchester's heritage and the community and local economy will benefit from the positive effects of sustainable tourism.*

### ***We will pursue this by:***

*Celebrating Dorchester's rich heritage and developing its position as a leading destination for cultural tourism.*

*Promoting and enhancing our presentation of Dorchester's extraordinary heritage to the public.*

*Campaigning to protect the heritage of the town and increase our knowledge and understanding of it.*

*Increasing the number and range of people exploring our heritage through events, activities and interpretation.*

*Working together to share ideas and resources.”*

The Forum discussed the draft vision and made the following comments:-

- The need for a strap line – ideas included ‘yesterday to tomorrow’ and ‘Stepping stone’.
- The natural environment needed to be promoted.
- Further discussion needed on how wide the vision needed to be for – need to be aware of what is around outside of the town’s boundary. Was Dorchester to be a gateway for the wider area.
- There would be a need to co-ordinate more generally with the wider area and establish strategic partnerships where necessary.
- The recent Dorset LEP Western Dorset Growth Corridor Museums and Heritage Report did highlight that there were a number of generic issues / opportunities that spanned the WDGC which could be developed. (A copy of the full report would be emailed to those that had left their email address.) The report did not identify how those opportunities could be delivered or resourced.
- There was a need to improve links across all that Dorchester has to offer.
- Green issues were important to young people – make links into schools.
- Need to concentrate on a ‘core purpose’ that was not too wide and have a mechanism for monitoring either individually or through the Forum.
- A central marketing and promotional body would be advantageous.

The Forum thanked Dr Murden for his useful presentation and for drafting the vision.

#### **4. JOINED UP EVENTS CALENDAR FOR THE TOWN**

The Forum discussed the benefits of having a joined up events calendar for the town, there were lots of quality events taking place around the town but publicity for them was sometimes not as good as it could be and the information that was available was spread out across different platforms. It was felt that a single joined up calendar for the town, most likely via Google Calendars, would be a huge benefit and Kate Hebditch agreed to start co-ordinating building on ‘Kate’s List’. The Deputy Town Clerk would contact groups and ask them to provide details direct to Kate. It was also felt that this matter could be discussed in more detail by a smaller group of interested Forum attendees.

Whilst discussing the calendar idea it was noted that a date for the town’s 2017 carnival had not yet been agreed due to issues surrounding use of the Fairfield car park for the fair. It was hoped that this could be resolved soon and those West Dorset District Councillors present agreed to take this forward.

## 5. A STRUCTURE FOR THE FORUM

The Forum was advised of the present terms of reference and membership for the Dorchester Joint Heritage Committee and were asked how it envisaged the Forum working going forward. It was felt that the wider Forum, to which anyone could attend, was very beneficial and should continue to meet approximately twice a year with its discussions being reported to the Dorchester Joint Heritage Committee. The relationship between the two to be the Forum identifying ideas, vision and consultation with the formal Committee agreeing strategy and pursuing funding.

It was also felt that it would be useful to establish a 'Vision Group' with membership drawn from the Forum which could meet as and when necessary to discuss specific ideas in greater detail. It was agreed that the group would be initially convened to discuss further the Heritage Tourism Vision taking into account the issues raised at the Forum. The group could also discuss the joined up events calendar following the work being undertaken by Kate Hebditch.

The following volunteered to be a part of the vision group:-

Dr Jon Murden	Dorset County Museum
Kate Hebditch	Heritage Committee
Kiran Ridley	World Heritage
Anna Bright	Shire Hall
Win Scutt	English Heritage
Alistair Chisholm	Heritage Committee

It was also felt that Emma Scott, the newly appointed Town Council Community Development Officer, should be invited to attend.

Kate Hebditch reported that Hampshire established a 'Big Theme' every year which was used as a marketing hook for all event organisers to use and that this theme idea seemed to be successful. Kate volunteered to endeavour to get a Hampshire representative to attend a meeting of the Vision Group to discuss the matter in more detail.

Forum Closed 6.20pm