



DORCHESTER HERITAGE JOINT COMMITTEE
DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

DORCHESTER HERITAGE TOURISM STRATEGY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dorchester benefits from over 6000 years of history and has both in the recent past and is currently seeing significant investment in heritage assets in the north of the town. Yet the town's visitor offer remains somewhat hidden, and its heritage assets have not been acting as a significant attractor of visitors for the economic benefit of the visitor economy and the town.

There is therefore a real opportunity to promote the Dorchester visitor offer across Dorset. The town has the opportunity to grow its short break visitor, and particularly its day visitor appeal, using its cultural and heritage offer as an attractor. Dorchester has much to offer the "heritage" visitor, but the offer is not well defined or well known amongst its target market and target geography.

This strategy has been produced following Dorchester Town Councils corporate plan intent to "Develop & Implement a Tourism strategy, with a strong Heritage focus". It seeks to encourage more day and staying visitors to come to the town, stay longer, and spend more in local businesses, particularly outside of the main summer holiday season.

It sets priority actions to create the right environment and structures for a broad range of partners: the Council, the local tourism industry (both accommodation providers and attractions), town centre businesses and relevant public and private sector partners and the community - to benefit from the opportunities that exist for the growth in the value of tourism through the heritage and culture in our town, and to be able to take those forward.

Successful delivery of the strategy will require the establishment of a governing body, proposed as a formal partnership, with established terms of reference and resources to lead and coordinate the development of the tourism sector in the town with actions including:

- Building a long-term vision for the growth of tourism in the town, engaging with both the residential community and the business community, particularly those involved in the heritage and visitor sectors.

- Developing a marketing approach that considers websites, includes social media and traditional marketing methods, and establishes some brand principles and USPs.

- Supporting the volunteers so important to some of the town's key attractions and events.

- Delivering the strategic actions paying due regard to climate change and sustainability.

- Identifying ways to enrich the visitor experience through both the product and stories the town can offer, and the experience provided across the town by all with whom visitors engage.

Contents

- A. Introduction – What is this document for
Reference to Town Council Corporate Objective
- B. The Towns offer
Function of the town, 6000+ years of History, culture, arts, events, recent investments, awareness of town as visitor destination
- C. Why now
Covid19, staycation opportunity, current and recent investment in heritage attractions,
- D. Heritage Tourism
Why Heritage Tourism
- E. Dorchester’s Tourism Market
What is the visitor market in Dorchester, where do visitors come from?
- F. Delivery of Tourism Promotion locally
Who has responsibility for developing and promoting tourism – national to local?
- G. Sustainability
Climate emergency, what could be done
- H. Governance and Delivery
Consideration of the best way to take forward the strategy and deliver the action
- I. Vision
Short term vision to direct the strategy and against which to measure progress
- J. Strategic Objectives and Action Plan
Objectives and Actions to deliver the strategy
- K. Performance measurement
The KPIs against which to measure progress

Background papers

- A. Heritage Role in Tourism
Why does it matter, why is it important?
- B. The impact of tourism in Dorchester
Research and studies summarised
- C. Delivery of tourism
Who is responsible for what in tourism, nationally to locally, what do they do?
- D. Local Context
Observations from the local tourism businesses
- E. Governance and Delivery Structures
How is tourism delivered in other towns or cities, is there any emerging best practice?
- F. Current extent of marketing
Who is doing what to promote Dorchester as a visitor destination?
- G. Dorchester Tourism Product
What is the current product in the town?
- H. SWOT analysis
- I. Heritage Audit

A Introduction - What is the document for

Since 2015, Dorchester Town Council has had an intent, in its Corporate Plan, to “Develop & Implement a Tourism strategy, with a strong Heritage focus”.

This strategy establishes why heritage is relevant, what we know about tourism and visitors to Dorchester, the role of others in developing and delivering tourism, and why we are doing this now. It considers the appropriate geography where actions should apply. It seeks to encourage more day and staying visitors to come to the town, stay longer, and spend more in local businesses, particularly outside of the main summer holiday season.

The strategy sets priority actions that will create the right environment and structures for the Council, the local tourism industry both accommodation providers and attractions, town centre businesses and relevant public and private sector partners and the community. This will bring benefit from the opportunities that exist for the growth in the value of tourism through the heritage and culture in our town, and to be able to take those forward.

B The Town's offer

(background papers B, D, G & I)

Dorchester has existed at the heart of an agricultural area as an administrative and trading centre for centuries. This is a function it continues today with Dorset County Hospital, principal offices for Dorset Council, Schools serving the outlying villages, and with weekly general markets, periodic farmers markets and a town centre mix of independent and multiple retailers. Unlike most towns, it has a jobs to resident ratio close to 1, indicating a significant immigration of workers principally to the public administration, health and education services.

The town is not however well-known as a visitor destination, and this is perhaps reflected in the low number of bed spaces available in the town, although recent additions such as the Premier Inn, the Duchess of Cornwall, and the refurbished Kings Arms with reputed high levels of occupancy suggest here is an opportunity to grow the number of bed spaces.

The town's visitor attraction offer is relatively small compared with other major Dorset destinations. Those most likely considered “Heritage” are very dependent on volunteers to fulfil a wide range of functions from stewarding to meet and greet and back office support.

The recent developments at Shire Hall and the County Museum, together with the growing interest in and attendance at local events (background paper B) suggest an opportunity for Dorchester to continue to maximise its staying visitor occupancy and become known and recognised as an excellent day visit and repeat visit destination, developing new experiences based on its heritage to improve visitor experiences and reasons to come back .

The town can tell stories from over 6000 years of history with an extensive catalogue of current and past people, places, and events including Maiden Castle, the Roman Town House, the “hanging” Judge Jefferies, Tolpuddle Martyrs, Thomas Hardy, and barracks for the military, together with significant archaeological remains under the town. It is also a town for today, with its developing new heritage at both Brewery Square and at Poundbury, both of which are already attracting visitor interest.

Much of this is in untold stories of the people and buildings including for example:

Birthplace and story of Frederic Treves	Fire from Heaven
Emigration to Massachusetts	Fighting Cholera with earth closets
First prorogation of Parliament	Castle and royalty
Multiple listed buildings displaying features from their past such as small, glazed windows (former gunsmiths) and butchers hooks	

Some elements of its history and heritage, particularly its archaeological heritage, are hidden beneath car parks, under buildings or modern facades.

It has a growing confidence in celebrating its heritage through the Thomas Hardy Victorian Fayre, and Heritage Open Dorchester event, together with the many other well attended events held in Maumbury Rings and the Borough Gardens.

It benefits from an extensive cultural programme of events from Dorchester Arts, embracing all tastes and with a full and comprehensive programme involving local to national and international artists. Dorchester Arts is heavily supported by volunteers as stewards and in the back office.

The Town Council has recently commissioned an audit of heritage “assets” to capture the extent of Dorchester’s heritage offer and to support the development of heritage tourism and new visitor experiences.

Opportunities exist to develop and enhance the visitor experience with new and additional ways of presenting and joining together the interesting people, buildings, places and events that are the background to modern Dorchester. This may involve new technological interpretation facilities and experiences.

C Why Now

The 2020 Coronavirus outbreak, period of lockdown, and temporary closure of non-essential business (still in place at time of writing) has put significant strain on the local economies across the country, and placed an additional burden on many already fragile high streets. With the recent closure of the Marks and Spencer store in Dorchester (Feb 2020), and several long-term vacant properties, including the former TIC premises in Antelope Walk, Dorchester needs to reposition itself to remain a vibrant town.

With major investments in heritage assets recently concluded or completing in the near future, and growing experience of successful local events attracting ‘000s of visitors from near and far, Dorchester has a rare opportunity to maximise the benefits of tourism for the town from the new experiences currently offered or about to become available in the northern area of the town.

With the failure of some smaller airlines, and the major airlines forecasting much reduced foreign travel¹ in the near future, the interest in staycationing and UK holidays is likely to grow, as it did in the recession of 2008.

The Town has an embarrassment of heritage riches, that are not necessarily well known locally, regionally, or nationally. It has a limited availability of bed spaces in the town. It does not have a

¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-52462660>
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p08bz9nx>

dedicated tourism promotional website, or tourism forum or other tourism focussed industry group. However, it has the opportunity to attract “day” visitors (locals and staying visitors) from across Dorset and neighbouring counties and further afield.

This strategy, and its action plan, can contribute to the town centre recovery through the development of the town’s visitor experience offer, and the potential for a greater interest in UK holidays. It can do this by building on the currently untold stories it has in depth, and to both provide and receive benefit from the heritage attractions, buildings and assets which have and are seeing significant investment.

D Heritage Tourism Market

(see Background Paper A)

While the value and volume of tourism across other tourism segments has fluctuated in recent years, the value of heritage tourism is reported to have seen annual growth. It is also a type of tourism which has wide appeal with over 75% of the population visiting a heritage site at least once in a year, and over 66% reporting that the opportunity to make a heritage visit was a key influencer in deciding on a short break or holiday in the UK.

It is also clear that visitors, together more generally with town centre users, are seeking an active experience of a place as opposed to a passive experience.

Dorchester, with over 6000 years of history, fantastic heritage old and new, factual and fictional characters of international renown, and unique and exceptional examples of former lives, is well placed to grow its tourism visitor to the town offer through its heritage and related stories.

With several recently or soon to be completed major investments in heritage assets in the town there is a particular opportunity to raise the local national and international reputation and awareness of the town’s visitor offer and heritage experience.

E Dorchester’s Tourism Market

(see Background Papers B & D)

While there is no data captured in Dorchester to enable a true picture of the volume, value and seasonality of tourism in the town, there are statistically robust analyses from national surveys that give an indication of the volume, value and seasonality of tourism in the town, and allow comparison with other destinations.

The sector locally follows the typical UK pattern, with peak occupancy close to capacity in the mid-summer months, and with year on year fluctuations resulting from many factors including political uncertainty, seasonal and unseasonal weather, global unrest, recession and staycation, Brexit and the exceptional weather in recent years. These fluctuations are likely to continue as the nation works out how to travel safely and manage life as a result of Coronavirus.

Dorchester’s staying visitors are typically coming from a 2.5-3 hr. journey time predominantly from the Midlands, London and SE England. Foreign visitors are mostly from the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and France, and particularly during the Thomas Hardy Festival from Japan and USA.

Anecdotally, local businesses confirm the seasonality of tourism locally, and the home locations of staying visitors. They also note that staying visitors are not aware of the Dorchester visitor offer.

Most visitors to attractions are either resident or staying visitors from across the county, but visitors will travel much further for a “unique” experience or event.

There is a real opportunity to promote the Dorchester visitor offer across Dorset and beyond to both residents and staying visitors. The town has the opportunity to grow its short break visitor, and particularly its day visitor appeal, by using its cultural and heritage offer as an attractor. Dorchester has much to offer the “heritage” visitor, but the offer is not well defined or well known amongst its target market and target geography.

F The Delivery and Promotion of Tourism locally

(Background papers C, D E & F)

The promotion and development of tourism, and the maintenance of the supporting infrastructure is a complex picture. This includes the national tourism bodies promoting the UK nationally and internationally, through the Dorset LEP and Dorset Tourism Association strategies and sector representation, to Dorset Councils maintenance of the public realm, highways, car park operations and planning function to wide promotion of Dorset through its visit-Dorset channels and of course, individual businesses promotion of their own enterprises.

Each has a role to play:

- international and national promotion,
- national and local product development,
- setting national and regional strategic direction
- sector representation and lobbying,
- grant fund prioritisation, application assessment and administration
- industry data gathering and analysis,
- Grant support to local organisations such as cultural organisations which are a key part of the local offer to visitors
- Supporting a positive visitor experience through maintenance of the public realm and protection of the natural environment

However, for these myriad organisations, “local” does not go below County level or prioritise any one local destination. Development of sustained relationships between the more local organisations will provide opportunity to represent the towns tourism needs and offer to those organisations and for those needs and offer to be reflected in their own activity.

At local destination or town level, and apart from local business own promotional activity, the only visitor promotion, public realm maintenance or visitor support currently provided exclusively for the town is through:

- Dorchester BID’s current programme of activity encouraging and supporting visitors to and within the town, and is just part of a wider remit within the BID business plan 2018-2023
- Dorchester TIC ‘s information and event booking services

- Dorchester Town Councils management of the Borough Gardens, Maumbury Rings, River Walks and open spaces, and the recent LEADER funded town centre signage

There is however neither one plan for coordinating or delivering the promotion and development of Dorchester as a visitor destination nor any formal or informal collaborative working.

Background paper D, concluded that staying visitors in the town had little awareness of the Dorchester offer prior to their visit, and that some staying visitors had spent a night for other reasons than to be a tourist in the town, and wished they'd stayed longer.

National websites have no Dorchester content currently, and while there is content on regional sites, their promotional content is more focused on individual businesses (accommodation and attractions) which in turn are dependent on the business having a membership package on the site. It is often not easy to navigate to pages with detail about the towns visitor offer in a single place on regional websites, and their content is not often proactively and routinely maintained.

Town based websites exist for other purposes than promotion of the visitor economy and for a multitude of audiences with different needs. Where there is content about the visitor offer, it is not always easily to identify or locate.

Local businesses frequently do not have comprehensive content about the town's visitor offer.

There is a need clearly to improve both the visibility and content about the town across websites at all levels. This may or may not be through a new dedicated website. However, with small numbers of tourism businesses in the town, most of whom are already paying a BID levy, it is unlikely that a commercial or exclusive membership approach to such a website will derive sufficient income to justify costs of debt collection and administration, or make a significant contribution to operating costs.

Social media activity is mostly carried out by larger organisations promoting Dorset generally, town centre offers or features of specific attractions. There is little social media activity amongst accommodation businesses.

There is an opportunity to increase social media activity and develop some common stories for all to share.

There is both opportunity and need to develop a marketing approach with a cost benefit analysis for the town's heritage tourism offer that:

- identifies and builds on the towns heritage USPs through a branding exercise;
- works to improve the quantity and quality of content on national, regional and local (town focused) websites;
- evaluates the options for a dedicated promotional website for the town;
- builds a coordinated approach to social media and traditional marketing based on the brand values

Opportunity should also be taken to establish new and sustain existing relationships with local and regional tourism representative bodies to ensure that the Dorchester's tourism needs and offer are included in their respective activities.

G Sustainability

It would be inappropriate for this strategy not to address sustainability and green issues. The Town Council and Dorset Council have both signed up to a climate emergency and are making efforts to reduce carbon footprints in the delivery of their services.

Opportunities for considering sustainability in tourism include for example:

- Encouraging public transport for travel to the destination
- Encouraging park and ride options for travel into the destination
- Walking or cycling on arrival, leaving the car at the accommodation
- Encouraging the greater provision of electric vehicle charging points
- A local green tourism charter for businesses that could include:
 - encouraging elimination of single use plastics,
 - sourcing locally,
 - reducing print waste and only printing on recycled materials

The signing of a climate emergency by Dorchester Town Council, the potential impact of climate change on our town, and the need to ensure preservation of our heritage, require this strategy to ensure that its actions address sustainability and environmental issues.

H Governance and Delivery

(background paper E)

The organisational structure to take the strategy forward should be appropriate to the scale of the local tourism sector and the capacity to fund and deliver. It is clear from research, that no one size fits all, and that activity, structure and funding are dependent on the local situation, ambition and political aspiration to get involved. It is also clear that where there is intent to deliver support for tourism (marketing, product development, events coordination etc.) the council has dedicated staff resource to enable delivery.

Larger destinations have established CICs or Companies Limited by Guarantee. These are often supported by some large regional private sector organisations such as hotel groups, or regional transport bodies, and are often established to deliver several services (such as Inward Investment or sports facilities) or to act in a commercial trading environment. They all charge significant membership fees and have a large sector base from which to draw memberships and income. None researched have identified an advantage in their private sector status in securing grant funding as a result of their status.

Several smaller destinations work alone without any engagement with the private sector, while others work to a greater or lesser extent in partnerships.

Given the small size of the tourism sector in the town made up as it is of both commercial and not for profit organisations, and the existence of a Business Improvement District already charging a compulsory levy on most town centre businesses, the establishment of a private sector membership body to lead and deliver the strategy is not proposed in this strategy.

In a town the size of Dorchester, and in common with many of the smaller proactive destinations across the country, it may be appropriate to take a less formal structured approach to the governance and delivery of the strategy through the establishment of a public, private and not for profit town tourism partnership.

The town council has been the lead organisation in the development of this strategy through the towns Joint Heritage Committee. In the absence of any other group with a heritage and tourism locally focussed remit, it would be appropriate that the Committee continues to take a lead role in delivering this strategy and establishing a formal partnership with appropriate partners including Dorchester Chamber, Dorchester BID, Visit Dorset/Dorset Council and the tourism sector in the town and that it maintains a connection to the Dorset Tourism Association. It is likely that this would require a dedicated member of staff part time to support the partnership and take a lead on appropriate actions from the action plan.

I The Vision

Dorchester needs to establish a vision for its visitor offer, that encompasses the towns values and aspirations for the future growth of both the visitor economy and the towns economy generally. This should be developed collaboratively engaging with the visitor heritage economy sectors specifically, and with general town centre businesses and the community, and can be commenced by the tourism partnership once established. This could be a long term 5-15-year vision for the town and tourism in order to establish some higher value goals and ambition.

In the interim, the Dorchester short term (3-5 year) vision could be:

To become known as a progressive and welcoming town in Wessex, passionate about and celebrating its wonderful and extensive heritage and its environment and offering an exceptional day visitor experience that encourages repeat visits.

The strategic vision will underpin the actions of the strategy and provide a benchmark against which to measure progress and success. The vision should be established with full engagement of both the residential and the business community.

J Strategic Objectives and Action Plan

Research and analysis, presented in the background papers A-G together with a SWOT analysis (background paper H), along with the feedback from the businesses within the tourism sector locally has identified several strategic themes: Governance, Communication, Community, Environment, Visitor Offer, and Industry. Delivery timescales are presented in the action plan assuming that delivery commences once the strategy has been formally adopted by the Dorchester Joint Heritage Committee and Dorchester Town Council.

K Performance Measurement

The individual actions in the action plan each have a note regarding performance or key stages against which to measure progress with the chosen action. They do not however capture change in the visitor economy of the town.

Background paper B identifies the current range of statistics produced and published about tourism across the country and notes the significant time lag between the data capture and publication of the analyses. It also notes that regional, county, and (when published) town data and reports are deductions from national studies using statistical methodologies, as opposed to on the ground data capture.

Key Performance Indicators should be established which measure effectiveness of activity, growth in visitor numbers, and if possible local sector health through comparison with other destinations capturing comparable data once some baseline data has been captured.

Options include:

Effectiveness

Marketing - Numbers of and change over time in

- Unique visitors to established Dorchester visitor web pages on one or more websites
- Followers to Dorchester based visitor focussed social media pages

Sector health

Visitor Experience

- Mystery shopper data
- TripAdvisor reviews and change over time

Sector growth

Visitor numbers

Numbers of and change over time in

- Car park usage data
- Visitor numbers at selected attractions (suitably anonymised)
- Footfall (dependent on footfall counter technology)

The ability to capture much of this data will be dependent on reaching agreements to share data with key businesses and organisations in the town in order that baselines can be established, and future meaningful comparisons made.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

BCP	Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council
BH postcodes	Bournemouth area post codes
BW	Best Western
CIC	Community Interest Company
COVID	Coronavirus
DMO	Destination Management Organisation
Dorchester BID	Dorchester Business Improvement District
Dorset LEP	Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership
DTA	Dorset Tourism Association
DTC	Dorchester Town Council
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
HTVF	Historic Towns and Villages Forum
LEADER	A now closed former EU funding programme for sparse populated rural areas
SWOT	Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats analysis
TIC	Tourist Information Centre
TUC	Trades Union Congress
USP	Unique selling point
VB	Visit Britain
VE	Visit England
Visit Dorset	Dorset Councils tourism service and brand

Strategic Theme – Governance								
The delivery of the strategy will need a suitable lead body to oversee and coordinate activity if the strategy is to achieve growth in the town’s visitor economy								
	Action area	Priority	DTC/DJHC Role Lead/Influence/ Encourage	Partners	Resource Implication (if known) and impact	Note/Comment	Indicative Timescale	Performance measure
G1	Establish a formal local delivery tourism partnership, and build communication amongst the tourism sector in Dorchester	1	Lead	Tourism businesses Dorset Council & Visit Dorset Dorchester Chamber Dorchester BID	Staff support High	Consider terms of reference, membership, degrees of autonomy, relationship with DJHC	Oct-Dec’20	Partnership, ToR, degrees of autonomy, relationship with DTC and DJHC agreed
G2	Consider appointment of dedicated Heritage Tourism post within DTC	1	Lead		Ongoing salary High	To support the partnership and deliver the strategy. Role and programme in addition to G1 determined by outcome of action plan activity	Jan-Jun’21	Post and budget agreed by DTC,
G3	Establish some key performance indicators against which change in the visitor economy can be measured, and comparisons made with other destinations	1	Lead	Dorset Council DJHC Dorchester Chamber Dorchester BID Tourism Sector	Staff Medium	See section K	Jan-Sep’21	Data sources and data sharing principles agreed
G4	Maintain and sustain existing, and build new relationships with local and regional tourism sector bodies such as the Dorset Tourism Association, Visit Dorset, and Visit England	2	Lead	Dorset LEP DTA Visit Dorset Visit England Historic Towns Forum (HTVF) Historic England	Staff Low		Apr-Jun’21	Awareness raising, lobbying, influencing

G5	Carry out a long term 5-15 years visioning exercise to establish an aspirational vision for tourism for the town that is relevant to the attractions, accommodation providers and town centre businesses	3	Lead	Tourism Sector, Heritage Sector, Local businesses Community	Consultancy fee (£1200 committed DJHC January 2021) and staff support Medium	The Long-term vision, influenced by the branding exercise will guide and influence the actions of the strategy for the longer Ensure community engagement in the process	Jan-Jun'22	Long term vision established through business and community engagement
-----------	--	---	------	--	---	--	------------	--

Strategic Theme – Communication

The strategy has identified that the town is not well known as a visitor destination. The communication aim should be to increase visitor numbers for both day visitors and for staying visitors by maximising the existing asset utilisation (bed spaces, travel, and attractions visitor capacity etc), away from the peak season.

	Action area	Priority	DTC/DJHC Role Lead/Influence/Encourage	Partners	Resource Implication (if known) and impact	Note/Comment	Indicative Timescale	Performance measure
C1	Conduct Brand development exercise to define what the Dorchester visitor offer is	1	Lead	Tourism Sector, Heritage Sector, Local businesses Community	£3000 (already committed by DJHC 21.1.20) Medium	To establish a brand identity for the town's heritage offer and some USPs, straplines. Images and iconography that can be used by all in town promotion and delivering a consistent image of Dorchester's visitor offer.	Jan-Sep'21	Specification agreed, consultancy appointed, brand agreed
C2	Investigate and evaluate cost effective means of improving visitor awareness of the Dorchester offer and develop and implement a costed marketing plan informed as below (2a-2d) and from the branding exercise				Outcome dependent Medium	Principal focus should be on increasing day visits to the town and maximising the existing asset utilisation (away from peak season) for staying visitors. Consider commissioning a marketing review	Apr-Sep'21	Marketing options investigated, marketing plan agreed, resources identified
C2a	Evaluate cost and benefit of a dedicated Dorchester Heritage Tourism Website and social media activity, or strong partnership working with	1	Lead	Visit Dorset Dorchester BID	Staff resource Medium	Options include a paid for satellite site from Visit Dorset, or dedicated town website	Apr-Sep'21	

	other notable local websites (such as Dorchester BID, Visit Dorset) and social media activists					Content informed by branding exercise.		
C2b	Evaluate cost and benefit of focussed Dorchester content and feature in printed area tourism guides such as Resort Dorset, and Visit Dorset's Explore Dorset, and Days out in Dorset publications	1	Lead	Visit Dorset, Publishing houses Local businesses	Staff resource Medium	Options include content for editorial, and paid for advertising	Apr-Sep'21	
C2c	Evaluate cost and benefit through partnering or other, of town promotion along key access routes such as rail and motorway and road services	1	Lead	SW Trains First Great Western National Express	Staff resource Medium	Options include posters at "stops" or on-board advertising	Apr-Sep'21	
C2d	Evaluate opportunities and cost benefits of town promotion via blogs, podcasts, newsletters, and press releases	1	Lead		Staff resource Medium	Informed by the brand exercise Use of appropriate channels, attraction of followers	Apr-Sep'21	
C3	Support improved Dorchester content in social media promotion by Visit Dorset, Dorchester BID and local businesses, including encouraging periodic "Dorchester focus" weeks	2	Lead	Visit Dorset Dorchester BID Local businesses	Staff resource Medium	Informed by the brand exercise Led by tourism partnership Yr 1	From Jan'21 on and informed by C1	Agreement to share content reached, content agreed, timetable of soc media joined up working agreed and implemented

C4	Evaluate options for increased cruise ship passenger day trips from Portland and Poole.	3	Lead	Port of Poole Portland Port Dorchester BID Dorchester Chamber	Staff resource Low	Options appraisal and resource identification Use of content from C3	Apr-Jun '22	Dependant on cruise ship industry recovery post COVID 19 and planned programme of calls to both ports
C5	Work with Visit Dorset to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support press familiarisation trips that include a visit to Dorchester • improve Dorchester content on Visit Britain and Visit England websites 	3	Influence	Visit Dorset	Staff resource Medium	Informed by branding exercise As opportunity arises	Apr'21 on	Improving Dorchester content submitted in response to calls for press fam trips to Dorset
C6	Evaluate requirements and benefits of group travel opportunities, including specialist groups	3	Lead	Local tourism businesses Dorset Council	Staff resource Low	Cost benefit analysis, informed by benefits seen in other destinations and towns ability to meet group travel operators visit expectations	Apr-Jun'22	Group travel options investigated, and benefits of engagement resolved
C7	Lobby for better signposting from the town bypass and from main routes (M5, A31) to the town and into the town	3	Influence and Encourage	Highways Agency Dorset Council DJHC Dorchester Chamber Dorchester BID	Staff resource Low	Town approaches could have info boards on the approaches celebrating visually the towns heritage offer	Apr-Jun'22	Key contact in relevant agencies identified, lobbying approaches submitted
C8	Explore how the towns cultural offer could combine with the attractions to offer complimentary experiences - promoted jointly by social media	3	Influence and Encourage	Dorchester Arts Arts Development Company Local attractions	Staff resource Medium	Connecting the theme of an arts performance with a display/artefacts/event If you enjoy X, why not also look at Y	Apr-Jun'21	Key player actively developing and delivering options under banner of town tourism partnership

Strategic Theme – Community

The community of Dorchester is an important element in delivering an exceptional visitor experience, whether providing volunteers to work on attractions and at events, or as workers in the many business with whom visitors interact, or as guardians and exponents of the town’s heritage.

	Action area	Priority	DTC/DJHC Role Lead/Influence/ Encourage	Partners	Resource Implication (if known) and impact	Note/Comment	Timescale	Performance measure
Co1	Establish a volunteer support and development programme to support volunteers to deliver exceptional service as part of the visitor economy	2	Influence	Volunteering Dorset Attractions engaging with volunteers	Staff resource Low	A resource to support volunteer recruitment and service industry skills development	Apr-Jun’21	Volunteering Dorset working with key attractions to implement a volunteer support programme
Co2	Welcome Dorchester - Develop a voluntary town “ambassador” programme to grow local people’s knowledge of the heritage offer in order that they may, through their own interaction with visitors, contribute to the visitor experience	3	Lead and Influence	Tourism businesses Dorchester Chamber Dorchester BID Visit Dorset and Dorchester TUC	Staff resource, Grant funding or sponsorship Medium	Self-instruction resources about Dorchester’s Heritage offer to visitors, where locals can develop their local heritage knowledge and share with visitors “if you liked... you’ll also enjoy...”	Oct’21- Mar’22	Business supportive, resources identified, programme requirements defined,
Co3	Long term vision - see Governance G5	3	Lead		Staff Resource Medium	Ensure the community is engaged in the process	Apr’22 - Sep’23	

Strategic Theme – Environment

Tourism can be a benefit for good, or negatively impact the environment (both natural and built). This strategy is celebrating the Heritage of Dorchester which includes the natural and built environment. The actions arising from this strategy should seek to make where possible a positive contribution towards environmental issues.

	Action area	Priority	DTC/DJHC Role Lead/ Influence/ Encourage	Partners	Resource Implication (if known) and impact	Note/Comment	Timescale	Performance measure
E1	Ensure a common environmental message runs through marketing and promotional activity – minimising environmental impact	1	Lead	DJHC	Low	Consider material used, environmental impact of actions proposed, longevity, residual waste. Avoid disposable product or materials as much as possible	Apr'21 on	Inclusion in marketing messages
E2	Encourage more electric car charging points, making the town more attractive to the growing number of electric car owners	1	Influence	DTC Planning Committee Dorset Council	Low	Lobbying role through the planning process	From Oct'20	Consideration given in town council responses to planning matters (policy and development)
E3	Champion the state of the town's natural and built environment	1	Influence	DTC Planning Committee Dorset Council Property owners	Low	Litter free, plentiful hanging baskets, well maintained buildings, paving, signage etc	From Oct'20	Consideration given in town council responses to planning matters (policy and development)

E4	Support and encourage Dorchester BID in its promotion and growth in the free to access town centre Wi-Fi network	1	Influence	DTC DJHC Local businesses Dorchester Chamber	Medium	Increased awareness of and access to an improved mobile network access across a wider area will enable more technical solutions to improve the visitor offer and experience in Dorchester	From Jan'21	Dialogue commenced with Dorchester BID
E5	Encourage the promotion of green travel planning for visitors to the town in promotional activity	1	Lead and Influence	DTC DJHC Visit Dorset Dorchester BID Local businesses	Low	Include references to Rail, Coach, Bus, National Cycle networks in promotional work	From Apr'21	Inclusion in marketing messages
E6	Support and encourage both the retention of existing and development of new serviced accommodation bed spaces to both maintain and increase the overnight visitor bed capacity	1	Influence and Encourage	DTC Planning DJHC Local businesses Dorchester Chamber	Low	Growth in visitor bed capacity identified in Blue Sail study	From Oct'20	Audit trail of comments on both spatial planning and development management processes Growth in bed spaces
E7	Explore the appetite within the tourism sector locally for the development of a local "Green Tourism Charter"	2	Influence and Encourage	DJHC Local businesses Dorchester Chamber DTA	Medium	Including local purchasing, local food, waste minimisation, no single use plastics	From Oct '21	
E8	Consider and comment on the impact of new development in and around the town, and its likely impact – supportive or detrimental – to the visitor experience	1	Influence and Encourage	DTC Planning DJHC Local businesses Dorchester Chamber Civic Society	Low	Including new housing proposals, traffic management, public transport services, cycle routes to and through the town	From Oct'20	Audit trail of comments on both spatial planning and development management processes

Strategic Theme – Visitor Offer

The strategy has and will identify a wealth of heritage on which to build the visitor experience, it also identifies the importance of “experience” in attracting and retaining town centre users and visitors. It is important that the existing and any new visitor offer positively contribute to the visitor experience and grows the reputation of the town as a must visit destination.

	Action area	Priority	DTC/DJHC Role Lead/ Influence/ Encourage	Partners	Resource Implication (if known) and impact	Note/Comment	Timescale	Performance measure
V1	Conclude the Heritage Audit to Determine the appropriate Heritage “assets” to support the development of Heritage Tourism in Dorchester, including the new heritage of Brewery Square and Poundbury	1	Lead	DJHC Dorset Council & TIC Local Businesses including those on Heritage Sector Community Civic Society and others Brewery Square Developments Duchy of Cornwall	£4900 Medium	Audit will identify the most appropriate assets on which to build new visitor experiences	Oct- Dec’20	Audit concluded; recommendations received
V2	Develop specifications and options for solutions to the new visitor experience products identified in the Heritage Audit	1	Lead	DJHC Dorset Council & TIC Local Businesses including those on Heritage Sector Community Civic Society and others Brewery Square Developments Duchy of Cornwall	Staff resource High	This should include but not be limited by tech solutions and traditional print options	Jan- Sep’21	Specifications agreed, resources identified, Solutions commissioned

V3	Review, update and coordinate the existing town trails and supporting products including Poppy Trail, Discover Dorchester Guide and trails, Dorchester Visitor Guide (Dorset Council), Real Town Trail (DBID), Doradormouse website	2	Lead	DJHC Dorset Council & TIC DBID	Staff resource High	Review existing content for accuracy, determine and cost replacement, updated or new resources required (paper, tech, infrastructure)	Jan- Sep'21	Need to review assessed, requirements agreed, resources identified, solutions commissioned
V4	Develop methodology to monitor and measure visitor experiences over time through user generated content on platforms such as TripAdvisor and Facebook.	2	Lead and Influence	DTC Dorchester Chamber Dorchester BID Tourism businesses	Staff Resource Medium	To measure progress in the improvement of the visitor experience	Jan- Jun'22	Discussions held, appetite determined, programme specified, resources identified, mystery shopper exercise programme commissioned
V5	Informed by the Heritage Audit, raise awareness of the opportunity of new food, culture and heritage focussed events in the town to attract town centre visitors, to potential events organisers/providers.	3	Influence and Encourage	Town Centre Attractions Hardy Society Civic Society Dorchester Chamber Dorchester BID Dorchester Arts Arts Development Company	Staff resource Medium	Recent new events have proved increasingly popular after the success of Dippy on Tour in 2018. Consideration should be given to grow visitor numbers for both staying and day visitors away from the peak season	Oct'20- Mar'21	Food, Culture and Heritage sectors locally working together on new events

Strategic Theme – Industry

The visitor experience of the town is dependent on the quality of the offer from its tourism industry. For the Heritage Tourism in the town to grow, businesses and events organisers need to have the skills and capacity to continue to deliver on and exceed visitor expectations.

	Action area	Priority	DTC/DJHC Role Lead/ Influence/ Encourage	Partners	Resource Implication (if known) and impact	Note/Comment	Timescale	Performance measure
In 1	Determine industry skills requirements and lobby for improved access/local delivery and raising profile of local career opportunities	1	Influence/ Encourage	Dorchester Chamber Dorchester BID Weymouth College Dorset Growth Hub Dorset Gateway	Staff Resource Medium	Initially support skills development in new communication technologies	From Apr'21	Dialogue with local businesses and learning establishments held, solutions identified
In 2	Work with event's organisers, attractions dependent on volunteers, and Volunteering Dorset to develop a support and development programme for new and existing volunteers supporting the Heritage Tourism sector	1	Influence/ Encourage	Volunteering Dorset Weymouth College Dorset Growth Hub Dorset Gateway	Staff Resource Medium	Improved capacity for events organisers to host more bigger and better events to attract visitors to the town	Apr- Jun'21	Volunteering Dorset, and volunteer dependent attractions in dialogue, training needs and resources identified
In 3	Develop a resource library of images and videos for use by local tourism businesses in their own marketing	2	Lead	DJHC Visit Dorset Dorset History Centre Civic Society	Staff Resource Low	Copyright free resources to help with a consistent message about Dorchester	Apr- Jun'21	Library developed, copyright issues resolved, images in use across platforms and users

In 4	Encourage collaborative working across the museum sector to achieve greater visits and visitor numbers across the sector from their complimentary exhibits and artefacts	2	Encourage	Heritage Attractions	Staff Resource Low	To improve awareness of the local offer and increase day visitor dwell time and repeat visits	Apr-Jun'21	Museums in dialogue, maybe as subgroup of the tourism partnership
In 5	Look at how other destinations provide resources support for event's organisers including facilities/ equipment/ storage/ processes	3	Lead		Staff Resource Low		Oct-Dec'20	

Actions identified as:

Lead – Those actions where the Town Council and or its employees will be directly involved in delivering

Influence – Those actions where the Town Council councillors, staff, or members of any established Tourism town partnership may bring influence in other fora where they are invited to comment or have representation

Encourage - Those where the Town Council councillors, staff, or members of any established Tourism town partnership can lend support or suggest new approaches to others working in or supporting the tourism industry locally

Impact

High – likely to require significant time and effort

Medium – Less time and effort

Low – Little time and effort, or not a role for the employed post, may be a position statement or policy approach of the council.

