

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

DORCHESTER JOINT HERITAGE COMMITTEE

23 JANUARY 2024

At a Meeting of the Dorchester Joint Heritage Committee held on 23rd January 2024:

PRESENT:

Dorchester Town Council	Councillors:	G. Jones (Chairman) A. Chisholm F. Hogwood
	Officers:	T. Hurley M. Manley
Dorset Council	Councillors:	R. Biggs A. Canning L. Fry
Dorchester Association		M. Rice
Local Nature Reserve		L. Poulsen
Dorset Museum & Art Gallery		C. Dixon
Dorset Council - Archaeology		S. Wallis
Thomas Hardy Society		M. Chutter
Dorchester Civic Society		I. Gosling
Shire Hall Historic Courthouse Museum		T. Little
Dorset History Centre		M. Gayton
Blue Badge Tour Guide		J. Wallis

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs S. Biles and D. Taylor (Dorchester Town Council), Cllrs S. Jones and R. Tarr (Dorset Council), R. White (National Trust), A. Worth (Keep 106) and E. Metcalfe (The Keep Military Museum).

2. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2023, a copy of which had been circulated, were confirmed and signed.

3. **BUDGET UPDATE**

A report on the budget position as at 1st January 2024 was presented. Mark Chutter noted that it was the Thomas Hardy Conference this year and the Fair next year but perhaps, looking ahead, the two events could both take place in 2028 to mark the centenary of Hardy's death. Maria Gayton reported that the History Centre has appointed an officer to catalogue the Hardy archive and they may be available to give talks/presentations.

RESOLVED

That the budget update be noted.

4. HERITAGE TOURISM STRATEGY - UPDATE

Matilda Manley provided an update on the work of the Tourism Partnership. Three projects had been selected to benefit from the Events & Experiences small grant fund – these were: ‘Hardy Ha’ comedy festival, Opera in Shire Hall, and a Drawing Festival.

Matilda also reported that co-ordinators had been appointed for the 2024 Walking Festival. Tamsin Little thanked Matilda for facilitating the Tourism Partnership.

RESOLVED

The Committee report on the activities of the Tourism Partnership were noted.

5. MUSEUMS AFTER DARK 2023

Tamsin Little present a report on the successful event in 2023 and agreed to bring forward a proposal for the 2024 to the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the report on the Museums After Dark 2023 event was noted.

6. HERITAGE OPEN DAY 2024

Tony Hurley presented an update on emerging plans for Heritage Open Day in 2024. Maria Gayton reported that the History Centre would be offering free tours on 15th September. The optional dates of either 8th or 15th September (both Sundays) and consideration was given to clashes with the County Show and the IronMan event. It was proposed that Heritage Open Day should take place on 15th September and Dorset Council asked if a closure of High West/East Street might be possible that day.

RESOLVED

That detailed proposals for Heritage Open Day on 15th September 2024 be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

7. ONGOING PROJECTS:

Updates on the following were received:

- a) **Millstream information boards.** Tony Hurley confirmed that the undergrowth had now been cleared from the path by Dorset Council and the installation/unveiling could be arranged. It was agreed that Tony Hurley will circulate the optional dates for the unveiling ceremony.

- b) **Roman mosaic project.** Matilda Manley reported that there not capacity to take the project forward at present but it was agreed that Matilda would explore options for a way forward with Claire Dixon.

8. FUTURE PROJECTS

- a) **Roman baths interpretation project.** Tony Hurley presented a report on options for the interpretation of the site. There was a need to improve the appearance of this area of town and the importance of linking any information to other Roman heritage signs in the town. Linda Poulsen highlighted the Victorian heritage of the site with links to Wollaston House and the Wollaston family. It was agreed that a more detailed proposal for this project be presented to the next meeting of the committee.
- b) **Water meadows project.** Tony Hurley reported that he had contacted Stinsford Parish Council regarding a potential joint project and was awaiting a response.
- c) **History of Dorchester online content.** Matilda Manley demonstrated that online content that had been produced for Heritage Open Day 2023. Cllr Gareth Jones was still keen on this being developed in to a presentation or display.
- d) **List of major events.** Matilda Manley reported that a list of annual events in Dorchester had been produced as was available online www.discoverdorchester.co.uk/annual-events/
- e) **Proposal for Bayeux Twinning / Norman invasion event.** Cllr Gareth Jones highlighted the opportunity to celebrate the links with Bayeux with an event focusing on the Norman invasion, the Bayeux tapestry (using images from the Reading Museum replica), and linking to the forthcoming television series and film. It was agreed that a detailed proposal will be presented to the April meeting of the Committee.
- f) **Town Pump enhancement proposal.** Ian Gosling outlined a proposal to install a water fountain near the base of the Town Pump to link with the 100th anniversary of the Civic Society. Local architects had been approached as were keen to work on the project. The Committee expressed its support for this idea. Tony Hurley mentioned the town council's ongoing project to enhancement the area of Cornhill around the Pump including new paving and benches.
- g) **Refurbishment of Treves memorial in Weymouth Avenue cemetery.** Ian Gosling reported on fundraising to have the memorial cleaned and refurbished – likely top cost about £1,000. The Civic Society had made a donation to the project and would make appeal for further contributions via the Echo.

RESOLVED

- (a) That a detailed proposal for the interpretation of the Roman baths be presented to the next meeting.
- (e) A proposal for a Bayeux/Norman invasion event be brought to the next meeting.
- (f) That the Civic Society's proposals for the Town Pump be supported.

9. NEW STATUE FOR DORCHESTER

The Committee received a presentation from Mark Chutter and Anya Pearson regarding a proposal to erect a statue to a significant woman from Dorchester’s history and suggested a range of people who could be considered. However, they explained the importance of consulting the community and, from this, new suggestions are likely to emerge. Various women were discussed and Mark Chutter highlighted Mary Moule as playing a significant role in the history of the town. Cllr Les Fry emphasised the importance of someone with a strong link to the town and Linda Poulsen stated that it was important to have an open consultation which might generate new names and perhaps also an alternative to a statue. Maria Gayton suggested that any community consultation should also ask whether a statue is the most appropriate way to celebrate a significant figure. Mark Chutter and Anya Pearson agreed that the consultation should be explore all options.

Matilda Manley suggested that the History of Dorchester Facebook page established by the Civic Society might be a good channel for consultation. The committee agreed to support a public consultation as part of a first step for the project.

RESOLVED

That the committee support the public consultation on options on the local woman to be commemorated in a new sculpture.

10. QUESTIONS

None were raised.

11. PROPOSED DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED

That the following dates be agreed. 23rd July 2024, 15th October 2024, 21st January 2025 and 15th April 2025 (all at 5.30pm).

12. URGENT ITEMS

None were raised.

Chairman.....