

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

DORCHESTER JOINT HERITAGE COMMITTEE

23rd JULY 2024

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

PRESENT:

Dorchester Town Council	Councillors: G. Jones (Chairman) S. Jones S. Biles
	Officers: T. Hurley M. Manley
Dorset Council	Councillors: R. Biggs 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 & V. Smith
Dorset History Centre	S. Johnston
Blue Badge Tour Guide	J. Wallis

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs F. Kent-Ledger and D. Taylor (Dorchester Town Council), Cllrs R. Major and R. Tarr (Dorset Council), R. White (National Trust), J. Wallis (Blue Badge Guide), A. Harrison (Town Crier) and E. Metcalfe (The Keep Military Museum).

2. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

Cllr Gareth Jones was elected as chair of the committee for the remainder of the 2024-25 council year.

3. **ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

The election of Vice Chairman for the committee was deferred to the next meeting.

4. **DECLARATION OF PREDETERMINATION**

None were declared.

5. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th April 2024, a copy of which had been circulated, were confirmed and signed.

6. **BUDGET UPDATE**

A report on the budget position as at 1st April 2024 was presented. TH reported that a replacement information panel for the Frink martyrs' statues had been produced. Cllr G. Jones asked that future reprints of the panel include new information from the Dorset History Centre and Dorset Museum.

RESOLVED

That the budget update be noted.

7. **HERITAGE TOURISM STRATEGY - UPDATE**

Matilda Manley provided an update on the work of the Tourism Partnership. The D-Day 80th immersive theatre trail was considered a great success. The projects funded by the Events & Experiences grants were going well, including the recent comedy festival. Matilda Manley requested support for the allocation of part of the tourism budget for a range of activities including re-prints of the Dorchester Walking leaflet and Cllr S. Biles noted that she often saw visitors in the town making use of the leaflet.

Cllr R. Biggs noted that Dorset Council will be developing its approach to tourism promotion and he also noted that a Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) was in the process of being formed for the Dorset area, however it was good that individual towns were active in tourism development.

Matilda Manley presented a draft Marketing and Visitor Experience plan for the period 2025-2028 which also contained proposals for key events to be organised by the Committee. Given that 2028 would be the 100th anniversary of the death of Thomas Hardy it was proposed that the Thomas Hardy Victorian Fayre take place in that year and in 2026 (thereby reinstating the two-year cycle of Fayres). The committee suggested amendments and additions to the plan including linking the Victorian Fayre to the Thomas Hardy Society conference, celebrating 100 years of women's suffrage in 2028. L. Poulsen recommended that priority 4 of the marketing plan should include specialist tours companies. Matilda Manley agreed to develop the plan for key events further through discussions with partner organisations.

RESOLVED

- a) That the report on the activities of the Tourism Partnership were noted.
- b) That a release of £3,608 from the tourism budget for the museums' passport cards, reprint of the Dorchester Walking leaflet and Google integration on the Discover Dorchester website.
- c) That the draft Tourism Partnership Forward Plan was welcomed but should be developed further through discussions with partners, particularly with regard to proposals for major events, and presented to the next meeting of the committee.

8. HERITAGE OPEN DAY 2024 - UPDATE

Tony Hurley presented an update on emerging plans for Heritage Open Day on 15th September 2024.

RESOLVED

That the proposals for Heritage Open Day 2024 on 15th September were noted.

9. ONGOING PROJECTS

Updates on the following were received:

- a) **Millstream information boards.** TH reported that the side of the Old Mill had been identified as the preferred location for the final board and the Mill Street Housing Society will decide on giving permission for its installation at its meeting in late July.
- b) **Roman mosaic project.** Matilda Manley presented a draft artists' brief as a way to take the project forward. Claire Dixon reported that Dorset Museum was working on a funding bid for the conservation and presentation of its mosaics and that perhaps the proposed project could be integrated into the bid.
- c) **Dorchester Sheroes Project:** M. Chutter and Anya Pearson presented the results of recent community consultation and reported that the chosen candidate to be celebrated with a statue will be announced at a fundraising event at the end of September.
- d) **Roman Baths Interpretation Project.** Tony Hurley updated the committee on on-going research by Clare Randall of Cotswold Archaeology.
- e) **Refurbishment of Treves Memorial.** Ian Gosling reported on the successful completion of the refurbishment project.

10. FUNDING REQUEST FROM NEW HARDY PLAYERS

The Committee considered a request from Shire Hall Museum for a grant towards the cost of further performances of the highly successful Six Men of Dorset play, performed by the New Hardy Players in partnership with Shire Hall and Dorchester Arts. Members were very supportive and agreed to a grant of £600.

RESOLVED

That a grant of £600 was allocated to support performances by the New Hardy Players in September 2024 of the Six Men of Dorset play.

11. PROPOSAL FOR BLUE PLAQUE AT TOP O' TOWN HOUSE

Members considered a report from the Assistant Town Clerk regarding a request for support from the owners of the Top o' Town House for the installation of a blue plaque to commemorate the properties former function as the Marabout Camp Commandant. Ian Gosling praised the restoration of the building and that it was being considered for a Civic

Society award.

RESOLVED

That the committee agreed to support the installation of a blue plaque on the Top o' Town House.

12. **FUTURE PROJECTS**

- a) **Water meadows project.** Stinsford Parish Council has responded positively to the suggestion of a meeting to discuss the better interpretation of the water meadows. Both Cllr David Taylor and Ian Gosling were keen to attend the meeting. It was also suggested that the information panel at Hangman's Cottage be redesigned.
- b) **History of Dorchester online content.** Matilda Manley reported that the web-content regarding the history of Dorchester in 15 objects is now online.
- c) **Town Pump enhancement proposal.** Ian Gosling reported on a very positive meeting with Wessex Water regarding the installation of a water fountain in the Town Pump – based on the design in old photographs. Ian will now discuss with Dorset Council's conservation officer.
- d) **Heritage information panels on Fairfield public realm area.** Cllr G. Jones stated that there were on-going discussions with Dorset Council with regard to improving heritage interpretation in the new pedestrianised area of Fairfield.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the project updates were noted by the Committee.

13. **UPDATES FROM PARTNERS**

Dorset Museum & Art Gallery - Claire Dixon reported that in 2025 there would be an Open Arts event to generate additional footfall and income, and benefit local artists. Plans were also being developed for the enhancement of the Victorian Hall.

Linda Poulsen reported on on-going management of the Riverside Reserve and thanked town council staff for their hard work on the site.

Dorchester Association – Michael Rice reported that a new programme of talks had just been announced.

Dorchester Civic Society – Ian Gosling reported that the Derek Beauchamp Awards would be announced in the autumn. Work was on-going to propose that the water meadows be listed as a local heritage asset.

Thomas Hardy Society – Mark Chutter reported that the annual conference would take place soon and that the 2025 programme of talks and events was about to be published.

Dorset History Centre – Sam Johnson reported that the Thomas Hardy archiving project was going well and that fundraising was on-going for the cataloguing of the William Barnes archive.

Dorset Council archaeology service – Steve Wallis reported that the Roman townhouse tours were currently running and that there was a nature conservation regime in place for the land around the townhouse. A new walk was being established to better link the townhouse with the museum.

Shire Hall – Virginia Smith reported on on-going fundraising activities and efforts to increase attendances via a new summer programme of activities. They are planning exhibitions for next year beginning with a photographic exhibition.

14. **QUESTIONS**

None were raised.

15. **URGENT ITEMS**

Chairman.....