



DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

DORCHESTER HERITAGE JOINT COMMITTEE

**Local Context and Issues**

**“The view on the ground”**

**Accommodation**

Not all accommodation providers capture post code data from their visitors, but all consider that most visitors have travelled from within 2.5-3 hours travel time.

All consider that awareness of Dorchester and its visitor offer is low and needs raising. Several report visitors staying for one night to break a journey, and wish they'd booked to stay longer being unaware of the offer.

There are differing views about what the Dorchester offer should be - from “Neolithic remains and our Roman Heritage” to “It must be Thomas Hardy”.

All consider that the off-peak period is where opportunity lies, and all have welcomed, and most have benefitted from, the recent events in the town.

All are using the internet to promote their businesses, some are using OTAs, use of social media for marketing is varied in use and frequency of use.

**Attractions**

Not all attractions collect postcode data from visitor, although those that offer gift aid do so. Not all are willing to share visitor numbers. All consider that most visitors travel from across Dorset and were staying on holiday and have travelled from within 2.5-3 hours distance.

Some, such as the Keep Military Museum, appeal to a specific group in the community but recognize the need to diversify their visitor profile too.

Others realise that their offer may not be of broad appeal as a main attractor, and that a proportion of their visitors come as they are here for another purpose and have seen the attraction.

All consider that events in the town, such as Dippy on Tour, Thomas Hardy Victorian Fair and Heritage Open Dorchester add atmosphere and a reason to visit the town and promote their attraction, and probably encourage repeat more in depth visits.

Most see international visitors from Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, France, US and Japan.

All are agreed that Dorchester has a tremendous story to tell for the visitor, but it has limited or no profile with national and international visitors.

Most agree Dorchester needs to define its offer(s) and establish an aspirational vision and brand, and to attract more ABC<sup>1</sup> visitors.

Some events draw an audience from further afield, because of the promotional activity undertaken by the event organizer or event participant.