

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

DORCHESTER JOINT HERITAGE COMMITTEE

15th OCTOBER 2024

At a Meeting of the Dorchester Joint Heritage Committee held on 15TH October 2024:

PRESENT:

Dorchester Town Council	Councillors: G. Jones (Chairman) S. Biles
	Officers: T. Hurley M. Manley
Dorset Council	Councillors: R. Major R. Tarr
Dorchester Association	M. Rice
Local Nature Reserve	L. Poulsen
Dorset Council - Archaeology	S. Wallis
Thomas Hardy Society	M. Chutter
Dorchester Civic Society	A. Harrison
Dorset History Centre	S. Johnston
Blue Badge Tour Guide	J. Wallis
Dorchester Sheroes Project	A. Pearson

26. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs F. Kent-Ledger, S. Jones and D. Taylor (Dorchester Town Council), Cllrs R. Biggs and L. Fry (Dorset Council), E. Metcalfe (The Keep Military Museum), V. Smith (Shire Hall Historic Courthouse Museum), and C. Dixon (Dorset Museum & Art Gallery).

27. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd July 2024, a copy of which had been circulated, were confirmed and signed.

28. **DECLARATION OF PREDETERMINATION**

None were declared.

29. **BUDGET UPDATE**

An update report on the committee's budget was presented.

RESOLVED

That the budget update be noted.

30. **COMMITTEE FUNDING FOR 2025-2029**

A proposal for the committee budget requirements for the period 2025-29 was discussed. Cllr Biles enquired about the cost of road closures and Cllr Tarr stated that investment in heritage events bring visitors to the town.

RESOLVED

That the following funding request for 2025-29 be submitted to Dorchester Town Council for consideration:

- a) £8,500 per annum for major events
- b) £3,000 per annum for small projects

31. **ONGOING PROJECTS**

Updates on the following were received:

- a) **Millstream information boards.** Tony Hurley reported the final heritage information panel on the Old Mill would be unveiled tomorrow and then the trail would be complete.
- b) **Refreshing heritage information panels.** Tony Hurley reported that several panels had been replaced recently due to weathering and that all the panels at Maumbury Rings would be refreshed in the Spring. Cllr Tarr stated that the Hardy trail panels were looking quite worn and it would be good to find the original designs so that these too could be refreshed.
- c) **Dorchester Sheroes Project.** Mark Chutter and Anya Pearson updated the committee on the project and stated that the author Sylvia Townsend Warner had been chosen by the project as the subject of a new statue in Dorchester. A concept design was circulated showing the statue seated on a bench in South Street. Anya Pearson confirmed that Dorset Council had been contacted with regard to the proposed location. The committee agreed that if this design was pursued then it would be useful to have an information plaque nearby. Mark Chutter indicated that some funding had already been promised by the organisation Visible Women UK and that a crowd funding campaign would be launched on the 8th November.
- d) **Roman Baths Interpretation Project.** Tony Hurley stated that steps to improve the interpretation would be included in the Roman Festival project.
- e) **Feedback from New Hardy Players.** Andy Worth provided an update on the Players highly successful performances of the Six Men of Dorset play. There had been 12 performances and an outdoor performance at the Tolpuddle Festival. Andy Worth stated that there was a film of the performance and that the script and other material would go to the Dorset History Centre. Matilda Manley suggested that perhaps there could be a 100th anniversary performance in 10 years' time. The committee congratulated Andy Worth and the Players for such an excellent project.

- f) **Museums After Dark.** Tony Hurley reported that the museums would like to retain the Committee's grant of £400 and use it to support a families' event just before Christmas as the Museums After Dark project would not be going ahead. This was agreed by the Committee.
- g) **Town Pump enhancements.** Anthony Harrison provided an update from the Dorchester Civic Society's project to install a water fountain in the Town Pump. Discussions with Wessex Water were very positive and there were planning/conservation permissions to secure. Cllr Biles recommended that the Society work closely with the Town Council's own project to enhance the surroundings of the Town Pump.

32. HERITAGE OPEN DAY 2024

Tony Hurley and Matilda Manley presented a feedback report on Heritage Open Day in September. There had been an impact on footfall in town as a result of the IronMan event. Mark Chutter stated that it was a shame there access to the Old Oak Rooms had not been given. The members of the committee stated a preference for any future event to be timed so that it did not clash with the County Show or IronMan, even if it was outside of the national Heritage Open Day fortnight, and for it to be a street event with entertainment requiring the closure of High West Street.

RESOLVED:

That Assistant Town Clerk bring forward a proposal for a heritage street event to take place in September 2025.

33. FUTURE PROJECTS

- a) **Water meadows project.** It was reported that the Civic Society had been in discussions with Kingston Maurward College regarding the reintroduction of water meadows but this project was current in abeyance.
- b) **History of Dorchester online content.** Anthony Harrison reported on the Civic Society's very popular 'history of Dorchester' Facebook page which had attracted considerable attention. However, the content was unstructured and capturing it for archiving was a challenge. Andy Worth highlighted that there were interviews and oral history recordings on the Keep 106 website.
- c) **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. Ideally, Cllr Jones would like to see replicas of the reliefs in Tudor Arcade installed in this area. Steve Wallis stated that there was a great deal of information about the 1909-13 excavations at Maumbury Rings which could be used. It was agreed that a meeting be arranged with Historic England to discuss the better interpretation of the prehistoric heritage of Dorchester.
- d) **Proposal for information board for the Moule Institute.** Mark Chutter highlighted the need for a heritage information panel about the Moule Institute in Fordington and would give a presentation on this to a future meeting.

34. **HERITAGE TOURISM STRATEGY - UPDATE**

Matilda Manley presented an update on progress with the Heritage Tourism Strategy and the work of the Tourism Partnership.

RESOLVED

That the report on the activities of the Tourism Partnership were noted.

35. **DORCHESTER TOURISM PARTNERSHIP – FESTIVAL PROPOSALS FOR 2025**

Matilda Manley presented proposals for a Food & Drink Festival and a Dorchester Walking Festival to take place in 2025.

RESOLVED

That funding be allocated to support the Food & Drink Festival and a Dorchester Walking Festival to take place in 2025.

36. **ROMAN FESTIVAL 2025 - PROPOSAL**

The Committee considered a proposal from Matilda Manley to hold a Roman Festival in Dorchester in April 2025 to co-incide with the British Museum's 'Gladiators of Britain' exhibition which is being hosted by Dorset Museum & Art Galleries in 2025.

RESOLVED

That the proposals for a Dorchester Roman Festival be agreed.

37. **UPDATES FROM PARTNERS**

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. The Sylvia Townsend Warner collection is also in need of cataloguing. The Wessex Water archive had been received along with a grant to help with cataloguing.

Keep 106. Andy Worth reported that the radio station was the third most listened to in the Dorchester area just behind Greatest Hits Radio. The station has a 'whats on' page which can be added to at no charge and is distributed to all the presenters.

Riverside Reserve. Linda Poulsen reported on the problem of ash dieback affecting many trees in the Riverside Reserve and there were also problems with anti-social behaviour in the evenings. Linda Poulson also expressed concerns about the level of graffiti in the town.

Dorchester Association. Michael Rice reported collaboration with Dorset Museum.

Thomas Hardy Society. Mark Chutter reported that the annual conference had been very successful. Plans were starting for the 2028 centenary conference and the Society was

working with the BBC on a film about Thomas Hardy. The Society has a busy programme for 2025 with a combined Hardy and Barnes conference.

Dorset Council archaeology service – Steve Wallis reported that the Roman townhouse tours were popular and the television series *Digging for Britain* had been filming in Dorchester.

Andy Worth highlighted the work being undertaken at Athelhampton House and suggested that the owner, Giles Keating, be invited to a future meeting to talk about this.

38. **QUESTIONS**

None were raised.

39. **URGENT ITEMS**

Chairman.....