

## **DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL**

### **DORCHESTER JOINT HERITAGE COMMITTEE**

**21<sup>st</sup> JANUARY 2025**

At a Meeting of the Dorchester Joint Heritage Committee held on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025:

#### **PRESENT:**

Dorchester Town Council	Councillors:	S. Biles G. Jones (Chairman) S. Jones F. Kent-Ledger
	Officers:	T. Hurley M. Manley
Dorset Council	Councillors:	R. Biggs A. Canning R. Major R. Tarr
Dorset Museum & Art Gallery		C. Dixon
Dorchester Association		M. Rice
Local Nature Reserve		L. Poulsen
Dorset Council - Archaeology		S. Wallis
Thomas Hardy Society		M. Chutter
Dorchester Civic Society / Town Crier		A. Harrison
Dorset History Centre		M. Gayton
Blue Badge Tour Guide		J. Wallis
Dorchester Sheroes Project		A. Pearson
Shire Hall Historic Courthouse Museum		V. Smith
Dorchester Heritage Magazine		M. Woodgate

#### 40. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr D. Taylor (Dorchester Town Council), Cllr L. Fry (Dorset Council), I. Gosling (Dorchester Civic Society), E. Metcalfe (The Keep Military Museum), R. White (National Trust) and A. Worth (Keep 106).

#### 41. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2024, a copy of which had been circulated, were confirmed and signed.

#### 42. **DECLARATION OF PREDETERMINATION**

None were declared.

43. **BUDGET UPDATE**

An update report on the committee's budget was presented. Maria Gayton urged the committee to consider seeking match funding for its own projects in order to maximise the impact of its budget. Claire Dixon requested that the £400 grant originally allocated to the Museums After Dark project be reassigned to support the Museums Pass initiative.

**RESOLVED**

- a) That the budget update be noted.
- b) That the grant of £400 allocated for the Museums After Dark project be reassigned to the Museum Pass project.

44. **SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER STATUE PROJECT**

The meeting was joined at this point by Anya Pearson and colleagues from the project and, along with Mark Chutter, provided an update on progress. updated the committee on the project and stated that the author Sylvia Townsend. The project has secured £50,000 towards an estimated total project cost of £60,000. The artist had produced a maquette and application would be submitted soon for planning consent. In response to a query from Cllr S. Jones, Anya Pearson confirmed that Chaldon Herring Parish Council, where the writer lived, had contributed to the project.

It was agreed not to support the project at this stage until it had secured planning permission and any other consents. The project may also wish to apply to Dorchester Town Council for a small grant.

**RESOLVED**

That a decision on any financial support for the Sylvia Townsend Warner statue project be deferred until more details are available and the design has secured planning consent.

45. **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.

46. **ROMAN FESTIVAL 2025**

The Committee received an update from Matilda Manley on the organisation of a Roman Festival in Dorchester in April 2025 to co-incide with the 'Gladiators of Britain' exhibition at Dorset Museum & Art Galleries in 2025. It was reported that South West Train are offering free poster space on the network to help promote the festival and exhibition. Claire Dixon also mentioned that she was working with the Dorset Bard and they could be involved in the

project.

## RESOLVED

That progress with the Dorchester Roman Festival were noted.

### 47. ONGOING PROJECTS

Updates on the following were received:

- a) **Refreshing heritage information panels.** Tony Hurley reported that all the panels at Maumbury Rings would be refreshed before the Roman Festival. In addition, discussions were in progress to locate the Roman gateway heritage panel on the HK Law building at Top o' Town.
- b) **Roman Baths Interpretation Project.** Tony Hurley reported that the project was on hold until a new staff were in place at Dorset Museum for the project to liaise with.
- c) **Town Pump enhancement proposals.** Anthony Harrison reported on the Civic Society's project to enhance the Town Pump and reinstate a water supply were at an early stage, but designs had been commissioned and funding was being sought.
- d) **The Dorchester Story project.** Anthony Harrison reported on the Civic Society's project to develop online content initially about Roman Dorchester with support from a Bournemouth University student and that this material would eventually be hosted on Discover Dorchester. This way of working would be used as a model for presenting the story of other periods in the town's history. Cllr S. Jones asked if they project would look at prehistoric Dorchester and Anthony Harrison confirmed that this might be the case depending on capacity.

Miranda Woodgate reported that she had collected material on the history of Dorchester during the pandemic and would pass this on to the Civic Society. Claire Dixon highlighted the *Bloomberg Connects* app which presented free information on art and museums around the world. Free training was available for developing content for the app but it was a significant commitment ( [www.bloombergconnects.org](http://www.bloombergconnects.org) ).

Cllr R. Tarr stated that the town council had developed heritage interpretative information with Jo Draper and that he had the designs.

### 48. FUTURE PROJECTS

- a) **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 he would come forward with proposals and a possible location (perhaps on the Green).
- b) **Heritage Open Day 2025.** Tony Hurley presented options for HOD 2025 including the closure of High West Street. The committee were supportive of the date of Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> September (at the end of the national HOD fortnight) but did not want to see such a large amount of money spent on the road closure. There should instead be a focus on access to buildings and heritage sites that were not normally publicly accessible and that the

budget could be used to fund free 'behind the scenes' tours at the museums. Tony Hurley agreed to report more developed proposals to the next meeting.

- c) **Maiden Castle excavation 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary event.** Michael Rice reported that the Dorchester Association was planning a day school with archaeologist Niall Sharples, who ran the 1985 excavation. The Association had a good track record of running successful day schools and was optimistic that the planned event would prove popular. The committee agreed to allocate £200 to the Association to help with the cost of publishing a programme for the event.

## **RESOLVED**

That a grant of £200 be awarded to the Dorchester Association to assist with the cost of producing a programme for the Maiden Castle excavation 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary day school.

### 49. **THE GORGE BUILDING, SOUTH STREET**

The Civic Society updated was noted.

### 50. **UPDATES FROM PARTNERS**

**Shire Hall:** Virginia Smith stated that the museum was turning a corner and had plans for the year, including a decarbonisation programme and a crime and punishment in Roman times family activity during the Roman festival. The museum is also hosting an exhibition called *The Magic of Middle Earth* opening at the end of March.

**Dorset Museum & Art Gallery.** Claire Dixon reported that the Gladiators of Roman Britain was opening that week and there were plans for a Jane Austen exhibition later in the year. The Museum is awaiting a decision on funding for repairs to the Victorian Hall roof.

**Dorset History Centre** – Maria Gayton reported that the Centre was working a bid for capital funding for an extension.

**Thomas Hardy Society.** Mark Chutter reported that membership numbers were up.

**Miranda Woodgate** reported that she had been asked by the Wessex branch of the Council for British Archaeology to organise an event in Dorchester in 2025.

**Dorset Council archaeology service** – Steve Wallis reported that the Roman townhouse had features in the television series *Digging for Britain*. Recent building works in Colliton Street had revealed further evidence of the Roman town.

**The Keep Military Museum.** Tony Hurley reported an update from Elliott Metcalfe that The Keep would be closed for the whole of 2025 whilst repairs are undertaken on the roof. In the meantime, Dorset Museum would help to display some of the items from The Keep's collection.

### 51. **QUESTIONS**

None were raised.

52. **URGENT ITEMS**

None were raised.

Chairman.....