



Dorchester Tourism Partnership Meeting

Monday 15th January 2024

2 pm – 4 pm

Monart Spa, Poundbury

Attending 17

1. Welcome and Introductions

Kirsty Schmidt, The King's Arms, chaired the meeting. Welcomed new members from National Trust, Keep Military Museum (Marketing Officer) and World Heritage Museums

2. Tourism Development Officer Update

Tourism Development Officer gave an update on the following projects and marketing stats. A full set of presentation slides should be attached:

- Recent social media and website stats
- 2024 events calendar and What's On posters
- Brew Dorch
- Dorchester Walking Festival
- Recipients of Events and Experiences grant include Dorchester Comedy Festival, Drawing Festival, and Courtroom Opera.
- 3-year marketing plan
- Spring 2024 campaign progress- Good Housekeeping Magazine, Rail station posters, Blue Monday competition with Visit Dorset
- Brown sign update

The following comments, decisions and requests were made by the partnership:

- Robin Potter, Tamsin Little, Kirsty Schmidt, and Katie Jones are to form group to look over Walking Festival organiser submissions.
- Group will be formed to devise 3-year marketing plan. This will include Tara Bailey, Kirsty Schmidt, Jackie Ridley, Ester Baker, Joe Doak, Tamsin Little, Dan Thomas, and Robin Potter.
- There is a worry that one of the Dorchester Artisan Markets dates (Nov 24th) clashes with Shire Hall's Christmas market therefore possibility of stall holder unavailability.

ACTIONS:

- Partners to share Blue Monday competition to their socials.
- Matilda to make front page feature for Spring Campaign.
- Matilda and Connie to investigate putting a Tourist Information Point at South Walks NHS Outpatient Assessment Centre.

3. Plan for Summer 2024

Tourism Development Officer presented the previously discussed options for the summer 2024 campaign. The partnership debated which campaign would be most useful to their organisation and narrowed down the key focuses on the campaigns.

The following comments, decisions and requests were made by the partnership:

- All in support of another Walking Festival. More promotion to go into this year, to link to other events around the country, and further reach to draw people to Dorchester.
- 'Dog Friendly Dorchester' campaign would be better suited to a blog/social media posts, as it does not influence people's travel enough. It was noted this could encourage people to take their dog wherever the like, causing issues if they are turned away.
- 'Stop on your way to Cornwall' could be a follow on from visits to Stone Henge if there is a push on the history links. Many felt visitor journeys would already be planned and it is hard to intercept before the plans are made.
- All are keen to work with influencers providing the cost per click ratio is promising. Visit Dorset offered to share their influencer contact details.
- 'September Stay' campaign supported, however, some felt people will already plan to come in September, so it needs less of a push.
- It was decided by the group that the focus of summer 2024 will be another 'Day Out in Dorchester' campaign as it fits with the most organisations and encourages spending in all sectors. Suggested to target people in Bournemouth for the 2024 campaign.
- All supported the production of a 'Summer in Dorchester' leaflet instead of a Resort advert. This would be distributed to holiday parks and accommodation providers as well as a digital version available to share.

4. Resort Advert

Tourism Development Officer put forward a vote to confirm whether the group was to go ahead with the resort Dorset advert for 2024. The majority vote was to NOT go ahead with the 2024 advert.

5. Finances

Tourism Development Officer shared the Heritage Tourism Partnership's 2024 finance projections with the group (slides attached).

6. Partner updates

- Monart Spa – plans for a plunge pool in the summer, marketing for a full day at the spa, new focus on spa experience for those with health problems, slight increase in price for April.
- Brewery Square – successful Christmas, fully let spaces, new play café has proven popular, new operation manager, plans for more events/music including Brew Dorch, Dorchester Science Festival and classic cars.
- National trust – opening for 2024 on the 18th of March, guided tour model showing successful, plans for BSL signing tours, new 'Mini Explorer' trail around Hardy's Monument.
- World Heritage Museums – purely income based, opening hours moved (7 days a week through Easter to October, weekends only through October to Easter).
- Joy Wallis – new cohort of blue badge tour guides keen to do regular walks around Dorchester, noted most people on guided tours are here to see Hardy Country.
- Dorchester Civic society – 50th anniversary celebrations, design award competition for design over the last 5 years (October), looking at restoring the Town Pump, regular talk programme, Facebook group started on the history of Dorchester (0->3k followers since November).
- Roman Town House – town house booklet published last year on sale in Dorset Museum, story map production, chasing up the archive on excavation information.
- Dorchester Arts – recently awarded grant for the next 3 years, creative health classes focus, good numbers over Christmas, supporting local level talent and schools' drama departments.
- Visit Dorset – slides attached for 2024 marketing schedule, trying out new types of videos, can host guest blogs, upcoming Visit England press and PR event.
- Robin Potter – Dorchester Town Councillor – elections coming up in May, 50th Anniversary Celebrations.
- Kingston Maurward – increasing student numbers, potential merger with Weymouth College to form the 'Dorset College Group', plans for Winter Ball in December to be a celebration of Dorset with business partners etc., Tractor Run 8th Feb, collaborating with Dorset County Show for the Dorset Spring Show in April.
- Kings Arms – record sales and best December ever, pop-up bakery opening on Thursdays (25th Jan).
- Keep Military Museum – best visitor year ever in 2023 (11.5k people), new Visitor Experience Manager Josh Hookins, plans for D-Day 80th Anniversary include D-Day dance and black-tie dinner, museum reaccreditation coming up.

- Tom Browns – successful Christmas period, opened upstairs function room, ‘The Museum’, new monthly creative drinks, upcoming events include Brew Dorch and Beerex, supporting the Dorchester Repair Café who are looking for venues.
- Shire Hall Museum – best Halloween number ever and good Christmas period, café events successful, Nina Corey (Director) leaving so others stepping up as joint interim directors, friends’ schemes picking up, no current core funding, schools and dementia programmes running.

7. Date of next meeting and close of meeting

Tuesday 2nd April 2024, 2-4pm

The Museum at Tom Browns