



Dorchester Tourism Partnership Meeting

Tuesday 9th July 2024

2 pm – 4 pm

Borough Gardens House, Dorchester

Attending 17

1. Welcome and Introductions

Kirsty Schmidt, The King's Arms, chaired the meeting.

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, website, and app statistics
- 2024 events and What's On posters
- Recent press coverage and blog campaigns
- Dorchester Walking Festival report
- D-Day commemorative activities recap and feedback
- Dorchester Events and Experience funding – 3 funded events coming up
- Summer 2024 campaign progress – including summer leaflet, competitions, cruise engagement
- Dorchester Artisan Market updates, walking leaflet reprints
- Proposed South Street improvements – Pulse digital boards

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

- The group discussed whether to hold the Dorchester Walking Festival in 2025. It was decided to go ahead with this. Feedback included:
 - Needs more a link with businesses
 - Required more business feedback
 - Too many walks were far away for the centre of towns
 - Shire Hall Café reported less profit made than 2023
- The group discussed the ongoing improvements to South Street. The following comments were made regarding the Pulse digital boards:
 - Need to fit in seamlessly to the environment
 - Must ensure longevity of the boards

ACTIONS:

- Walking Festival to be added to next meeting's agenda.
- Keep partnership updated with progress on South Street digital boards.

3. Meeting the New Town Crier

Anthony Harrison introduced himself to the partnership as Dorchester's new town crier. Anthony explained he is available as town crier for events such as celebrations, openings, and one-off events. Currently, Anthony is performing weekend round-up cry's and plans to do themed cry's; for example, to promote Dorchester's independent businesses. He is on social media under the following handles:

- Facebook: Dorchester Town Crier
- Instagram: @dorchoyez

- Email: dorchoyez@gmail.com
- WhatsApp/Phone: 07426 954560

4. Finances

Tourism Development Officer shared an update on the Heritage Tourism Partnership's finances with the group (slides attached).

5. Proposed updates to the Discover Dorchester website

Tourism Development Officer proposed two updates for the Discover Dorchester website.

The first update was the integration of google into the DD website. This would include automated updates of opening times, images, addresses, and reviews. It was decided to approve the integration of google for the fee of £650.

The second Discover Dorchester website update proposed was the creation of a separate business area for discover Dorchester partners. This would improve Dorchester's profile as a place to run a business and would include features such as footfall counters. It was decided to approve this new page and the fee will be covered by Dorset Council.

6. New Museum Passport Proposal

The Dorchester Museums asked for funding to produce a 'Museums passport'. Dorchester's Museums include Dorset Museum, Shire Hall Museum, The Keep Military Museum, The Dinosaur Museum, Terracotta Warriors, Teddy Bear Museum, and the Tutankhamun Exhibition. One side would be a map with the 7 museums locations. The other side would be 8 squares, one for Discover Dorchester logo and one per venue, which would be stamped. The cards would be collected by visitors at the first venue, and they are all giving a 10% discount, one visit per venue.

The Dorchester Museums requested for the money to print 5,000 copies to hand out across the venues. This would cost £200 for design and £359 for printing with a total of £559. It was decided by the group to approve this proposal and give the museums money for this project.

7. Forward Planning

i. Autumn/Winter

Tourism Development Officer presented the proposed plans for autumn/winter. The partnership discussed the planned promotions and agreed to move forward (see attached slides for promotion details).

ii. 2025 Action Plan

Tourism Development Officer presented the proposed 2025 action plan. This would be to focus on the Roman heritage of Dorchester (see attached slides for details of the Roman plan).

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

- There was a worry that the Roman connection to businesses/attractions is not strong enough to have a positive tourism effect.
- Potential clashing of dates with big events for various partners e.g., end of WWII for The Keep.
- Most partners were in favour of focusing on Dorchester's Roman heritage.
- Would need to figure out a solid way to collect data and shop spends.
- Question for how this would benefit the town in the long term, specifically in terms of visitor spend.

ACTION:

- Tourism Development Officer to expand the proposal more and consider how to integrate with all Dorchester attractions/businesses.

iii. 3-year Marketing Plan

- Tourism Development Officer presented an update on the Tourism Partnership's 3-year Marketing Plan and Visitor Experience Strategy (see attached slides for full plans).

ACTION:

- Tourism Development Officer to send out Marketing Plan and Visitor Experience Strategy to partners for comments.

8. Partner updates

- **National Trust** – took part in Chesil Youth Pride, historical research with Dorset history Centre led to the restoration of upstairs window dressing at Max Gate, BSL signing tours started.
- **Maiden Castle Farm** – waiting for good weather for the Sunflower Trail – plans to open in August, events held in sunflower trail this year (Storytime in the sunflowers, sunflower stride fun run), call out for partners to share posts.
- **Dorchester BID** – A&E D-Day convoy had BCC coverage prior to the events, 10-12k attendees at event, super sleuth competition starts soon (120 businesses signed up).
- **Dorchester Civic society** – 50th anniversary celebrations coming up, 12 nominations for Derek Beauchamp design award, regular talk programme, History of Dorchester Facebook Group now at 6.5k followers.
- **Steve Wallis** – tours starting every fortnight at Roman Town House, new tours starting at Dorset Museum then exploring around Dorchester town, lead successful walking festival walks.
- **Dorchester Arts** – upcoming Dorchester Comedy Festival (The Hardy Har), New Hardy Players show with Shie Hall very successful, building work start in August on the Corn Exchange (to finish Feb 2025).
- **Visit Dorset** – ‘Wild Weekend’ video campaign doing well, ‘Reunion’ video campaign out in August, Multiple successful competitions on the go, received shared prosperity funding, compiling press and PR directory (contact to be included), hosting influencers in September, focuses for Autumn are food & drink and dog friendly Dorset.
- **Robin Potter – Dorchester Town Councillor** – elected as Mayor, slow down after business of local and general elections, successful event for 50th Anniversary Celebrations of DTC.
- **Kingston Maurward** – good numbers at Animal Park and Gardens, success with Spring Show, pirate treasure trail beginning soon, 75th Anniversary of the college in 2024.
- **Keep Military Museum** – visitor numbers breaking records, successful D-Day events including dance and black-tie dinner, good media coverage on radio and news, talk programme coming up.
- **Duchy of Cornwall** – Crown Square business increasing (plans for new cocktail bar), food and drink festival planned for Queen Mother Square, Damers Meadow opened for school engagement, aims to promote Poundbury itself as development is nearing end, linking with Keep Military Museum for road names trail.
 - Spring Show success, Dorset County Show planned for 7th/8th of September, call to get Dorchester businesses involved (contact James Cox, Show secretary).
- **Shire Hall Museum** – new director (Virginia), visitor numbers steady, community fundraising events have been very successful and raised money for 3 sessions Memory Café per month for a year, up for an award for schools programme, Dorset Youth Pride on 13th July, plans for summer include storytime sessions, craft sessions, first summer fete, huge success with 6 men of Dorset play.

9. Date of next meeting and close of meeting

Tuesday 1st October 2024, 1.30pm-3.30pm
The King’s Arms, Casterbridge Room