



Dorchester Tourism Partnership (DTP) Meeting

Tuesday 29th September 2026

10.30am – 12.30pm

Council Chamber, Corn Exchange

Attendees: Helen Moody (C-Side and Vinyl Van), Joe Doak (Dorchester Civic Society), Katie Raven (The King's Arms), Kirsty Schmidt (Stay Original), Marc Sweeney (Dorchester Town Council), Mark Tattershall (Dorchester Arts), Matilda Manley (Dorchester Town Council), Cllr Robin Potter (Dorchester Town Council), Sue Clark (Thomas Hardy Society), Steph Addison (Chamber of Commerce), Steve Wallis (Dorset Council), Jessica Matthews (Visit Dorset) Cecilia Rego (Dorset Museum & Art Gallery), Jason Bowerman (Duchy Of Cornwall Estate and Dorset County Show), Phil Gordon (Dorchester BID), Kerry Smith (Talk about Trust, PIP), Katy Jones (Tom Browns Pub and Pub Watch), Charlotte Spracklen (Brewery Square), Rachel White (National Trust)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Kirsty Schmidt, Stay Original, chaired the meeting.

2. Tourism Development Officer Update

Tourism Development Officer gave an update via email before the meeting questions and comments on the update were discussed:

- Group liked the "Stop off in Dorchester" campaign and "Show off your Dorchester" campaign would like to see this continued and not just limited to this Summer
- Request from Officer for everyone to upload and notify Discover Dorchester about their events much sooner. They would like to know about Autumn half term events by the end of the summer holidays and Christmas events by the end of September at the latest. Visit Dorset echoed they would also like to know about events much further in advance.
- Visit Dorset will be launching their 2027 marketing plan in October and it will be linked to the Visit England Marketing Plan. The Discover Dorchester marketing plan then be formed to link to the Visit Dorset plan.
- Links are being made with North Dorset Tourism Partnership around Hardy 2028 as well so that it all ties in together.

ACTION: Everyone to upload and notify Discover Dorchester about their events much sooner. They would like to know about Autumn half term events by the end of the summer holidays and Christmas events by the end of September at the latest. Visit Dorset echoed they would also like to know about events much further in advance.

3. Mailchimp Review and Discussion

The group reviewed the report on how much Mailchimp is currently costing the partnership, as well as the open and click rates. The following comments were made:

- Suggestions to switch from "Mailerlite" or "Bravo"

- Do a light version of the enews everything month with just events in, and a quarterly more detailed Enews.
- Have guest articles for the enews.

ACTION: Tourism Officer to send out format and length of articles needed for Enews to members.

4. Discussion Request for funding – Ooserfest, Dorchester Folk Festival

Katy Jones presented on the plans for a new folk festival for Dorchester. The request funding of £750 towards festival organisation costs and acts was approved. They are also looking for other sponsors for the festival.

5. Collaborative content – how can we work collaboratively to increase our social media impact

Breakout session for attendees to look at how they could work together on collaborative social media content

6. Dorset Destination Management Plan - what is it and what does it mean for Dorchester

Jessica Matthews from Visit Dorset gave a presentation on the new LVEP (Local Visitor Economy Partnership) Dorset Destination Management Plan. The presentation and a copy of the plan will be sent out with the meeting notes to members.

7. Partner updates

- The King's Arms – August was quiet for event bookings so held lots of “groove and grill” and other in-house events. Carrying out a lot of work to secure tour groups – big international dendrology tour next year. Terrace is being revamped for the Spring. Now selling own charcuterie and granola.
- Visit Dorset – Requested Halloween and Christmas events to be uploaded onto Visit Dorset ASAP. Autumn campaign is the Hidden Dorset campaign. Creating three year action plan to work alongside Dorset Destination Management Plan.
- Dorchester Town Council Markets – Going well. Climb of traders over the summer. Lots of coaches visiting.
- Dorset Museum & Art Gallery – Treasure Exhibition was good – had the highest June since Museum reopened. Dressed For Duty Exhibition opening soon and Mary Anning Exhibition in January
- Thomas Hardy Society – Conference was well attended with students staying at Kingston Maurward. Events linked to literary festival coming up.
- Dorchester Chamber – Business breakfast and lunches going well. Organising Christmas Cracker which is being held on 13th December.
- Duchy of Cornwall – Build progressing should be finished by 2029. Good to see lots of events on Great Field this Summer. Coming up in Poundbury there is the Crown Square Christmas Market and Art in Poundbury Jubilee Hall Exhibition.
- Dorset County Show – Show was successful. Wurzels were very popular. Spring Show and Dorset Show planning for 2027 now happening.
- Dorchester BID – Flags and hanging baskets coming down soon and Christmas trees will be going up. Had a fantastic summer with good footfall, Highest footfall day was A&E Event. Phil Gordon announced that he will be leaving at the end of December after 20 years in the role. Re-ballot will be happening in 2028.
- Roman Town House – Group visits happening. Path repair works happening. Good to see Thomas Hardy Society using seating for a play, this is what it is for. Steve Wallis has also been doing talks for Heritage Open Day and talks for the treasure exhibition.
- Civic Society – have been doing interviews by BBC about Dorchester heritage that have been popular. Are putting together their talks programme for 2027 at the moment. Will be contributing to the Roman Festival and Hardy 2028.
- Town Council – Busy summer of events organised by Town Council staff. Town Council is apposed to North Dorchester. Town Council have been consulting on 20MPH speed zone. New planters on South Street and new planting by the market happening soon too. Susie the cat sculpture being unveiled soon too.

- Talk about Trust/PIP – Really enjoyed summer events and seeing the Great Field being used. Kite festival day was biggest footfall day ever. During heatwave footfall much lower than usual. Running free Halloween craft events in Half term.
- Dorchester Arts – Hot weather meant that the events in Maumbury Rings were successful this year. Scripts the thing is back again in October for 2 days this year. Café is now closed permanently. Gallery is still open.

Note: Matilda looking at moving Tourist Information Point at Corn Exchange to somewhere else in central Dorchester (as physical tablet and leaflet stand were funded by Dorchester BID). Brewery Square and Market were both suggested.

- Tom Browns – Involved in Scripts the Thing and Ooserfest. Will be doing some refurbishments and new signage soon. New regular songwriters night and rescored film nights.
- Brewery Square – Footfall was lower in the summer as the fountains were broken. Focus on coming to Brewery Square by train. Lots of people doing this. Country in the Square event was successful. Christmas lights switch on happening on 28th November. Skating in the Square coming back, a day market and dog parade.
- National Trust – Hot weather was not great for National Trust visitor members across the country, not just in Dorset. When temperatures got over 25 degrees then visitor numbers drop off nationally. Took part in Heritage Open Days. Autumn Flower display happening in the last two weeks of October. Will be closing for the season on Sunday 1st November and opening again for Easter 2027.

8. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 12th January 2027 10:30 am – 12:30 pm in Brewery Square – exact venue in Brewery Square TBC