

Minutes of a Meeting of the **TOURISM COMMITTEE**  
held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY,**  
**8<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2017** at **10.00 a.m.**

Chairman: -

Councillor C Finch

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor M Bonfield

Swanage Town Council

Councillor G Green

Swanage Town Council

Councillor G Marsh

Swanage Town Council

Councillor T Morris

Swanage Town Council

Councillor W Trite

Swanage Town Council

Councillor M Whitwam

Swanage Town Council

Outside Representatives:-

Mr R Johnson

Swanage Pier Trust

Ms S Libicka

Swanage & District Chamber of Trade

Mr M Norris

Swanage Museum

Mr D Rawsthorn

Swanage Railway

Mr A Tuckey

Durlston Country Park

Also Present: -

Dr M Ayres

Town Clerk

Miss N Clark

Management Support Officer

Miss H Lagden

Tourism Manager, Purbeck District Council

Mr C Milmer

Visitor Services Manager & Business  
Development Officer

There was one member of the public present at the meeting.

**Public Participation Time**

There were no matters raised.

1) **Apologies**

An apology for her inability to attend the Meeting was received from Mrs K Delahay (Swanage & Purbeck Hospitality Association).

2) **Declarations Of Interest**

Members were invited to declare their interests and requests for Grants of Dispensations in accordance with paragraphs 9 - 13 of the Council's Code of Conduct and regulations made under chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011.

There were no declarations to record on this occasion.

3) **Matters arising from Minutes of the Tourism Committee Meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2016**

There were no matters raised.

4) **Matters arising from Minutes of the Beach Management Advisory Committee Meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2017**

There were no matters raised.

5) **Durlston Country Park ‘Parks for People Project’ - update**

Mr Ali Tuckey, Durlston Country Park Ranger, gave an update on the Park’s bid of £958,000 to the Heritage Lottery Fund, which had passed ‘Round 1’, and was now in ‘Round 2’. It was hoped that the outcome would be known in August 2017 and, if successful, the funds would be used towards the revitalisation, renovation, and improvement of the historic landscape at Durlston for the local community, and for heritage. It was hoped that works would commence in early 2018, and enhancements/improvements planned included:

- Improved access to provide greater opportunities, particularly for disabled visitors, young people, and under-represented groups.
- Improved pathways, viewpoints, and seating areas.
- Some woodland areas would become a ‘playable landscape’ for children.
- Promotion of exercise, healthy living, and wellbeing, through countryside activity, recreation and enjoyment.
- Working with local schools and universities to encourage project involvement and longer-term associations.
- To ‘link up’ with the other Heritage attractions, and integrate Durlston better with the town.

Committee Members thanked Mr Tuckey for his update, and were very much looking forward to hearing the outcome of the bid at a future meeting.

6) **Beach Gardens (BG) – report on plans for 2017 summer season**

The Visitor Services Manager (VSM) gave an update on events to date, and plans for BG for the summer season, which included:

- **Staffing** – the recruitment process was underway, and interest in the posts on offer was high. The successful applicants would undertake shift work/flexible hours, which would allow BG to open for longer during the season. BG staff would become part of the TIC Visitor Services Team.
- **Rebranding and refurbishment** – this would include the update of the kiosk, which would be renamed ‘Tea on the Green’, a new range of coffees, an enhanced range of snacks and ice creams, and new tables, chairs and umbrellas.
- **Advertising** – the new facilities would be advertised on Facebook and in the local press during March 2017, be included on a tourist map from April 2017, and in the Carnival Programme in July 2017.
- **‘Open Day’** – this would be held on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017, in conjunction with the Tennis Club Open Day which was being held at the same time. Free putting and a free coffee would be on offer to anyone attending who had a copy of the BG press advert.
- **Charity Putting League** – a new league was planned for local families, clubs, and businesses, and would run from 3<sup>rd</sup> June to 17<sup>th</sup> September 2017.
- **Putting prices for 2017** – these would be £3.00 for adults, and £1.50 for children.

Comments were made that BG provided the Town Council with a significant opportunity to bring in additional income, and it was hoped that the planned improvements would ensure that BG would be seen as a tourist ‘destination’ in the future.

7) **New leaflet to promote Swanage and the surrounding areas and attractions – Update**

It was reported that copies of the new leaflet were being delivered today, in time for the start of the summer season. A digital version of the leaflet was already in use by the Swanage and Wareham TICs, and on the Visit Dorset and Town Council websites, and could also be used by local businesses, and other TICs.

## 8) Visit Dorset Tourism Partnership – update

Further to Minute No. 6) of the Tourism Committee Meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2016, the Tourism Manager gave an update on the ‘relaunch of [www.VisitDorset.com](http://www.VisitDorset.com)’ event held at Athelhampton House on 1<sup>st</sup> February, which she had attended along with the Chairman and VSM. As well as the relaunch of the website, there had been a series of industry leading speakers taking part in an ‘on the sofa’ debate on the impact digital innovation and marketing could have on a tourism business in Dorset. The event was well attended and considered to be a very successful afternoon.

It was reported that ‘Phase 2’ of the relaunch would be a corporate site, and members of this service would be able to access tourism statistics, business mentoring/advice, business-to-business advertising, and training and networking events. Comments were made that this type of information would be particularly important to start-up businesses.

Committee Members agreed that the new look website was a superb tool to bring visitors into Dorset.

## 9) Tourism Reports

The Tourism Manager, gave updates on the following:

- **Coach Friendly Status (CFS)** – information on the criteria/assessment process for CFS was provided to Committee Members for information purposes. A discussion ensued, during which comments were made that facilities for coaches should be seen as an important part of the town’s tourism offering, particularly for overseas visitors, groups, and events, although it was felt that greater consideration needed to be given to what services should be made available. Reference was made to the increasing popularity of outdoor activities, the potential for Portland Port cruise ship excursions, and the fact that Poole Harbour may become a destination for smaller cruise ships in the future. It was therefore agreed that the Tourism Manager and VSM would explore this matter further and report back to a future Committee Meeting.
- **Visit England’s Year of Literary Heroes 2017 - 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Enid Blyton’s ‘Famous Five’** – it was reported that Enid Blyton was a regular visitor to Dorset’s Jurassic Coast, and the area inspired locations in many of the books, including Corfe Castle and Brownsea Island. The Famous Five books were being relaunched, and a journalist would be visiting the area to research the ‘Enid Blyton Trail’, details of which could be found on Visit Dorset. The Tourism Manager was looking for any information that linked Enid Blyton to Swanage. Comments were made that Miss Blyton used to visit the ‘Tilly Whim Inn’ public house, and also swim around Swanage Pier.

The Visitor Services Manager gave an overview of the VSM role and responsibilities, and details of plans for the next twelve months which included:

- **Tourist Information Centre** – the building works were on track to be completed by 27<sup>th</sup> March 2017. The TIC would be closed for three days while the TIC Team moved back in to the building. A ‘Business Open Day’ would be held at the end of April 2017, and a ‘Public Open Day’ would be held on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2017.
- **Boat Park** – refurbishment works would be undertaken, and it was hoped to reopen the Boat Park during April 2017.
- **Beach Huts** – an online availability calendar had been launched, online booking would follow imminently, and it was hoped that online payments would be introduced during 2017. An advertising campaign was also being developed.
- **Beach** – the Blue Flag and Seaside Award application had been submitted, and the outcome would be known in May 2017. ‘Mr Punch & Judy’ had been recruited for 2017, and the RNLI Lifeguards would return. New/improved

signage would be installed on the beach/along the seafront. One #2 Minute Beach Clean station board had been ordered and would arrive in May 2017.

- **Event Management** – the process had been ‘streamlined’.
- **Marketing Plan** – a new Plan had been established, and was now being implemented by the VSM.

## **10) Updates from Outside Representatives**

### **Swanage Pier**

The outcome of the Pier’s applications for grants from the Heritage Lottery and Coastal Communities Funds would be announced in March 2017. If successful, it was hoped that the preservation works would commence during 2018.

Details of the Pier’s new community radio station, ‘Purbeck Coast Radio’, was provided. The recruitment process for presenters was currently in progress, and the studio had been installed. The aim was to launch a full time service, streaming online, and eventually progressing to a FM frequency. The station would be predominantly run by volunteers from the local area, and would broadcast a blend of interesting chat, local news, stories and events, along with a varied selection of music.

### **Durlston Country Park**

It was reported that the Purbeck Literary Festival events had been well attended, and that the Park had had a very busy February Half Term. Over 100 events had already been planned at the Park for 2017, and new events included dementia friendly guided walks, and a fun run.

### **Swanage Museum and Heritage Centre**

The Museum & Heritage Centre would reopen on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2017. Discussions were ongoing regarding funding options for the proposed new combined TIC and Museum & Heritage Centre, advice was being taken from a funding consultant, and an application for Heritage Lottery Funding was nearing completion. It was hoped that, if the bid was successful, the new centre would become an educational ‘hub’, benefitting the local economy, local residents, and visitors alike.

Details were provided about work being undertaken on ‘The Trackways of Purbeck’, which linked dinosaur trackways and quarry trackways down to the Pier. Remnants of these trackways could be found around the town, and made the area unique. Further details would be given at a future meeting.

### **Swanage Railway**

An excellent winter was reported, with the best ever year for ‘Santa Specials’. The main season of events would begin on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2017, and details were given of the Railway’s ‘Strictly Bulleid’ Spring Steam Gala, from 31<sup>st</sup> March to 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2017, which would celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the final operation of steam hauled services on British Railways Southern Region.

It was reported that an announcement was imminent regarding the planned trial service to Wareham, for 60 days during the summer season. The contract was due to be signed, and details of the service would then be widely advertised via local press, on Facebook/Twitter, and the Railway’s website.

### **Swanage & District Chamber of Trade (COT)**

It was reported that discussions were ongoing with the Swanage & Purbeck Hospitality Association regarding ‘joining forces’, and some S&PHA members had already joined the COT.

## **11) Items of Information and Matters for Forthcoming Agendas**

a) **Proposals for a combined TIC and Museum & Heritage Centre – update** - there were no further updates to be given.

b) **Heritage Group** – representatives from the Railway, Pier, and Durlston Country Park would be meeting on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2017 to discuss plans for the future, and

to explore ways to better promote the attractions. A request was made to include this matter on a future Tourism Committee Meeting agenda.

- c) **Swanage Volunteer Bureau** – details were given of this new initiative, and there would be a ‘drop-in’ event held in Swanage Library on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2017 from 10.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m., where interested parties could find out more,

**12) Provisional Date of Next Meeting**

The provisional date of the next meeting had been scheduled for Wednesday 21st June 2017 at 10.00 a.m., to be confirmed at the Annual Council Meeting in May 2017.

The meeting closed at 11.40 a.m.

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