

Minutes of the Meeting of the **TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall on **Monday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2005** at **10.00 a.m.**

Chairman: -

Councillor A H Miller

Town Mayor

Present: -

Councillor Mrs C Bartlett

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C R Bright

Swanage Town Council

Councillor Mrs J Farrow

Swanage Town Council

Councillor M Pratt

Swanage Town Council

Councillor M Tyrer

Swanage Town Council

Mr A Leeson

Town Clerk

Miss A Stockley

Tourist Information Centre

Miss N Elston

Purbeck Tourism Officer

Mr N Brown

Swanage Railway Co. Ltd.

Mr G Willey

Licensed Victuallers Association

Mr C Ferguson

Independent Hoteliers Association

1) **Apologies**

Apologies for their inability to attend the meeting were received from Councillor Mrs Gainsborough, Mrs Scott and Mrs Fegan.

In Councillor Mrs Gainsborough's absence the Town Mayor took the Chair.

2) **Matters arising from Minutes for Meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2004**

There were no matters to report under this item.

3) **Tourism Report**

Miss Stockley reported on the following matters:-

a) **Holiday Guides**

Over 10,000 guides were sent out within a week of arrival at the Tourist Information Centre. A total of 15,000 have been sent out to date.

b) **Footfall**

Footfall figures are going to be slightly down on last year overall.

c) **Welcome Host**

The first Town Council in-house Welcome Host course will take place on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2005 and all tourism front line staff will be Welcome Host trained by the end of April 2005.

d) **RNLI Training**

Beach Wardens will receive a short training session with the RNLI beach lifeguards on spotting hazards on the beach and learn how to advise the public on beach safety.

e) **Beach Gardens**

The kiosk at Beach Gardens will take a more tourism related theme with walks leaflets and general information being available and the staff will be encouraged to promote local attractions.

Miss Elston reported on the following matters:-

a) **Wareham Tourist Information Centre**

Purbeck District Council was currently recruiting a supervisor for the TIC in Wareham.

b) **Grading workshop**

A grading workshop took place at the Springfield Hotel with a good turnout from Bed & Breakfasts, self-catering facilities and caravan & camping. There had been positive feedback. The number of applicants usually decreases in the first two years but usually picks up later.

c) **Heritage Centre & Museum**

The use of the rear of the Heritage Centre had been offered to the Swanage Museum in light of the failure of an application for funding from the Heritage Lottery.

This should enable greater access to funding and a greater footfall, with all working together for a common aim. It was noted that there would be a press release in the near future.

d) **Destination Management Organisation**

A report should be available in autumn from all district councils within Dorset as to how tourism is managed in the future. A questionnaire was issued to the trade within Dorset. Councils will be looking at a more effective partnership with South West Tourism.

Miss Elston clarified the meaning of Destination Management Organisation as the fusing together of organisations with the same aims. This would be aided by a Destination Management System, which is the software programme to enable this. It was noted that South West Tourism is purchasing its own software. Miss Elston will bring more information to the next meeting.

4) **Reports from Outside Organisations**

a) **Licensed Victuallers Association and Swanage & Purbeck Holiday Accommodation Association**

With reference to an article in the local Advertiser paper, Mr Willey expressed the Licensed Victuallers Association and the Swanage & Purbeck Holiday Accommodation Associations concerns over the proposed blanket ban of the consumption of alcohol in public places. The lack of consultation with the aforementioned groups was highlighted. Mr Willey stated that the powers of the Police were too widespread and would be a blow to tourism if taken literally.

The Chairman clarified the Town Council's position and the steps that had been taken to reach the present point. The fact that the Police will now

have the power to confiscate alcohol from people not on licensed premises as an alternative to arresting somebody was highlighted. Councillor Mrs Bartlett stated that the article in the press was misleading and that the Council supported a ban sensibly and discreetly enforced. The Chairman suggested that a Police representative attends the next Council meeting to answer any questions.

**ACTION: The Clerk should invite a Police representative to the next Council meeting.**

Mr Willey questioned the method of consulting that was used. It was noted that a statutory notice was placed in the Echo by the licensing authority, Purbeck District Council.

**b) Independent Hoteliers**

Mr Ferguson stated that the independent hoteliers had bookings similar to last year, with last year being quite a bad year. The number of brochures being sent out had decreased and the website had had no effect on bookings.

Mr Ferguson reported that the Fairfield Hotel at Studland had closed and stated that a BBC programme concerning Studland had been seen as damaging to the area.

Mr Ferguson further reported that the nudists at Studland beach were continuing to be a problem. The Chairman reported that he had been appointed as the independent Chairman of the Beach Users Group following a request from Inspector Downer and hoped that they would start to move forward.

Mr Ferguson raised the issue of the general appearance of areas within the Purbeck area especially regarding road signs. The Chairman requested that Mr Ferguson draws up a list for the Clerk to take forward to the next meeting to be held with Dorset County Council and he was also advised to telephone the Clarence number 0800 23 23 23 to report any problems.

Mr Ferguson asked whether there had been any progress with regards to prohibiting parking on Ferry Road. It was reported that the Fire Brigade had made representations towards the Bournemouth & Swanage Road Ferry Co. and it was anticipated that signs stating no overnight camping/parking will be erected once planning permission was granted. The need for the National Trust to take greater action was noted. Mr Ferguson's concerns at the ferry operator's lack of action were noted.

**c) Swanage Railway**

Mr Brown reported on developments at Swanage Railway. It was stated that the railway had shut down for five weeks and during this time a new signal box had been introduced at Corfe Castle, which should enable more trains to run. It was expected that at the end of the year the line will be connected at Furzebook and non-passenger trains with the occasional charter train will be allowed to run by 2006/07.

It was reported that to connect to the Wareham mainline would cost an estimated £4 million and there was a reluctance to give the funds to upgrade.

Councillor Bright reported on a meeting of the Purbeck Rail Partnership, which had illustrated how many parties were involved and he felt that

Swanage Railway was very professional. Councillor Mrs Bartlett stated that through questionnaires for the Town Partnership it was apparent that the reconnection of the railway to the mainline was important to the town.

5) **Any Other Matters**

a) **Beach Recharge**

The Clerk stated that the contractors had dug bore holes, needing to access the beach by making gaps in the groynes, which would be reinstated. Work will commence in October 2005, subject to the approval of funding from DEFRA.

b) **Seafront Proposals**

The Clerk reported with regards to the stabilisation that consultants had been commissioned to draw up designs for the seafront. It was highlighted that any proposal would go out to public consultation.

c) **Swanage Bay View Holiday Park**

The Clerk reported that the official opening of the £0.5 million refurbishment of the Holiday Park would be held on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2005, to which members of the Committee would be invited.

d) **Chamber of Trade**

The Clerk reported on a sign that the Chamber of Trade wanted to erect in Gilbert Road. The need to clarify if the advertisements were individual plaques or contained on one sign was noted, as this would have implications if a business closed. It was RESOLVED:

That the Tourism & Environmental Committee supports the erection of the sign on Gilbert Road.

The meeting closed at 12.00 p.m.

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