

Minutes of the Meeting of the **TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall on **Monday 7th April 2003** at **10.00 a.m.**

Chairman:-

Councillor Mrs C Gainsborough JP Swanage Town Council

Present:-

Councillor Mrs J Farrow	Swanage Town Council
Councillor Mrs H O' Donovan	Swanage Town Council
Councillor A H Miller	Swanage Town Council
Mr A Leeson	Town Clerk
Miss A Stockley	Tourist Information Centre
Mr N Pearce	Swanage Bay View Holiday Park
Mrs L Fegan	Swanage & Purbeck Holiday Accommodation Association (from 10.40)
Mr M Sturgess	Purbeck District Council (from 10.20)
Mr C Ferguson	Independent Hoteliers Association
Mr R Stimpson	Purbeck Tourism
Mr R Johnson	Swanage Pier Trust

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for their inability to attend the Meeting were received from Councillors Mrs Bartlett and Trite and Mr Trott.

2. **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD - 2nd DECEMBER 2002**

The Minutes of the Meeting held 2nd December 2002 were noted as agreed.

3. **MATTERS ARISING**

With reference to Minute 4, Councillor Mrs Gainsborough requested that a letter be sent to the Swanage Lights Committee to congratulate them on the festive lights and the switch-on. Miss Stockley updated the Committee on the fundraising activities for the lights appeal. Details were given of a fundraising event to be held on Easter Sunday at the Conservative Club and collection bottles, donated by Godlingston Manor Springs Ltd, distributed in schools and shops.

The Clerk informed the Committee that a replacement banner for the "Merry Christmas" sign had been ordered. The new "Welcome to Swanage" sign features an ammonite, as part of the Jurassic Coast theme. The next phase of lighting is to install lights along the sea front and the Swanage Hoteliers have already donated £7,500 and the Council have set aside £4,250 towards this.

The Chairman welcomed Mr Johnson, representing Swanage Pier Trust, to the meeting. Councillor Miller expressed his concern at the non-attendance of a

representative from Swanage Railway. It was felt that the Railway should be represented on the Committee in order to coordinate events that occur within Swanage and the outlying area.

Mr Stimpson informed the Committee that this would be his last Meeting as he was retiring from the Purbeck Tourism group and that Mr Williams would be the representative in future. The Chairman offered thanks on behalf of the Committee, to Mr Stimpson for all his past contributions.

4. **SWANAGE MARKET**

The Clerk updated the Committee on the weekly market due to commence in Swanage, at the Main Beach Car Park, with effect from 27th May 2003. Mrs Fegan's input was recognised by members of the Committee. Details were given of the management arrangements involving Ensors, the company appointed to run the market and the new Committee appointed by the Town Council. Details of the proposed advertising campaign were outlined.

The Clerk also stated that on market days, coaches would in future drop-off in Gilbert Road and then park at the North Beach Car Park instead of the Main Beach Car Park. The Chairman expressed concern over the volume of traffic expected to use De Moulham Road. After a brief explanation, it was noted that there should be no traffic management problems.

5. **TOURISM REPORT**

(a) **Swanage Tourist Information Centre**

Miss Stockley gave a report on the Tourist Information Centre. The Committee was informed that Saturday opening during the winter had been a great success and that it was the busiest day of the week. It was reported that, as part of the Blue Flag criteria, a Beach Awareness week would take place in the May half term, with various events and displays being organised.

Miss Stockley informed the Committee that a new town map was being produced, self-funded from advertising. The website for March 2003 had 6,664 hits showing that the internet is a very popular medium. A copy of an insert in the Tourist Handbook, distributed in 4 & 5 star hotels, was circulated. Miss Stockley also informed the Committee that an advertisement for Swanage Bay View Holiday Park had been placed in the 'Resort 2003' publication, with the editorial feature detailing the Town Council's services and facilities being written by her.

Councillor Miller stated that he and the Town Clerk had attended a "Days Out Fair" aimed at coach tour operators and organised by the Southern Tourist Board. With the exception of Monkey World, the Purbeck area was not represented. Mr Stimpson stated that in past years Purbeck Tourism had organised representatives to attend the Fair. It was suggested that a complete aisle be taken up by representatives from our area at future events. The importance of participating at such events was acknowledged by the Committee.

(b) **Swanage Bay View Holiday Park**

Mr Pearce, Holiday Park General Manager reported on the progress made regarding the refurbishment programme. A portfolio, showing photographs of the

completed work was presented. Mr Pearce also reported that caravan sales, bars and catering income were all well in excess of budget targets.

Details of the new advertising campaign were given, including confirmation that a front-page panel of the Swanage & District Advertiser series had been secured for each week of the summer season.

(c) **Purbeck District Council**

The Chairman welcomed Mr Sturgess, Community Planning & Design Manager who presented his report.

Staffing – Tourism Officer

1. Mr Sturgess informed the Committee on the options being considered for appointment of a Tourism Officer, following the resignation of the Tourism & Countryside Officer in January 2003. Details of funding were outlined following the loss of £12,760 in grant from the Countryside Agency. Mr Sturgess emphasised the value of tourism to the local economy as being £94 million per annum. The Committee welcomed proposals to create a dedicated Tourism Officer role but expressed concern at the recommendation that it be a 25 hr per week part-time post. A detailed debate ensued, concerning the importance of the role, now that the area had obtained World Heritage Status and ways in which the post could be partially self-funded. It was Proposed by Mr Stimpson, Seconded by Mrs Fegan and agreed unanimously:-

That the committee recommends that Purbeck District Council seek to employ a full-time experienced and qualified Tourism Officer.

Heritage Centre

2. Mr Sturgess reported that the Heritage Centre was due to open on Saturday 12 April 2003. A television featuring local videos and a new World Heritage site display were being introduced. The centre would also be selling local craft, on a commission only basis.

World Heritage Site

3. The role of the Centre in promoting the World Heritage Site was currently being considered. Mr Turnbull, Dorset County Council's lead officer was being consulted to ensure that any new role would be complementary.

6. **REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

(a) Mr Stimpson reported that Purbeck Tourism had written to the District Council registering its concern that no officer had been appointed to fill the Tourism Officer vacancy. The "Where to Eat Out Guide" would be published and distributed to local organisations in time for Easter 2003. The guide was self-funding this year, by virtue of omitting household postal deliveries, costing £2,500.

(b) Mr Ferguson representing the Independent Hoteliers, reported that bookings were sluggish although the numbers of bookings by individuals staying in the area, whilst looking to purchase second homes, had increased significantly. It was suggested that local estate agents be encouraged to promote local accommodation.

Mr Ferguson informed the meeting that World Heritage status had not yet had any noticeable effect on trade. He also congratulated the Council on the excellent

achievement in refurbishing the Vista Complex, as it reflects well upon the image of the town.

(c) Mr Johnson reported that the area around Swanage Pier had been significantly improved during the past 3-4 years. The prospects for its future were positive, in view of its role within the World Heritage Site.

(d) Mrs Fegan on behalf of the Swanage & Purbeck Holiday Accommodation Association reported that the recent school half-term holidays had been busy and that summer season bookings were good. Reports that a new guest house being opened in Park Road were welcomed. Weekend business throughout the year remained good. Mrs Fegan requested that Council use its influence to encourage establishments and facilities to remain open for visitors.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(a) **Tourist Board Membership**

A general discussion ensued regarding representation of Swanage and Purbeck following the merging of the Southern Tourist Board and Southeast Tourist Board. It was noted that Swanage Town Council would retain its membership within the new Southern and Southeast Tourist Board, whilst Purbeck District Council pledged to continue as members of Southwest Tourism.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was noted as Monday 30th June 2003 at 10.00am in the Town Hall.