EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL
Festival and Events Working Party

Notes of the virtual meeting held at 1400 on Thursday 27th February 2025 via zoom

Present

Cllr Joy Whipps (Chair)	JW	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Steve Gazzard	SG	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Nick Hookway	NH	Exmouth Town Council
Pip Piper	PP	Guest Speaker (OSBD)
Jess Magill	JM	Exmouth Town Council
Lisa Bowman	LB	Exmouth Town Council
Chetna Jones	CJ	Exmouth Town Council
Lisa Greenway	LG	Exmouth Town Council

Apologies:

Cllr Graham Deasy	GD	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Olly Davey	OD	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Cherry Nicholas	CN	Exmouth Town Council

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

JW welcomed attendees to the meeting.

2. To approve the notes from the meeting on the 16th of January & matters arising

JW proposed and SG seconded the accuracy of the notes from the meeting on the 16th of January 2025, all members agreed that the notes were a true record and there were no matters arising.

3. To consider a request from OSBD that ETC take on the Exmouth Film Festival

PP thanked members for taking the time to read the proposals prior to the meeting.

PP discussed the proposal of transferring the ownership of the Exmouth Film Festival to ETC as it is currently run under the umbrella of their media charity (OSBD), which is now closing. EFF is a volunteer-run Film Festival in Exmouth that has been successfully running for the past 2 years and breaking even each year, mainly through ticket sales and modest venue fees. The festival is proposed to come under the ETC's umbrella for continued structure and support.

ETC would provide a formal framework for the festival while allowing the 8-10 volunteers to remain actively involved in organising and executing the event. LB was comfortable with the proposal, noting the minimal financial risk involved, and suggested a council representative attend the organising committee meetings for transparency and to strengthen the connection.

It is anticipated that the overhead costs will be very little by using volunteers. Expenses are minimal, with most venues offering free or low-cost use. ETC may need to underwrite some initial costs, but the festival's track record suggests it will cover its expenses through ticket sales. Last year EFF received a grant from the East Devon Creative fund which was used to upgrade the website and purchase reuseable banners however, this fund has now been wound down so no more funding will be available.

NH made members aware that a new initiative was approved at an EDDC meeting of the Full Council called the Screen Devon Initiative which involves a number of district councils joining together to market Devon as a film location. EDDC is unable to provide further funding due to tight budgets, the Shared Prosperity Fund is now managed by DCC who is using the funds for their own schemes.

NH proposed, SG seconded, and the proposal to take on the Exmouth Film Festival was carried with unanimous support.

PP and volunteers are currently debating the possibility of alternating between a full festival and a smaller "film festival light" every alternate year, reducing financial strain while still maintaining the festival's presence and plans to seek sponsorships from local companies.

PP left the meeting.

4. To discuss the VE Day celebrations for the 8th of May 2025

CJ informed members that the Rotary Club plans to hold a "Night of the Proms" at the Pavilion on the 8th of May at 7:30 PM, which may overlap slightly with the beacon lighting, but both events will likely attract different crowds.

JM has been in touch with Exmouth Museum who are hosting an afternoon tea in conjunction with the Salvation Army, the date is still uncertain and will depend on volunteer availability, but it could take place either on the 8th of May or the following Saturday. The possibility of teaming up with the museum for the afternoon tea or picnic was considered, as well as the idea of having a pop-up memorabilia display in Manor Gardens, but this would depend on the museum's plans.

Members discussed hosting an afternoon picnic in Manor Gardens from between 3pm and 6pm followed by a simple commemorative service at 6pm in the Strand and the church bells ringing at 6.30pm. The afternoon event would be a family-friendly option, with the opportunity to attend other events later, such as the proclamation and beacon lighting at the Imperial Recreation Ground from 9pm (beacon being lit at 9.30pm).

For entertainment in the Manor Gardens, the Liberty Sisters are being considered to perform two short sets with the PA system set up to play suitable background music between performances. The idea of walkabout entertainers, such as people in WWII outfits, was explored but rejected due to cost concerns and a preference for a more respectful celebration of peace.

JM is approaching a local community artist to provide simple craft activities for all ages. Seating for the event was another topic of discussion and members agreed that providing tables and chairs, particularly for elderly attendees, was important. There's a suggestion to provide benches and trestle tables with tablecloths to create a street party atmosphere and taking weather into consideration umbrellas or cover may be necessary. JM will investigate this further.

While food will not be provided the resident café in the Manor Gardens could be asked if they would like to offer takeaway cream teas for pre-order. There had been consideration of a mobile fish and chip van but concerns about potential complaints from local traders led to the decision to avoid this option although people could be signposted to local fish and chip shops. Attendees will be encouraged to bring their own food.

Details will be finalised with the Royal British Legion (RBL) for the commemoration service before posters are designed for the event. CJ has reached out to Holy Trinity church to ask if they can provide a small choir to sing "I vow to thee my country" at the beacon lighting.

5. To discuss the Summer Festival 2025

The East Devon events team has given permission to use the area behind Queen's Drive Space as a third stage, contingent on receiving Arts Council funding in April. If funding is granted, the space will be used for a youth stage, if funding isn't received, alternative venues like the First and Last (local venue) will be considered for local bands.

JM has been working with Music Devon Initiative that run the Battle of the Bands competition which is an initiative that helps young musicians get a platform to launch their careers, JM recently judged the final and hopes to support young musicians during the festival.

Last year's bar operator in the Manor Gardens received criticism regarding high prices, and this led to a discussion on whether to approach others. The event industry's uncertainty, especially about profitability, has deterred other potential operators however, LB suggested sending out enquiries again to ensure transparency and avoid the perception of selective tendering.

The stage for Queen's Drive has been replaced, and the inflatable roof stage from the Winter Festival will be used instead.

JM will provide more updates in due course.

6. To discuss Dinosaur Day for the 19th of April 2025

The Dinosaur Day will take place on the 19th of April 2025 on Bath Road for which a road closure application has been submitted to DCC Highways for street traders even though the road is permanently closed to traffic.

Activities for the event will include fossil-related stalls, geology and fossil workshops, dinosaur walkabouts, craft activities, and the relaunch of the dinosaur trail. JW suggested putting small posters on Stagecoach buses to promote Dinosaur Day. This could also be used for other events. There was an idea to explore reciprocal promotions with Stagecoach, similar to past years when they sponsored the festival.

NH suggested including the Dinosaur Day and VE Day events on the festival app however it was noted that this would be very time consuming but push notifications could be sent to inform users who have the app installed about the events.

7. Any other business

No other business

8. Date of next meeting 20th of March 2025

LB is unable to attend this meeting

The meeting ended at 14:48