EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL
Festival and Events Working Party

Notes of the virtual meeting held at 1400 on Thursday 18th June 2026 via zoom

Present

Cllr Steve Gazzard	SG	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Nick Hookway	NH	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Alex Sadiq	AS	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Olly Davey	OD	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Aurora Bailey	AB	Exmouth Town Council
Joy Whipps	JW	Festival Volunteer
Lisa Bowman	LB	Exmouth Town Council
Mark Devin	MD	Exmouth town Council
Chetna Jones	CJ	Exmouth Town Council
Jess Magill	JM	Exmouth Town Council
Lisa Greenway	LG	Exmouth Town Council

Apologies: None

1. To elect a new chair

AS proposed and NH seconded that SG be re-elected as chair, no further nominations were received.

Members were asked to vote, and SG was duly recommended as chair.

2. Welcome, introductions and apologies

SG welcomed members to the meeting.

3. To approve the notes from meetings on the 23rd of April, 21st of May 2026 and matters arising

OD proposed and NH seconded the accuracy of the notes from the meeting on the 23rd of April and NH proposed and SG seconded the accuracy of the notes from the meeting on the 21st of May 2026, all members agreed that the notes were a true record.

Members did not raise any matters from these meetings.

4. Update on the summer festival

JM reported that sponsorship efforts since the previous meeting have been productive, securing the Imperial Hotel as the headline sponsor and bringing in additional smaller-scale sponsors such as World of Country Life and Shoebridge Funeral Services. World of Country Life may also contribute animals and vintage cars to the event, depending on staffing availability, and space has already been allocated for them in the Imperial Gardens should they participate. Shoebridge Funeral Services, a family-run firm on Exeter Road, is contributing a smaller sponsorship this year but is interested in expanding its support next year, and they are also volunteering a session with the festival's volunteer team. These contributions have strengthened the festival's budget and provided flexibility for last-minute expenses.

The National Trust has also booked a prominent stall and paid for a highly visible presence, which will be signposted throughout the festival. The overall budget remains in a strong position, although final security costs are still pending. JM noted that the security company has been responsive up until the point of formal confirmation, after which communication has slowed, likely due to their involvement with Pride taking place this weekend.

Programming for the festival continues to expand, with the Shanty Day on Sunday now confirmed by Derek from the Shanty Men and Maisie at the Beach Pub. Sunday is expected to be extremely busy, with three festival sites operating simultaneously alongside the Shanty Festival. Although it would be preferable for Saturday to carry more of the footfall, JM acknowledged that shanty events traditionally take place on Sundays.

JM updated members on her recent meeting with the Safety Advisory Group, which raised only minor questions and expressed satisfaction with the plans presented. Production company meetings have been running smoothly. Marketing activity is now highly visible, with estate agent boards installed, bus stop posters displayed, and online advertising underway. However, the festival's Facebook page was hacked earlier in the week, resulting in spam ads being posted. The social media manager is addressing the issue, reporting it, updating passwords, and adding additional security measures. The festival is also benefiting from EDDC funded marketing aimed at audiences outside East Devon, including targeted social media campaigns, print advertising across the South Hams, and a regional supplement covering Devon, Cornwall, Somerset, and South Wales. Surveys will later help determine whether this wider outreach has increased visitor numbers.

CJ reported on drinking water provision for Manor Gardens, an issue highlighted after last year's hot weather. Although South West Water initially expressed enthusiasm about providing their water bowser, they later withdrew due to water regulatory changes. A replacement 2,000-litre drinking water bowser has been sourced, expected to last until at least Sunday lunchtime, and South West Water has donated £1,500 to cover the cost, leaving surplus funds available.

CJ made members aware that an information evening for festival volunteers has been arranged for Thursday the 25th of June at 5.30pm, open to anyone interested in learning more about volunteer roles and potentially attracting new helpers.

SG queried toilet provision in Manor Gardens, JM confirmed that, as in previous years, a block of ten compost toilets will be installed in addition to the existing EDDC facilities. JM will follow up with EDDC regarding their cleaning schedule, although staffing shortages may limit their flexibility.

JM noted delays in producing the printed programme due to personal issues affecting the designer, but she expects to receive them hopefully within the next week. In the meantime, the website version should go live shortly, with around 113 programme items being uploaded in bulk. The previously planned festival app fell through when a partnership collapsed, so JM is instead focusing on making the website more functional, including a future feature that would allow users to download the site to their phones for offline use. With Exmouth's generally good connectivity, JM expects the website to serve as an effective real-time guide to what's happening across the festival.

Programming across the festival sites is shaping up strongly. Live music, choirs, and a large market will feature prominently, with Sound of the Sirens performing on Saturday evening. The Imperial Hotel Gardens site will offer a quieter, workshop-focused environment, including dance, theatre, craft sessions, literature and spoken word activities, and installations by the Fabularium, whose interactive pieces include a large boat that doubles as a puppet theatre. The National

Trust will bring VR headsets showcasing the A La Ronde shell room, and other nature-based organisations will run activities. JM hopes to display the large Exmouth letters, which have been in storage due to lack of a suitable location, but should fit well within the Imperial Gardens.

Water for performers will be available from the bowser, with communication planned to remind performers and crew to bring refillable bottles.

5. To approve dates for the winter festival 2026 and summer festival 2027

JM proposed the 28th of November 2026 as the date for the winter festival, all members agreed to the proposed date.

JM was keen to secure dates for the 2027 festival as it will mark its 30th anniversary, and some acts will need to be booked well in advance. JM proposed holding the event from the 9th to the 11th of July 2027, noting that this is the same weekend the festival has traditionally run. JM acknowledged that the 16th to the 18th of July was a possible alternative but expressed concern that this later weekend would coincide with end-of-term activities for schools, which could complicate attendance and logistics.

JW raised the question of whether the festival should be scheduled with local residents or holidaymakers in mind, pointing out that the earlier weekend would attract mainly locals because holidaymakers would not yet be in the area. JM responded that many schools do not break up until the end of July, meaning that waiting for the holiday period would push the festival into late July or August. It was emphasised that the festival is largely funded by local taxpayers and should therefore be aimed primarily at residents, with visitors considered an added benefit rather than the core audience. The current strategy is to attract people who might visit for a day or a weekend rather than relying on week-long holidaymakers.

Members expressed full support for this approach and agreed that the festival should remain locally focused. With this alignment, all members agreed that the 2027 Summer Festival will take place between the 9th and 11th of July 2027.

6. Any other business

JM reported that the Art Explorer mobile museum truck has confirmed interest in visiting and is now proposing the 10th and 11th of August, as the original July plan was too late for EDDC's six-week consultation requirement. Although JM will be away for parts of the lead-up, she has spoken with LB, who feels there is enough capacity to support the visit. JM is now checking date availability so an application can be submitted.

JM reminded members about the volunteer's meeting on the 25th of June at 5.30pm in the Town Hall Chamber, encouraging both new and experienced volunteers to attend so they can meet, connect, and share knowledge.

7. Date of next meeting 23rd of July 2026

The meeting ended at 14:29