

Accessible Swanage

Accessibility is an increasingly important aspect of tourism and social wellbeing. 13.9 million people in the UK have a disability, or just over 1 in 5. The Town Council is striving to meet the accessibility needs of visitors and residents alike and to date has undertaken the following actions or activities.

Current and previous activities

- Commenced a refurbishment programme of public conveniences. This has included accessible toilets at three sites across the town (one of these is new at Beach Gardens and includes a shower).
- The Visitor Services Manager attended a 'Heritage Ability' event in March 2018. This was a fantastic opportunity to better understand what accessibility means for different people, and to gain an appreciation of what the Town Council may wish to do to enhance the visitor experience.
- We currently hire out two wheelchairs for public use from the Swanage Information Centre – these are very popular.
- Shore Road beach huts are very accessible and allow a great many people to enjoy the beach hut experience. It is anticipated that new beach huts at the Spa will also have a high level of accessibility.
- All staff (except one peak season summer) in the Swanage Information Centre, Beach Gardens Kiosk, and Seafront Advisor, received very useful dementia awareness training.
- Purbeck District Council has produced a very good Accessible Purbeck Guide which is available on the Council's website, and paper copies are available through the Swanage Information Centre on request.

Future activities

- A beach access mat is being considered for Swanage Beach for 2019-20 which will allow users flat access to the water's edge (depending on tide conditions).
- Accessibility guides, are being created/worked on over the winter period by Visit England for the Swanage Information Centre, the beach and Beach Gardens.
- In March 2019 a 'Stroll and Roll' is being organised by Steve Darrington for the Visitor Services Manager (and others) to experience Swanage in a wheelchair.
- Enhancement of Beach Gardens as a 'dementia friendly' destination.

Culvin Milmer
Visitor Services Manager
November 2018

Tourism Reports – Visitor Services Manager & Business Development Officer

Swanage Visitor Services Team - 2018 update

The following is a list of actions/achievements that the Visitor Services Team have implemented in the last period (July 2018 to November 2018).

Swanage Information Centre

- Won SILVER at the Dorset Tourism Awards for ‘Visitor Service Information Service of the Year’.
- Continuing to receive excellent TripAdvisor reviews and fantastic Google reviews.
- Good range of quality photos taken during summer by professional photographer.
- Very successful retail sales – good products, however, we are running out of stock.

	Budget	Actuals (17 Nov 18)
Retail Expenditure	£9,000	£9,000
Retail Turnover	£15,000	£13,400

- The amount of traffic using Shore Road when it is closed has reduced, and vehicles are driving at slower speeds, and going one way only – although further work is required here.

Beach Gardens – Putting and Tennis

- 17% increase in turnover (or £4,000) compared to previous year.
- Received some great customer reviews on TripAdvisor, Google, and face to face.
- Tennis diary will be online after Christmas 2018.
- Table Tennis arrived in May – although its location within Beach Gardens will change for 2019.
- No major changes anticipated for 2019-20, other than CCTV and some new signage.

Beach Huts

- Beach Hut turnover for 2018-19 up by 13% on 2017-18, budget has been exceeded.
 - Promotion
 - Weather
 - Online
 - Change to day bookings
- Reviewed the ‘lottery’ approach to beach hut bookings for 2019 – new approach, adopted by the Town Council in September 2018, is essentially a ‘first-come-first-served’ approach, or ‘hotel room’ style booking.
- This went live in early October and was spread across three different booking periods (depending on number of weeks being booked).
- Deposit of 15% required for all bookings for 2019 – only 2 cancellations to date.
- Agreement to close first two rows on the Spa from 2019 approved by the Town Council.

	October	November	Total	
Received in bank				
Paypal	10,019	159	10,177	30%
Through TIC	20,933	2,639	23,571	70%
Total Received in bank	30,951	2,798	33,749	
Amount due by 31st January 2019				
Paypal	12,856	900	13,756	
Through TIC	24,269	1,286	25,555	
Total outstanding	37,125	2,187	39,311	
Total	68,076	4,984	73,060	
Amount received at 1st April 2018 for 2018-19			84,787	

Boat Park

- Achieved income budget.
- Number of issues around the parking bays and cars have been raised this year, and will be considered at the Boat Park Working Party Meeting next week.

Marketing

- Various adverts in the Gazette and Advertiser to promote beach huts and Beach Gardens.
- TIC's Facebook page has reached 1,935 likes and 1,982 followers.
- Christmas marketing leaflet designed and printed with support from Durlston Country Park, Swanage Railway, and the Chamber of Trade.

Other

- 'Artisans on the Beach' event has changed a little for 2018 and will be a Friday to Sunday event, with late night opening on Saturdays. It will run throughout December.
- First aid incidents – 16 incidents from May to September (7 inside TIC / 9 outside)
- 6 incidents of lost children – less than previous year, and could be due to the handing out of safety/identity wristbands to children – Dorset Police commented on this as very good practice and are looking to adopt it for other sites.

Culvin Milmer
 Visitor Services Manager
 November 2018



Update for Swanage Town Council Tourism Committee Meeting - 21st November 2018

- **2018 Passengers**

Just over 182,000 to end of October (about 5% down). Poor Spring weather, including 2 days lost due to snow and ice, followed by the Summer heatwave has not helped matters. Conversations with fellow attraction operators reveal this pattern has been experienced by most of them.

We no longer see significant upsurge in passengers during major Town events (for instance Carnival and Regatta). Our numbers are also adversely affected during some major out-of-town events (e.g. Tankfest and Bournemouth Air Festival). Also, more needs to be done to encourage visitors to make use of Norden car park then travel by train.

Our special events, both steam and diesel galas, have been well patronised as has our Wessex Belle dining trains. We plan to run more dining trains in 2019 as well as introduce a new mid-week luncheon train.

- **2018 Santa Specials**

On-line bookings opened in August but are now closed as almost all 44 trains are full. Very limited seating available, on just a few services, but can only be booked by 'phone.

- **South Western Railway services to Corfe Castle**

Salisbury - Yeovil - Weymouth - Corfe diesel services on Summer Saturdays was well patronised but, sadly, impacted by industrial action on a number of dates. We understand they may wish to repeat this service during Summer 2019 and we will be supporting it again with a discounted add-on fare offer.

- **2018 Group Travel Trade Shows**

Attended or represented at The Group Leisure & Travel Show at the NEC in October. Stands booked at next year's Excursions and The British Travel Trade Show. This is through membership of the Bournemouth & Poole Attractions Group (BPAG). BPAG is assisting with attracting the UK Inbound Conference 2020 to Bournemouth. If successful, this should bring several hundred foreign tour organisers to Dorset and, hopefully, provide tourism opportunities for Swanage. Attendance at other trade shows next year will be discussed at the BPAG January meeting.

- **2018 Dorset Tourism Awards**

We were awarded a Gold Award in the Large Attraction Category.

It was pleasing to see other local businesses being recognised such as a Silver Award to Swanage Information Centre.

- **2019 Rail Tours** (details subject to change/cancellation by tour operators) - two special

trains have been announced so far:

Thursday 4th April *THE CATHEDRALS EXPRESS* operated by Steam Dreams.
Chinnor, Princes Risborough, Bicester Village, Oxford Parkway, Goring & Streatley and Basingstoke to Bournemouth, Corfe Castle and Swanage

Thursday 12th September *THE SWANAGE BELLE* operated by the Railway Touring Company. London (Victoria), Staines, Woking and Basingstoke to Swanage.

- **2019 Sea Train Adventure**

This popular joint venture with City Cruises Poole returns for another season between 1st April and 31st October.

- **Project Wareham**

Refurbished diesel units about to undergo powered movements within Eastleigh depot to test newly installed systems as well as overhauled items. Another regular visit to Arlington Fleet Services is scheduled for 29th November. Hoped that units may arrive back in Swanage in early 2019 which is very much later than anticipated. Swanage Railway artisan (maintenance) and crew training can then be undertaken. Meanwhile, outstanding work ongoing for the necessary pre-requisite Mainline Passenger Licence and Mainline Safety Certificate from the Office of Road & Rail. Once all paperwork received, and staff training completed, it is still intended to operate the second year trial 4 times a day on 5 days a week to/from Wareham. However, this may be varied given SWR's desire to run a Summer Saturday service to/from Corfe next year.



Swanage Railway 3 car diesel unit outside Arlington Fleet Services' paint shop at Eastleigh
Taken on 25th October 2018 Copyright: Carl Watson

- **General Manager**

Matt Green left the Railway in September having chosen to move on in order to develop his career. His contribution as General Manager was much appreciated, particularly in

relation to the re-introduction of trial services to Wareham. Going forward an interim Director-led Management Structure was agreed by the Company Board with departmental Managers reporting to a Director who will, in turn, report to the full Board.

- **Durlston Bus Route 5**

If this is running next year, and into the future, we all need to promote it far more collectively than hitherto. As we know, the service is a great way to enable less mobile visitors (and locals) to get around town.

In discussion, Go South Coast have intimated it is possible to brand this bus - as it was some years ago. Any branding should be attraction/facility focussed rather than 'business' but **is this something we can look at collectively?**

- **2018/9 Timetable/Special Events:**

- 28th December – Winter Warm Up (mixed Steam and Diesel locos).
- 29th December - 6th January – Orange timetable.
- 16th to 24th February – Orange timetable during Half-Term School holidays.
- 2nd March – Start of weekend-only Orange timetable operations.
- 23rd March – Start of daily running for 2019.
- 29th to 31st March - Spring Steam Up Gala (using as many of the home fleet as available and, hopefully, some services extended to the River Frome).
- 9th May – Diesel Gala Preview Day (mixed Steam and Diesel locos).
- 10th to 12th May - Diesel Gala and Beer Festival 2019. Intensive diesel service.