

A MEETING OF THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP
FOR THE ELING EXPERIENCE CENTRE

MINUTES OF MEETING
Wednesday 12th March 2025 at 10.30 a.m.

PRESENT: Councillors S. A. Shepherd (Chair), L. S. Shelley and L. P. Francis.
The Town Clerk (T&ETC)
Eling Tide Mill Experience Manager
P.A. to the Senior Leadership Team

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

2. MINUTES APPROVAL, UPDATE AND ACTIONS

Minutes of the meeting dated 11th December 2024 were approved as a true record.

3. UPDATE ON TIDE MILL MACHINERY

- a) It was not known what aspects of the remedial work had been removed or reduced in order to bring the overall cost estimate down and it was hoped that this would be covered in the report at the next ETME Board Meeting.
- b) It was reported that the New Forest District Council had 2 new personnel who would be points of contact, including Sam Wills, the Service Manager for Buildings.
- c) It was reported that the NFDC had suggested HLF match funding as a source of long-term funding.
- d) It was reported that the tender was being worked on for the work to repair the wheel and get the mill operational for display purposes.

4. CAFÉ AND VISITOR CENTRE OPERATIONS

- a) It was reported that although the income figures were down against the summer period 2024, the café had taken £700 in one day, which was the highest ever.
- b) The ETME Manager stated that potentially increasing café staffing levels would need consideration in regard to there only being 1 person on duty between 2pm and 4pm. It was agreed that this should be closely monitored with a view to changing the shift pattern without increasing staffing costs. It was reported that during quieter times, staff were occupied with administrative tasks and laptop training.
- c) There had been a problem with the electrics as the new and additional appliances were overloading and tripping the circuit. An electrician had been out to investigate and a quote for a quick and easy solution, such as putting in additional sockets and upgrading the fuses, was awaited. The broken dishwasher had been fixed.
- d) The issue with the lift was still being investigated and it had been agreed that a temporary ramp at the side door would suffice for regulatory accessibility. It had been agreed that

expenditure on repairing the lift was inappropriate until any issues with tidal waters and electrics had been identified and resolved.

- e) It was reported that the local charity had not yet started their regular booking of the Visitors Centre.
- f) It was stated that period costume uniforms were to be provided for wear on event days only, and that these should take into account any Health & Safety requirements and be approved by the Town Clerk.
- g) It was reported that the Health & Safety inspection was due.
- h) It was stated that a meeting should be set up between Ian Bennet, Project Manager at NFDC, the Town Clerk regarding any potential monies available from ABP and any likely new developments on ABP site adjacent to Eling. In addition, a meeting was to be arranged for the Town Clerk to meet with Sam Wills, the Buildings Service Manager at NFDC.

5. ELING EXPERIENCE FINANCIAL BUDGETS

- a) It was reported that January figures showed that income levels were down, which was normal for the season.
- b) Ways of maximising profit from ingredients used in the café were being investigated and it was felt that additional publicising of take away options would be beneficial, especially with local businesses.

6. EVENTS, PROMOTION AND MARKETING OF ELING EXPERIENCE

- a) An event was to be held for International Women's Day.
- b) A knit and natter event had been attended by 12 people who had expressed an interest in it being a weekly event.
- c) The mother and toddler group event was currently on hold.
- d) A beach event would be held on Carnival day.
- e) Enquiries had been received from local groups.
- f) The Conservationists Group had a meeting arranged for 26th March 2025 which was to be hosted by NFDC.
- g) A crabbing event would be held in May at the end of the half term school holiday, and although no events would be held, crabbing would be available throughout the summer school holidays.
- h) National Mills weekend was scheduled for the weekend of 10th/11th May.
- i) A Spring Fair event had been suggested, with local people receiving discounted entry.
- j) An Easter Egg Hunt, using pictures of Easter Eggs would be organised using volunteers to do posters and place the pictures.
- k) The Mothers' Day event would be repeated from 2024 with children taking orders and serving their own mums, in line with Health and Safety Regulations.
- l) The ETME stall at the Artisan and Farmers Market had not made a lot of money and it was suggested that cheaper items be sourced for selling at this event.
- m) The Arts Festival event would be held in August with the ETME receiving commission on sales. In addition, they would be charged for the use of the room.
- n) Larger events for Halloween and Christmas were being considered.

7. TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

- a) It was stated that the Toll Bridge new opening times had commenced on 3rd March 2025 and that the toll keepers were happy with the new arrangements. It was confirmed that monitoring

the usage before the change had proved that there were only 5 or 6 cars after 5pm v 15-20 during the lunchtime.

- b) It was stated that bridge repairs, repairs to the quay walls, and new road markings would be coordinated as much as possible in order to minimise any bridge closure.
- c) NFDC had been made aware that no exemptions or discounts would be made for their vehicles using the bridge, but that in order to reduce their administration, an annual pass for NFDC vehicles would be made available for purchase.
- d) It was felt that it was too early to gauge whether the increase in the toll fee had reduced the number of vehicles using the bridge, especially as there had been incidents on the A326 which would skew any figures.
- e) It was reported that there were still some drivers going over the bridge without paying, and also some recurring offenders, all of whom would be followed up for payment.
- f) It was reported that the doorbell type cameras had had to be removed as there had been feedback from bridge users that this was an invasion of privacy. The tollkeepers had been issued with bodycams and they then could notify drivers before activating the camera.
- g) It was stated that the eel passage on the bridge had been installed without a camera. At a later stage, the eels would be filmed and this footage would be played on a loop in the visitors centre.

8. MATTERS FOR FORTHCOMING BOARD MEETING

It was noted that the agenda for the next Board Meeting to be held on 10th April 2025 had been issued.

The meeting closed at 11.30 am.