**Draft Events & Festivals Policy 2020 – 2025**

**Report on public consultation**

**Background:**

Weymouth Town Council has produced a new Events & Festivals Policy for the next five years, the draft of the Policy was circulated to all members prior to external consultation.

The consultation was publicly available and promoted via a press release and social media. In particular, the consultation focused on four key questions are set out in the report below.

The council also directly circulated the documentation to local and regional event organisers (who regularly stage events on council land), stakeholders, businesses, and to the Town Centre Management Group that comprises the Weymouth Bid, Chamber of Commerce, Dorset Council’s Economic Development officer, and Weymouth Area Development Trust.

In total, 11 responses were received including submissions from event organisers, members of public, harbour businesses, Weymouth BID, Activate Performing Arts, Dorset Council’s Economic Development Officer and its Arts Officer.

The consultation period was from the 21st August to 21st September 2020.

The tables below set out all the responses received and proposed the council’s response to the issues raised.

**Question 1.** The new Policy sets out the following vision for the council’s approach to events and festivals:

*That by 2025 Weymouth has developed a comprehensive programme of high quality sustainable Community inspired and Tourism based Events and Festivals that cultivates community creativity for maximum economic benefit and social enjoyment throughout the Town.*

Do you agree with this vision or would you like to suggest any changes or improvements?

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| **Comments on Question 1** | **Council response** |
| I agree with the vision statement, particularly the fact that it acknowledges that the events and festivals are not only for visitors but also local communities. | Agreed – no changes to Policy required. |
| The visions refers to "sustainable" events, and then goes on to refer to events that provide economic benefit and social enjoyment, plus community creativity. The vision therefore includes two of the pillars of sustainability, economic and social benefits, but omits the environment in some form e.g. environmental protection, enhancement within the constraints of environmental limits. To me and many others, this shouts loud and clear that you don't really mean sustainability, you're simply using it as an on-trend term. If you want sustainable events then the vision should encompass all three pillars, even if it's to refer to the constraints of the Green Guide in the vision. | Agreed – the Vision has been amended to state: ‘…*economic* ***and environmental*** *benefit…*’ |
| Its great to see the new Council generating this strategy and indeed planning/considering an arts strategy which will complement this. Overall I think the documents are comprehensive.   1. I think the vision covers what you need, but could be more dynamic.  Currently it feels too long as its trying to include everything.  Breaking it down into two sentences and trying to capture how different the town will feel by 2025 to inspire the reader – particularly if it is shared publicly.  Something along the lines of (although I am not a PR specialist):   *By 2025, Weymouth will have an inspiring programme of high quality, sustainable Events and Festivals that cultivate community creativity.   Community inspired and Tourism based, the events will help the economic and social development of the town and mark Weymouth out as a distinctive place to live work and visit.* | Support for the Policy is welcome although no changes are proposed to the Vision. |

**Question 2.** The Policy states that the council will want to support events and festivals with a particular focus on those that fit with the following four priority themes:

* Health & Wellbeing
* Community Events & Engagement
* Local Heritage & Culture
* Sustainability & Green events

Are these four priorities the right ones for the town council and for the town?  If not, what else should the council focus on?

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| **Comments on Questions 2** | **Council response** |
| As economic benefit is part of your vision statement should one of the priorities include some wording to reflect this ? Maybe under Local Heritage and Culture ?. ***ie This celebration of local distinctiveness can also attract visitors to the area, boosting both the daytime and night time economy*** | Agreed. The Policy now includes the statement that: ‘*It is also acknowledged that many events and festivals can raise the profile of Weymouth both nationally and internationally, and which deliver significant economic benefits for the town and surrounding area.*’ |
| While agreeing with the 4 you have included we feel there should be some sort of acknowledgement of the importance of events which bring a National or even International profile / promotion to the Town. We are thinking of events such as the sea Food Festival/ Triathlon and obviously our own Classic which not only bring enjoyment to  local people but also pull people in from across the Country and gain National media coverage all of which boosts the Town's economy | Agreed. The Policy now includes the statement that: ‘*It is also acknowledged that many events and festivals can raise the profile of Weymouth both nationally and internationally, and which deliver significant economic benefits for the town and surrounding area.*’ |
| Priority 4: Sustainability and Green: Weymouth Town Council has declared a climate emergency and we have committed to making the Council’s activities net zero carbon by 2030. In turn, we would like all events organisers to undertake an Environment Impact assessment and apply best practice sustainable measures to the way their events are planned and delivered."  "Like" - this is weak. You might as well say "please feel free to ignore".  "undertake an EIA" - these can be useful when prepared by a qualified and committed person. Otherwise they are a tick box exercise that will add no value. This will not drive any positive change.  "apply best practice sustainable measures" - again this will make no difference to any event that isn't already committed to best environmental practice. Again this will not drive any positive change.  In summary Priority 4 is just weasel words that mean next to nothing and with not improve environmental and sustainability outcomes. At the very least this section either needs to specify the sustainability/environmental areas that the Council wishes to see protected and improved, along with those that would not be acceptable i.e. those directly counter to climate change and plastic commitments, or it needs to point directly to where they are. But actually there is a more fundamental problem with this priority. It is written in a different way to the other 3 priorities, all of which refer to the types of events you will be encouraging. For consistency I would have expected to see that you are encouraging of events that focus on sustainability and environmental issues. Priority 4 should be re-written in my opinion, in the same way as Priority 1, 2 and 3, and the words currently being used should be significantly enhanced to show that you are serious, and should apply across all priorities and compliance is effectively an event holders license to hold the event.  Damage deposits:-is it time to include excessive litter in the damage deposit? Events can manage litter and waste much more effectively when they have an incentive to do so.  Aside from the way priority 4 has been presented, I think your priorities are very good. I am left with the question "what will you do if an event doesn't meet the requirements of this policy?". Will the TC permit an event that clearly does not sit comfortably with this policy or other commitments. just because it's popular, or because it bring in economic benefits? If the answer is yes, then this policy, and our time in looking at it, is wasted. The first test of that is likely to be fireworks which clearly fly in the face of climate emergency, plastic free, and litter commitments, and probably air quality ones too but I am not familiar with those. The word emergency has never meant "we'll slowly work towards". It usually means "we'll take immediate action and make tough decisions as an emergency response”. | Priority 4 has been amended to state that: ‘…*we would ~~like~~* ***ask*** *all events organisers to undertake an Environment Impact assessment…’* |
| I think the four priority themes are good.  With the third theme, I think it is important to ensure that Culture can be interpreted as both local and potentially international | Agreed. The Policy now includes the statement that: ‘*It is also acknowledged that many events and festivals can raise the profile of Weymouth both nationally and internationally, and which deliver significant economic benefits for the town and surrounding area.*’ |

**Question 3.** Is there anything further we can add to *The Green Guide* (Appendix 1) to encourage event organisers to reduce emissions, cut energy consumption and reduce waste?

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| **Comments on Question 3** | **Council response** |
| Could you add a request not to have balloon or sky lanterns at events please. | Weymouth Town Council now has a Balloons and Sky Lanterns’ Policy in place and the Event Terms and Conditions will be updated to include this eg: *The licensee/ lessee shall comply with the Balloon and Sky Lantern Release Policy 2020 made by Weymouth Town which prohibits the release of Balloons and Sky lanterns from land and assets under the ownership and management of the Town Council.* |
| This is great to add as an appendix to the policy to encourage organisers to start thinking about the environmental impact early in their planning stage. | Agreed. |
| Appendix 1 - "We would like each event organiser to detail these and to put in place strategies to minimise, and reduce these impacts; helping the Council to reach its net zero carbon emissions by 2030". Again "like" comes up. As I read this, they don't have to do it. If they did, you would use the word "must".  The specific areas of impact read much as "motherhood and apply pie", anybody who bothers to read it will have seen it before long ago. The important thing is the rigor to which the Council will hold event holders to account on these things, and that seems to be absent.  Two other small things however:  1. "Did you know: Canned drinking water has the lower possible environmental impact. Aluminium cans have the highest recycling rate of any drink on the market."  Only compared to other packaged water, the lowest impact by far is from tap water. That should be said in my view. And it only applies anyway if the cans are collected and recycled afterwards, other-wise it is not.  2. Use companies that area (typo) ISO14001 certified, that have an environmental certification or at least an environmental policy. (20 years ago maybe, it means next to nothing now). | No changes proposed. |
| I think the Green Guide is good and glad to see the climate emergency declared – there is a Culture Declares Emergency movement too <https://www.culturedeclares.org/> | The council will investigate this further to inform its work on climate change. |

**Question 4.** Please let us know if you have any other comments on the Policy and its appendices.

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| **Comments on Question 4** | **Council response** |
| I would however like to comment that as a club we have been visiting Weymouth on Drive-it day for a number of years, which is always around the end of April. Both yourself and the council have always made us extremely welcome at the Pavilion car park and you have always made the car park accessible to us from 10am - 4pm on that day, hopefully we contribute to the town in the way of 70-80 people dining in the town, as well as the ladies shopping in the town and for our part we enjoy displaying the cars in the car park. | Agreed. |
| Would just like to comments on this, with visitors likely to holiday in the UK in future, I feel many people are re discovering Weymouth, the variety out our town to offer events suitable for all will be an added bonus.  As you may recall like many events in 2020 our two planned events this year had to be cancelled.  We know more people are aware of the footfall created all year by local and visiting dog owners.  We hope to hold future events and thank you for the support given by the events team earlier this year.  We look forward to continuing to share your events on all forms of social media, and promote Weymouth as the place to visit to find exciting opportunities to join in or watch | Agreed. |
| Is it worth including something about how the Council can also assist with some infrastructure elements eg links to power supplies, gazeboes, staging, lost children service etc? You’ve mentioned licensing and marketing which will be hugely beneficial for some event organisers but a commitment to help with the examples above will also be a great help. | Information on council’s assets and equipment available for hire is set out in Annex 2 of the Policy. |
| The Dorset Seafood festival is somewhere between the three descriptions above. DSF has raised over £60K for the Fishermen’s Mission since it first happened in 2008. The event is run by a mixture of professionals and volunteers and is supported by a Ltd company. Should there not be a middle ground for charges between Commercial Events and Charity Events? | No changes will be made to the Fees and Charges Structure at Appendix 2 |
| I would like you to take into account my comments as a harbour user and business owner regarding the events and festivals. It is no exaggeration to say that we dread the various events and festivals that affect the South harbourside. The disruption to our business is immense and causes problems with regard to access and reduced retail sales. There are plenty of other places that could be utilised for the events and festivals. It would make more sense to use the peninsular which would not cause the disruption to the harbourside. The best local event was the trawler race which sadly no longer takes place. The other festivals are long past their sell by date and have the same stalls and nothing new and innovative.  I would be grateful if you would take into account my views when making any decisions with regard to the future events and festivals. | Although Weymouth Town Council are not the licensing authority for event road closure application that take place around the Weymouth Harbourside, we note the comments received and will raise these point with Dorset Council Highway Section and take into consideration for future joint working and planning of events in this area. |
| Firstly, many thanks for reaching out for public opinion on this matter. I am a resident of Weymouth harbour and operate a commercial charter vessel from the harbour. I also chair the harbour's largest un-incorporated association comprising residents and businesses in the harbour community. My comments therefore pertain primarily to the harbour area.  Weymouth Harbour, particularly on the south side, is a residential area. The harbour is also home to around 120 small business operators, of which over 80 operate from the water. Whilst the organised events bring some additional revenue to a number of business adjacent to the harbour, they also create an access barrier for the customers of certain retailers, and if not located with care, prevent access to the quays. This completely prevents or limits the operation of many of the water-borne businesses.  Events don't have to close the quays or roads adjacent to them. There are many spaces in the area that provide a scenic backdrop without preventing the loading access that is vital to many commercial vessel businesses. The Peninsula is a prime example. It has plenty of space, is situated between the footfall of the harbour and beach, and has a scenic sea-view. Likewise Nothe Fort, North Quay and Hope Square. All of these could be utilised without encumbering the working harbour, whilst also limiting noise and allowing access for residents.  It would also be worth considering dates outside the prime high-season dates. In high season the harbour is already full with visitors, and these are prime dates also for the other businesses. Events that attracted visitors outside of high season would have a much higher incremental impact for the local economy.  In summary, please give consideration to commercial harbour users and residents by not closing the roads and placing events with greater thought. Weymouth harbour is a residential area and a working harbour, not a theme park. | Although Weymouth Town Council are not the licensing authority for event road closure application that take place around the Weymouth Harbourside, we note the comments received and will raise these point with Dorset Council Highway Section and take into consideration for future joint working and planning of events in this area. |
| Whilst it is understandable that events want to use the backdrop of Weymouth Harbour, this is to request that within your policy you include the requirement for event organisers wishing to specifically use Weymouth Quayside and apply for highway closures along the quayside to explain why it is necessary to use and close the quayside and how they will mitigate any disruption to existing businesses working out of the harbour to enable these businesses to continue to work unhindered throughout the event.  Harbour users and residents need to maintain vehicle access to the quayside. Events basing themselves around the harbour invariably apply for road closures, increasingly in excess of 48hrs, often along the entirety of the quayside with zero access for any other business or resident and no regard for the impact that this has on existing harbour users, businesses and residents (whilst the temporary event stall holders continue to be afforded access for their deliveries).  There are plenty of open spaces around Weymouth Harbour that could be used for such events whilst maintaining the backdrop and connection to Weymouth Harbour such as Hope Square, the Stone Pier, Nothe Gardens, Nothe Fort, the Peninsular.  Quayside highway closures, event stalls backing onto the quayside and dancing platforms taking up the entire road prevent loading and unloading from the quayside, even by foot. Event stalls block the entrance to the pontoons and mask the businesses working from the quayside denying them the footfall trade they rely on from the harbourside – mackerel fishing, ferries, RIB rides.  Clearly events and festivals bring a vital economic boost to the town, however your policy needs to recognise and provide for the inclusion of a mitigation strategy that minimises disruption to the existing harbourside businesses and residents that contribute 365 days in the year to the economy and at the very least affords them the same access provided to temporary event stall holders and activities during such events.  **Scheduling:** Event organisers should be encouraged to use the shoulder months when the town needs to attract more visitors rather than every event being scheduled around the school and bank holidays.  The Quayfest events which take place every day of every bank holiday for 12 hours a day have removed any chance of anyone residing in or visiting Weymouth Harbour from enjoying a relaxed few hours during a Bank holiday nowadays. Last year I was walking across the Weymouth Town Bridge on Sunday morning enjoying the sunshine and ambience and at 11am the PA starts up with the party music blasting out. My heart sank. My request is that you consider that not everyone wants to listen to party music for the entirety of each and every bank holiday and perhaps the event starting later in the day may allow other people to enjoy at least part of the holiday in an alternative more sedate manner. | Although Weymouth Town Council are not the licensing authority for event road closure application that take place around the Weymouth Harbourside, we note the comments received and will raise these point with Dorset Council Highway Section and take into consideration for future joint working and planning of events in this area. |