

## Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee

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<b>Date:</b>	<b>1 February 2022</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>TCWG: Market Town Co-Ordinator Update</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Becky Reid, Market Town Co-ordinator</b>

### Purpose of Report

1. To provide an overview of the current focus of work and action taken since 21 December 2021.

### Update

#### 2. Town Centre vibrancy & vitality: Town Centre Working Group (TCWG)

- 2.1. Last met 14<sup>th</sup> January 2022. Confirmed focus for the following months.

#### 3. Partnership work with 21stCT

- 3.1. Thame Art Crawl: Team met on 18<sup>th</sup> January to review last year, allocate roles and start planning 2022. Will also be some presence at Oxfordshire Art Weeks.
- 3.2. Taste of Thame: Team of 6 volunteers recruited and met on 17<sup>th</sup> January to review plan, allocate roles and start to implement. There is 18 weeks until this event takes place so there is a lot to achieve. Many businesses are already on board, but just need to be recontacted so this is the main focus for the MTCO for the next month.
- 3.3. Volunteering Opportunities coffee mornings continue to run. A plan of which groups to invite to various dates over the year ahead has been made now. This will be progressed.
- 3.4. Shopping Guides were updated and installed over Christmas and New Year.

#### 4. Other MTCO work

- 4.1. Christmas feedback has been gathered through a survey and will be fed back to relevant committee.
- 4.2. New Town Map has been installed.
- 4.3. Town Guide has been delivered with positive feedback so far. Unfortunately, a mistake was made with the wrong street index being included so the web version will be updated to provide this information, along with an A4 handout for anyone that wants to collect it.
- 4.4. Thame Inner Circuit and Thame Outer Circuit Roundels still to be ordered.
- 4.5. Statistics:
  - Monthly Business Newsletter: 271 subscribers, down from 272
  - Weekly Town Council Newsletter: 1105 subscribers, up from 1103 subscribers
  - Town Council Facebook page: 1432 followers up from 1419 at last report.
  - Christmas in Thame page: 1761 followers up from 1754.
- 4.6. Several elements of the Market Town Coordinators role have been put on hold until after the Town Council strategy is created. These are elements that are not yet started, and that may not be worth pursuing once this is place.

#### 5. Visitor Economy Working Group (VEWG)

- 5.1. Meeting of this working group due to take place 3 Feb 2022. This will include a plan for the year, decision on renewing memberships of destinations and discussion about who else to invite to the group.

## 6. Public Arts

- 6.1. A Public Art Working Group meeting took place on 19<sup>th</sup> January combined with a Town Centre Working Group special meeting to progress to implementation stage of the first Public Arts Project developed from the Public Art Strategy.

### History of this project to date

- 6.2. This Public Art Strategy was approved at NPCC on 25 September 2018, allowing the Town Centre Working Group to be able to start to progress projects proposed, within available funds to completion, in line with the Strategy.
- 6.3. The first project started with a long negotiation with SODC Arts Team and Section 106 Team that eventually led to the draw-down of Section 106 funds to cover the costs of commissioning a Wayfinding report as reported at NPCC on 13 August 2019. This report was considered important to ensure that the artwork eventually created was sited on key routes through the town.
- 6.4. The result of this Wayfinding report was presented to NPCC on 6 October 2020.
- 6.5. Following this, the process of creating an Artist Brief called 'Art Leading Wayfinding' was started, and was finalised by the Town Centre Working Group (as per the Public Art Strategy). This brief stated:

*Thame has a rich heritage with permanent settlement being documented for over 5000 years. Different areas of the town have grown up during different periods. A theme of 'Meeting Places' has been identified for this project as much of the development of the town has been as a result of people meeting for a specific purpose.*

*We want to create several pieces of high-quality artwork, which celebrates the heritage and history of the town using this theme, at the same time as improving communication routes through the town, and specifically connecting outlying estates into Thame.*

It also stated the requirement for an artist that

*brings the community together and creates special and bespoke features for the public realm.*

The brief included that

*The themes are a proposal, and The Public Art Working Group is open to alternative suggestions from the successful artist/s, provided anything proposed meets the aims and ambitions of the project*

- 6.6. A funding pot of £82,250 was agreed from Section 106 funding, and advertisements for an artist to lead on the project went out during April and May 2021. The result was the recruitment of Nicola Henshaw in June.

### Delivery of the Art Leading Wayfinding Project to date



- 6.7. The 'Art leading Wayfinding' project was launched in September 2021 with a series of Community engagement workshops. During her research into Thame, the content of the brief and the history and heritage of the town, Nicola decided to run these initial workshops as Story

making workshops, that would help to engage the community of Thame in stories that would bring the history to life.

- 6.8. Through these workshops it became clear that rather than trying to create a story that covered the whole of the town it would work better to focus the story on one route: the route from Thame Meadows into the town centre. The decision was taken to start with this trail, and then explore the development of two further trails. These are a fact trail that cover Lea Park (and will be included within the scope of this project as a Phase 2 activity), and a poetry trail that will connect Wenman Road estates to the town centre that will be implemented.
- 6.9. The outcome of the workshops was the creation of a magical tale that engages children (encouraging them to walk to discover the totems), as well as connects to elements of Thame's history and leads ultimately to Thame Museum. At present this is only available to be listened to on request to the MTCO but after this NPCC meeting will be published on our website. We are currently developing a name for the project as a competition for children from St Josephs' School (future trails will engage Barley Hill and John Hampden).
- 6.10. Following the creation of the story Nicola Henshaw designed 5 'totems' that capture the story and pull-out significant elements from this story that relate to the history of Thame. Each of these totems will also include a QR code that links to pages on a website where people can both listen to that section of the story and find out more about the history of Thame relating to these elements. The hope is that these will be hosted by Thame Museum, but if not will be hosted on Thame Town Council's own webpage.
- 6.11. Between each Totem there will be additional signage that connects to the trail but also provides wayfinding including numbers of minutes it takes to walk anywhere.
- 6.12. As stated above these designs, (see Appendix A), were presented to and agreed by the Public Art Working group and the Town Centre Working Group. One design (Totem 2) had been updated to incorporate a change requested through this process to ensure they are historically correct – this is currently with the Public Art Working Group for final approval.
- 6.13. We are now at the stage of finalising the locations of these totems and additional signage. A meeting had taken place with OCC, who have requested a report with full details, but see no real issue with the proposed locations. We also need NPCC and Full Council permission in order to proceed. The locations proposed are as follows:
  - Totem 1: Play area within Thame Meadows
  - Totem 2: Beside footpath leading from Thame Meadows to the Oxford Road. Close to the Oxford Road
  - Totem 3: Alongside Spring Path next to the bridge over Cuttlebrook.
  - Totem 4: Outside the Railing on Southern Road, close to the roundabout with Moreton Lane/Dorchester Place
  - Totem 5: Outside the Town Hall. Front right as you look at it. This location will become the meeting point of all of the trails. However future trails will not lead to the creation of significant sculptures in the same way this one does. Any future proposals will have to complement and fit in with the work already installed.



- 6.14.** The story concludes with reference to a pot you can find at Thame Museum – and this pot will be created as part of the implementation plan to be hosted there (subject to their approval) to be used as an interactive part of the trail e.g. to draw competition prize winners out of, or as a place for people to place feedback forms etc.
- 6.15.** As part of the implementation, we would also like to adopt the Phone box outside of the Town Hall to be used as a location from which people can also listen to the story, as well as a location where people can find out more about what is going on in the town. We hope to use QR codes here as well to link to locations such as The Players Theatre and Thame Museum.



## 7. Thame Markets

- 7.1.** Thame Farmers Market branding has been approved and has now changed to Thame Local Produce Market. Publicity for this is being created.
- 7.2.** Bookings for specialty markets around the Town Hall are confirmed for next year.
- 7.3.** Discussions to be held with the appropriate organisations about whether a monthly, evening Street Food Market would be possible around the Town Hall following the success of the Christmas one.

### Action Required:

- To approve the proposed locations of the Public Art so these can be taken to Full Council for final approval.
- To approve scoping the adoption of the phone box for use as an information centre and storytelling booth, subject to ongoing costs not being prohibitive.