



Joint Archives Board

Date: Wednesday, 1 July 2026
Time: 2.00 pm
Venue: A link to the meeting can be found on the front page of the agenda.

Members (Quorum: 2)

Richard Biggs, Laura Beddow, Lesley Dedman, Scott Florek, Marion Le Poidevin, and Andy Martin

Chief Executive: Catherine Howe, County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1XJ

For more information about this agenda please contact Democratic & Governance Services Meeting Contact 01305 224926 - Louis.wicks@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting, apart from any items listed in the exempt part of this agenda. If you would like to attend this meeting and have any specific requirements please contact the Democratic Services Officer named above.

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Agenda

Item	Pages
1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR	
To appoint a Chair for the Joint Archives Board – In accordance with the procedure rules set out in Article 11 Other Arrangements.pdf of the Dorset Council Constitution, Cllr Andy Martin will be appointed as Chair of the Joint Archives Board until May 2028.	
2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR	
To appoint a Vice-Chair of the Joint Archives Board.	
3. APOLOGIES	
To receive any apologies for absence.	
4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	

To disclose any pecuniary, other registrable or non-registrable interest as set out in the adopted Code of Conduct. In making their disclosure councillors are asked to state the agenda item, the nature of the interest and any action they propose to take as part of their declaration.

If required, further advice should be sought from the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.

5. MINUTES

5 - 8

To confirm the minutes of the last meeting.

6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Representatives of town or parish councils and members of the public who live, work, or represent an organisation within the Dorset Council area are welcome to submit either 1 question or 1 statement for each meeting. You are welcome to attend the meeting in person or via MS Teams to read out your question and to receive the response. If you submit a statement for the committee this will be circulated to all members of the committee in advance of the meeting as a supplement to the agenda and appended to the minutes for the formal record but will not be read out at the meeting. **The first 8 questions and the first 8 statements received from members of the public or organisations for each meeting will be accepted on a first come first served basis in accordance with the deadline set out below.**

Further information read [Public Participation - Dorset Council](#)

All submissions must be emailed in full to louis.wicks@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk by 8.30am on Friday the 26th June 2026.

When submitting your question or statement please note that:

- You can submit 1 question or 1 statement.
- A question may include a short pre-amble to set the context.
- It must be a single question and any sub-divided questions will not be permitted.
- Each question will consist of no more than 450 words, and you will be given up to 3 minutes to present your question.
- When submitting a question please indicate who the question is for (e.g., the name of the committee or Portfolio Holder)
- Include your name, address, and contact details. Only your name will be published but we may need your other details to contact you about your question or statement in advance of the meeting.
- Questions and statements received in line with the council's rules for public participation will be published as a supplement to the agenda.
- All questions, statements and responses will be published in full within the minutes of the meeting.

7. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

To receive questions submitted by councillors.

Councillors can submit up to two valid questions at each meeting and sub divided questions count towards this total. Questions and statements received will be published as a supplement to the agenda and all questions, statements and responses will be published in full within the minutes of the meeting.

The submissions must be emailed in full to louis.wicks@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk by 08:30am on Friday 26th of June 2026.

[Constitution - Dorset Council](#) – Procedure Rule 13.

8. CAPITAL PROJECT AND UPDATE REPORT

9 - 16

To receive a report from the Service Manager for Archives and Records.

9. URGENT ITEMS

To consider any items of business which the Chairman has had prior notification and considers to be urgent pursuant to section 100B (4) b) of the Local Government Act 1972. The reason for the urgency shall be recorded in the minutes.

10. EXEMPT BUSINESS

There are no exempt items scheduled for this meeting.

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JOINT ARCHIVES BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2026

Present: Cllrs Laura Beddow, Lesley Dedman, Scott Florek, Ryan Hope, Marion Le Poidevin and Andy Martin

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Sam Johnston (Service Manager for Archives and Records), Joshua Kennedy (Democratic Services Officer), Louis Wicks (Democratic Services Officer Apprentice), Jonathan Mair (Director of Legal and Democratic and Monitoring Officer), Hannah Brown (Service Manager for Finance) and Matti Raudsepp (Director of Customer and Business Delivery, BCP)

Also present: Christine Fowler (Dorset Archives Trust, Chair)

71. Apologies

There were no apologies.

72. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

73. Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting held on the 5th of November 2025 were confirmed and signed.

74. Public Participation

There were no questions from the public.

75. Questions from Councillors

There were no questions from councillors.

76. Budget 2026/27 and Service Development Plan Update Report

The Service manager for Archives and Records presented the report.

The recommended budget still stood which was presented in the November meeting. The report was to update the committee on the recent activities of the archives service. The new agreement with Ancestry would increase income with additional funding provided from a small saving from an employee reducing their hours.

There had been significant attrition to the repairs and maintenance budget. The reserve was £55,000 but was likely to be reduced to no more than £22,000 due to costs involving maintenance of the building. The £50k reserve had been allocated as match funding towards the Lottery application should it be successful. The service would now need to source that funding from elsewhere. The new agreement with Ancestry would save about £10,000 for each council through the provision of free access in both Dorset and BCP libraries once the project is completed. This would last for ten years.

The application to the National Lottery Heritage fund was submitted for the 12th of Nov deadline and the result of the application should be known in roughly four weeks from this meeting. There was set to be a development phase and a delivery phase. The delivery phase would include the new building. The total cost of the project being £4.7m. If the project was approved it would be a five year undertaking. If it was rejected, then they would need to consider the feedback from NLHF and look to see if it would be worth going back for another application. There would be a new service development plan brought to the next meeting.

It was explained that obtaining the Ancestry contract had been a lengthy process with a 70% positive response from consultees. There was a space identified within DHC where people could do the work to digitise the archives, which would result in additional clicks and income for the service. The Hardy project had been fully completed, and the 11 notebooks had been digitised and are available via the catalogue which was ready to be promoted to the public.

The Dorset Archives Trust were set to start a fundraiser to raise the £48,000 to catalogue the collection of Sylvia Townsend Warner and would be seeking to raise funds through trusts and foundations. There was work being undertaken in Bournemouth with the Jewish congregation, and there was a meeting with members of the congregation a week prior to the panel meeting. There was evidence of success from similar projects in areas such as Sheffield and the congregation seemed engaged with the collection of these archives. The Wessex Water archives was going to be made accessible through an ongoing externally funded project. There are 700 boxes of material and over 1000 maps being worked through which included all the predecessor bodies.

There was a two-week closure which happened before Christmas to allow focus on boxes being archived. There were some lessons learned as to how things can be done more efficiently but staff had still been very effective.

In response to questions the Service Manager explained:

- That the Joint Archives Service was feeling their way along to see what happens in regard to the archives of the Jewish Congregation. They were putting some tests together to show what the communities were hoping to achieve and that this would encourage people to come forward, however timing was not precise. When it was ready to be presented, they would be happy to work with other contacts.

The recommendations below were proposed by Cllr Scott Florek and Seconded by Cllr Andy Martin.

1. That the Joint Archives Board confirms the 2026/27 budget recommendation to the two funding councils from the 5 November meeting of the Joint Archives Board.
2. That the Joint Archives Board notes the service updates within the body of the report and the progress made with particular projects and workstreams.

The recommendations were approved by the committee.

77. Urgent Items

There were no urgent items.

78. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 2.00 - 2.21 pm

Chairman

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Joint Archives Board

1 July 2026

Joint Archives Service – Capital Project and Service Update Report For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member:

Cllr R Biggs, Regeneration, Economic Growth & Strategic Assets
Cllr Andy Martin, Customer, Communications and Culture, BCP Council

Local Councillor(s): All

Senior Leadership Team:

J Mair - Director, Assurance and Governance

Report author and job title: Sam Johnston, Service Manager for Archives and Records

Email: sam.johnston@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Local Government Acts 1962 & 1972; Public Records Act 1958; Freedom of Information Act 2000; Environmental Information Regulations 2004; Data Protection Act (GDPR) 2018.

Report status: Public

Executive summary: This report provides an update to the Joint Archives Board (JAB) on the work of the Joint Archives Service in the five months since the Board last met on 4 February. The key issue to report to the JAB is the positive result of the service's application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This decision means that work has now commenced on a major project *Past Lives, Future Proofed* which it is expected will result in major capital investment in the Dorset History Centre and a significant programme of public engagement lasting into 2031.

Recommendation(s): It is recommended that the Joint Archives Board:

Notes the detail of this report and the implications resulting from the *Past Lives, Future Proofed* project for the Joint Archives Service and its staff and customers over a prolonged period of time.

Reason for Recommendations: Effective oversight of Joint Archives Service budget via the Joint Archives Board is required under the terms of the *Inter-Authority Agreement on Archives, 2022*. The recommendations will be placed before the executives of both funding councils.

1. Capital Project *Past Lives, Future Proofed*

- 1.1 The service's application *Past Lives, Future Proofed* to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) was submitted in November 2025 with a four-month assessment period. The London and South of England committee met on 5 March and a decision was taken to support the project's Development Phase with a grant of £603,000. This has been matched by £80,000 from the Joint Archive Service's (JAS) own funds – drawn partly from its service reserve and partly from its donations reserve – funds which had been deliberately ringfenced for this purpose over a significant period. Additional in-kind contributions through volunteer time have been included in the overall calculation.
- 1.2 The JAS has commenced the 18-month Development Phase of the project which will result in a second stage application to NLHF intended for submission in November 2027. If successful, this in turn will result in a further grant of £3.8 million which will fund the majority of the Delivery Phase of the project and the capital improvements to Dorset History Centre.
- 1.3 The project has three key ambitions and will:
 - Create a two-storey repository block accommodating c. 22,000 boxes of physical archives;
 - Improve the public spaces including a new entrance and lobby area;
 - Deliver a major programme of public engagement focussing on collections and audiences, building partnerships and long-term collaboration.
- 1.4 During the Development Phase various additional staff and contractors will be employed in order to assist the core JAS team in testing and refining the project proposals and in preparing the Delivery Stage application. These are:
 - Project Archivist (18 months) 1.0 fte
 - Project Community Engagement Officer (18 months) 0.8 fte
 - Design team (consultants) including project manager, architect, quantity surveyor, mechanical, structural and electrical engineers and a fire specialist.
 - Evaluation consultant
- 1.5 The NLHF has also appointed two project mentors whose role it is to support the project team, act as 'critical friends' and to report back to the NLHF to ensure that the project is delivering to specification, time and budget.
- 1.6 The two project posts have been recruited to and the briefs for the consultancy-led work have been tendered with appointments anticipated in the near future. The JAS is working closely with Dorset Council's Assets and Regeneration Service which is acting in the 'intelligent client' role to facilitate and support the design work and to ensure quality and value for money. It will be important for example to plan for a period of closure of the DHC building

whilst building works are undertaken – and whether an alternative, temporary service model can be provided instead.

- 1.7 JAS staff will oversee the work of the new project staff. They will also engage with the consultants to ensure that the final design proposal which will inform the next application to NLHF is both visually and practically appropriate for the service as well as ensuring that it falls within the cost envelope available to the project.
- 1.8 The service will also be responsible for composing the application to NLHF and liaising with the Lottery officers throughout the process. In addition, the JAS will be responsible for raising the match fund requirement to ensure that the full budget for the project is in place before the commencement of the Delivery Phase. Two internal staff groups have been created to work on the repositories/staff areas of the building and the public spaces respectively. The application included allowances for inflation and contingency. However, in the case of the latter, NLHF would need to approve any variation from the original cost plan before funding is released. NLHF funds projects in arrears so there will be sometimes monthly requests made of it for costs incurred throughout the life of the project.
- 1.9 The Development Phase of the project will provide an opportunity to explore the costs, risks and outcomes proposed for the Delivery Phase including the volunteer input and digital outputs. It is important that the proposals outlined initially stand scrutiny and that the audiences we engage with view identified priorities in the same way as the service. Above all, the project must align with the NLHF's Investment Principles and deliver high quality outcomes whilst embedding sustainable practices and long-term organisational health within the JAS.
- 1.10 In terms of fundraising, the JAS has a significant but realistic target to meet in order to generate the full sum needed to complete the Delivery Phase of project. This is **£4.6 million**:

Delivery Phase Funds (assumed or committed)		
Source	Amount	Status
NLHF (Delivery Phase grant)	£3,800,000	Subject to successful Stage 2 bid
Dorset Council	£540,000	Subject to successful Stage 2 bid
Dorset Council Community Infrastructure Levy	£50,000	Subject to successful Stage 2 bid
Dorset Archives Trust	£50,000	Subject to successful Stage 2 bid
Dorchester Town Council	£5,000	Subject to successful Stage 2 bid
Dorset Council Section 106	£45,000	Subject to successful Stage 2 bid
Total	£4,490,000	

- 1.11 As can be seen, all the additional or ‘match’ funding is contingent upon a successful second stage application to NLHF – which is viewed by other bodies as the ‘gateway funder’. This means that there currently remains a gap of **c. £110,000** to bridge. The JAS will seek support from a range of sources in order to ensure that full project funding is in place. We have consulted with the leaders of other recently delivered cultural capital projects to find out how they were able to meet the funding challenge and have benefitted from their advice and experience. The service will be working closely with its support charity the Dorset Archives Trust. The latter can apply for funds that are not open to local authorities and in the case of personal giving, DAT is able to harvest Gift Aid. The service will be applying to a number of charitable trusts and foundations as well as approaching depositors and a wider range of stakeholders.
- 1.12 In order to submit a high-quality application in November 2027, the JAS team will need to focus first and foremost on *Past Lives, Future Proofed* so that both the capital and engagement elements of the project have been well scoped with ample evidence of need and demand, alongside rigorous analysis of costs and risks. In this way, we would hope to be able to move seamlessly into the Delivery Phase of the project in mid-2028 with a three-year plan of action.

2. Service Development Plan 2026-31

- 2.1 A new Service Development Plan is under development and will be shared with the JAB at the Board’s next meeting. It is certain that the *Past Lives, Future Proofed* project will dominate the JAS’s activities in the coming years given its size, value and significance to the service’s long-term resilience and sustainability. There will of course be business as usual activity undertaken – public service provision, the accession of collections and advice and guidance to partners and stakeholders. The success of the application to NLHF has significantly mitigated a key service risk – that of storage capacity being reached with no prospect of additional repository space being created.

3. William Barnes Project

- 3.1 The William Barnes archive project began in October 2025 after a £36,000 fundraising drive led by the William Barnes Society and Dorset Archives Trust. The project archivist has now completed their task, and the catalogue of this important collection is now available on DHC’s website: <https://archive-catalogue.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/records/D-BAR>. The collection is now available alongside that of Thomas Hardy providing full public access to the archives of these two prominent Dorset literary figures.

4. Ancestry

- 4.1 After signing an additional 10-year contract with Ancestry.co.uk work has now started at DHC on the further digitisation of records. These are principally parish records but also include records of other denominations and anything

else that is name-rich and therefore of interest to genealogists. Ancestry have recruited a staff member to work on this for a nine-month period. They will be based at DHC for the duration of the project. It is anticipated that the new material will assist in driving additional interest in the Dorset content hosted by Ancestry. The new contract with Ancestry has also enabled both Dorset and BCP Council library services to benefit from free provision of the resource on their public network terminals. This represents a combined saving of c. £20,000 to the two councils.

5. Collections Projects

- 5.1 Work continues on the **Wessex Water** archive. The externally funded project runs until March 2027 and will result in a major new resource relating to the origins of public water provision in Dorset through to the latter part of the 20th century. In addition, work on structuring and assessing the **Pitt-Rivers estate** archives continues with private funding provided. DHC's participation in the Bristol-based regional project '**Sounds of the Southwest**' continues with more rare and fragile audio material being digitised and made available via the project team. The JAS still intends to seek funding to undertake work on the archive of Sylvia Townsend Warner although this will need to wait until later in the year.

6. Staff Development

- 6.1 Skilling up the South West – a project led by Gloucestershire Archives funded by a grant from The National Archives has just concluded. It has benefitted all 8 archive services in the region with funding made available for staff training – via visits to peer services to share ideas and techniques, skill-sharing and learning. As well as this there has been a focus on digital preservation and the challenge of cataloguing backlogs. The programme has been of great benefit to staff from the JAS who visited services in Cornwall, Plymouth, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire as well as the three apprentices who also visited Clarks Museum and Archive at Street.

7. Document purchase

- 7.1 The service was fortunate enough to recently acquire a rare royal charter at auction. The document dates from 1313 and the reign of Edward II. The purchase price of over **£8,800** was entirely met by a grant from the Friends of the Nations' Libraries and generous support from Dorset Archives Trust for which we are very grateful. The charter relates to Forde Abbey in the far west of the county and recounts the grant of privileges to the abbot and monks by the monarch.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 The JAS along with its stakeholders were hugely buoyed by the NLHF funding decision in March. The confidence placed in the service to delivery this multi-million pound project has been very positively received. The JAS is now focussed on ensuring that the project's Development Phase meets its stated

outcomes to schedule and cost and that in so doing the groundwork for a strong and sustainable future for the service is laid.

1. Alternative options considered

There is no alternative model for delivering archive services currently under consideration.

2. Legal considerations

None

3. Financial implications

All activities described in this report are covered by either the JAS revenue budget, capital resources, reserves or an externally sourced grant.

4. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

DHC has significantly improved its energy performance through a major project to reduce consumption whilst ensuring the maintenance of high-quality environmental controls. This, combined with the generation of solar energy through PV panels on roof elevations has rendered the building highly energy efficient.

5. Well-being and health implications

The JAS contributes to wellbeing outcomes for both councils and improving the quality of life for residents of BCP and Dorset Council areas and attracting visitors to the county lie at the heart of its work.

6. Other implications

None

7. Risk implications

HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Medium

Residual Risk: Medium (due to pressure on archive accommodation – although mitigated by the recent NLHF decision).

8. Equalities

The JAS has completed a full EQIA. Areas for further consideration include working with younger people and with black and ethnic minority groups and religious minorities. Improved digital provision will also assist in providing greater access to collections for people living at some distance from Dorchester.

9. Appendices

None

10. Background papers

None

11. Report sign-off

This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Assurance and Governance (Monitoring Officer), the Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

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