

## **Progress Report from the PHSSG regarding the High Street support grant of £25,000**

In July 2020, Somerset West & Taunton Council (SWT) announced their Emergency Town Centre Recovery Fund, specifically to help support the High Street Traders, following the hardship they faced in the wake of Covid-19 shutdowns and restrictions.

Cllr Milne headed the group who put together the funding bid (Indicative Plan) based on about 25 questionnaire responses and the Plan for Porlock and, as a result, Porlock Parish Council (PPC) received £25,000 in December 2020 to be spent by December 2021 on projects specifically to support the High Street.

In December 2020, Cllr Milne and two of the other three members of the original group stepped down and a new group was formed to deliver the projects. As requested by SWT, this group, the PHSSG, is predominately High Street Trader led. Further consultation was undertaken and a new Indicative Plan was drawn up based on the results of this wider-reaching follow-up questionnaire, which delivered over 80 responses.

This new Indicative Plan, which was approved by PPC and SWT in early March 2021, significantly revised the original budgets and projects, reflecting the feedback of the follow-up consultation on how the fund should be spent. Below is a summary of the changes in emphasis of the spending and how projects are progressing.

The original matched funding scheme for High Street Traders of £10,000 was dropped as there was very little interest or take-up. General painting and tidying up of the High Street are now being funded from the Appearance & Functionality Project Group budget.

The original PVTA External Space Refurbishment funding of £5,000 for the Visitor Centre was dropped, as the emphasis for spending needed to be focused on the High Street, according to both SWT's Terms & Conditions and the traders' feedback. However, improved accessibility issues and opening of the toilet at the Old School Building as a public toilet, for extended hours 9am-6pm (as a minimum), 7 days a week, are now being addressed and funded, as having a public toilet at this end of the Village as well as at Doverhay, was seen by all as very important. We are also encouraging the PPC to make all the toilets free to use.

The original cost of staffing at the Visitor Centre of £8,000 and a promotional video for £1800 has been replaced by £1,000 to establish a Traders Group and website to help connect the Traders, £3,500 of funding to publicise events and the High Street specifically, using proven expertise, to create a brand for Porlock, and £3,000 to pay for the cost of Admin and a PHSSG Project Manager.

Signage was originally budgeted at £5,000 but this has now been costed at c. £2,000 following quotes obtained with possible free design work for road signs supplied by SCC. The signs budgeted for include: Road signs highlighting the car parks and services available; pedestrian signs to and from the car parks to the High Street; pedestrian signs on the High Street to buildings and sites of interest; improved maps and notice boards.

Walking leaflets originally costed at £1500 are now being produced by the VC/PVTA, funded by charges to local businesses. The PHSSG will therefore not be continuing its plans for these. The funding for Events and Activities has been increased to £3,000 to provide free events and activities throughout the year on the High Street to extend the season, entertaining visitors and residents. An Events Manager and specialist, to organise and ensure safe and appropriate running of events will be engaged, creating a 'How to' booklet to provide invaluable knowledge for future years.

The original funding of £1,000 for Floral displays and Christmas trees has now been significantly increased to £9,000 which also includes funds to spend on improving the functionality and experience of the High Street.

The floral displays now budgeted for include: A permanent display area to be created for a floral statement for visitors entering Porlock from down Porlock Hill, costing £400 using at-cost local labour; recycled barrel planters throughout and around the High Street; a statement floral display for visitors entering Porlock from down Dunster Steep; natural plantings on approaches to Porlock; and flowers at St. Dubricius Church.

The PHSSG is very fortunate to have a Chelsea medal winner in Courtyard Garden Design helping with the floral and seating projects. Unfortunately, however, we were unable to get the permission of the landowner for Tim's lovely design for a floral display with seating and artwork reflecting our cider heritage at the central garage.

All floral displays will use peat-free soil, sustainable materials wherever possible and plants carefully chosen that are sympathetic to Exmoor and the environment whilst providing year-round colour and interest.

The PHSSG has purchased two watering bowsers to be used by Village volunteers, plus someone contracted to maintain and water the new flower displays this year, with PPC taking this on from 2022 if the budget allows.

Later in the year we will be funding improved Christmas displays, supporting the voluntary groups.

The walls at Doverhay car park are being redesigned to provide much needed seating near the bus stop and toilets, subject to SWT approval.

The appearance of the High Street is also being improved by removing and repairing/repainting gates, posts and signs. Notice boards and advertising spaces are being provided that will hopefully detract less from the general aesthetics of the High Street.

The original tree planting funding of £500 is still being considered.

The PHSSG are also helping to fund the repair of the Church clock with a donation of £500. The clock was originally paid for by village subscription to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee and, having stopped, it was felt this reflected very negatively on the appearance of the High Street.

The PHSSG will not be funding hand sanitising stations, etc. as originally suggested on their IP, as there was very little support for this and the shops and other businesses are already providing them.

The original funding of £300 for a bench seat has now been increased to £2,500. Space to put benches on the High Street is very limited - we hope to put a bench near the bus stops at each end of the Village and are working with St. Dubricius Church and the Methodist Church to provide more seating close to the High Street for visitors and residents to enjoy.

The original funding of £200 for a cycle rack has been increased and is still being considered, although two cycle racks are already available so this money may be reallocated.

### **PHSSG Project Groups and their volunteer members**

Appearance & Functionality of the High Street and Seating: *Lesley Thornton, Duncan McCanlis & Tim Davies*

Signage: *Mel Tesouro, Lesley Thornton, Duncan McCanlis, Will Rayner & Sarah Brice*

Events & Activities: *Sarah Shorten, Jane Dyer, Sarah Brice*

Publicity & Promotion, including the Traders Group: *Will Rayner, Rachael White, Jane Dyer, Tim Davies & Duncan McCanlis*

Chair: Duncan McCanlis

Administrator: Lesley Thornton

**If you would like any more information or wish to contact the PHSSG, please email Lesley Thornton, at [porlockhssg@gmail.com](mailto:porlockhssg@gmail.com) or visit our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/groups/porlockhssg](https://www.facebook.com/groups/porlockhssg)**

PHSSG documentation, information about meetings, Zoom meeting recordings and minutes are published on the Porlock Parish Council website at [www.porlockparishcouncil.org/phssg](http://www.porlockparishcouncil.org/phssg)