

Joint Press Release – Swanage Town Council and Friends of Swanage Bandstand

Town Council backs Friends of Swanage Bandstand Restoration Proposal

At its monthly meeting on Monday 21st August Swanage Town Council voted unanimously to support a project to restore the town's bandstand.

Councillors allocated £50,000 towards the total estimated cost of £160,000, setting the Friends of Swanage Bandstand the task of raising the balance within the next twelve months. The Council also made funding available for the professional fees required to take the project forward.

In February of this year the Council set a 6-month deadline for interested parties to come forward with proposals for the site. During that time Mr Alan Houghton spearheaded a campaign to secure pledges from the public of donations towards a restoration project. The sum now pledged stands at £31,500, and a folder of 63 letters of support for the restoration project has been submitted to the Town Council.

The Council held a public meeting in May this year, which was attended by approximately 200 local residents, who supported the restoration of the bandstand by an overwhelming majority. A presentation by bandstand enthusiast, Mr Paul Rabbitts, gave many examples of successful restoration projects from around the country.

Mr Houghton and others have since formed the Friends of Swanage Bandstand as an organisation to take the restoration project forward. The Council's working party met with their committee members in July, together with a representative from the Town Band, and were impressed with the expertise that the group had assembled to make the project a success.

The Friends were the only organisation to put forward a formal submission for the Council to consider, although the alternative options of removing the bandstand and potentially filling in the sunken surrounds were also debated. However, it was noted that the Council would incur substantial costs, whichever option was pursued.

Also important in underpinning the Council's decision were the pledges to use a newly refurbished structure that the Friends had received from more than a dozen local performers, including musicians, dancers, and a local secondary school.

Councillor Caroline Finch, chairman of the Tourism Committee, stated: 'I have been so pleased to see such a great public response about the future of the bandstand. The Council is working with all parties concerned to support its restoration'. She continued, 'It has been heartwarming to see the community working together'.

Alan Houghton, of the Friends of Swanage Bandstand, remarked: 'This is excellent news and represents a giant step forward towards getting our bandstand back'. He continued: 'local people have been enormously generous in pledging £31,500 towards the project, but we do need that to continue, either by pledging more funds or organising a fundraising activity'.

To help support the Friends of Swanage Bandstand, Alan can be contacted by email, al2lyho@talktalk.net, telephone 07814 319263 or post to 3 Dingle Court, De Moulham Road, BH19 1NT.

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