

Dorset Museum & Art Gallery

PRESS STATEMENT: 25 July 2025

Since reopening in May 2021, Dorset Museum & Art Gallery has worked in partnership with Taste, granting them a commercial licence to operate our on-site café. This agreement sees Taste retain café revenue while we receive rental income and cover all building running costs — a collaboration that has worked well over the past five years.

Taste also has the opportunity to cater for private Museum events such as weddings and conferences, depending on client requirements.

In 2025, Taste proposed a new programme of supper evenings and we agreed to support a pilot phase, charging just £120 per event to support this trial. This did not cover the cost of our staffing, gallery access, and bespoke guided tours but was a supportive gesture, to enable this pilot. The pilot has now ended, and while we're happy to continue supporting these events, as a charity it is important we ensure our operating costs are met.

As guardians of world-class collections and a state-of-the-art venue, our insurance requires Museum staff on-site during all events, and for the building to be fully secured afterward. This makes any out of hours events a cost-bearing exercise for our charity.

Unfortunately, the modest contribution we've requested to cover these costs and ensure the financial sustainability of the Museum has been deemed unviable by Taste and they didn't take up an alternative model that was offered. While we regret this, we cannot subsidise commercial activity at the expense of our charitable activities.

Claire Dixon, Executive Director, said: *"Our café is much-loved by visitors, and we have a mutually beneficial relationship with Taste that sees regular café users enjoying the galleries and exhibitions, as well as Museum & Gallery visitors making the most of the cafe."*

"The café licence is for daily operation - which Taste delivers excellently - and we remain open to working with them on additional activities but as a charity, we must strike a balance between generating income and managing costs. Any extra use of the building must, at minimum, cover the overheads we incur — so we can continue to protect and promote Dorset's cultural heritage for future generations."

NOTES TO EDITORS

Dorset Museum & Art Gallery is the only museum in Dorset that tells the story of the county in its entirety, showing the relationship between the land and its inhabitants, and how this relationship inspired ingenuity, exploration and creativity. Covering 250 million years of history, their collections are of international significance and demonstrate the breadth of the Dorset story and its relevance to all. The Museum holds four permanent galleries and typically offer 3-4 major temporary exhibitions, touring or home-grown, a year in their designated special exhibitions space. For more information about exhibitions and events at Dorset Museum, www.dorsetmuseum.org

Marketing

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