

James is back! – After what seems like a very quick six months, James Gould will be returning to Corfe Castle as Visitor Operations Manager. He will be bringing what he has learnt in his secondment to develop the visitor offer and fundraising at the castle. As departing Operations Manager, I would very much like to thank you all for the warm welcome and support I have received during this six-month period, it has been a pleasure sitting in on the meetings and learning/understanding the work that you do and getting a feel of the real Corfe Castle community. It has been great, hopefully I will see you all around the village in the future, please do say hello.

Conservation works – The low-level works that are part of the first phase of the project were due to start in mid-Sept however due to scheduling conflicts that conservation contractor will not be able to start until November. These works will be removing vegetation and consolidating mortar between the SW gatehouse and the Sally port. The high-level rope access work will begin at the start of November around the New Bulwark and that will once again be focused on vegetation removal and mortaring.

Goat Path and Ollie Vyes Lane – The steps to the castle on the goat path have been filled in and the council have fixed boards to the side of the steps to stop further slipping of the filling. One of their rangers came to meet me to discuss repairing the water damaged parts of the path at the top of Ollie Vyes Lane as it is becoming quite a trip hazard. They have agreed that there is a need and are trying to schedule the works.

Weddings – We hosted our first wedding of 2023 in the castle on Saturday 23rd September. All went well and the Bride and Groom were overjoyed with how the day went. We are currently gathering feedback from the teams that were in on the day so we can reflect on what went well and what we can get better at/refine. We have previously hosted a small wedding fair in the castle, and we will be holding another one on the 8th October. Once again, there will be great selection of local suppliers, covering everything from wedding dresses to photography and marquee hire. There was good take up of the last one and we hope with additional advertising this one will be even better attended.

Festival of Cultural Heritage – On Saturday and Sunday 16th/17th September we held a Festival of Cultural heritage within the castle. It was free entry to all for the weekend and featured exhibits, talks and demonstrations of the cultural heritage of the Isle of Purbeck. The weekend went well, with lots of visitors attending, the feedback from the public on the days was all incredibly positive from everyone that visited. We have decided that it will be happening again next year to tie in with the 'heritage open days' week.

Autumn trail and events – Starting mid-late Sept. Working in conjunction with Arts University Bournemouth, we have a trail and exhibition surrounding the fashion of the castle. There is life size photos of models in period clothing throughout the castle. During the half-term there will be an exhibition of the costumes at Castle view visitor centre. This will include 'design and making of' interpretation as well as the original sketch book with all of the designs for each piece of clothing. There will be the return of the Teddy bear Zipwire and new limited edition siege coins to collect.

Maverick races Dark run – The castle will be hosting an evening running event on the 18th November 2023 between 5pm and 8pm. Runners will be setting off from the castle and completing either a 5km, 10km or 20km

trail across the Purbeck countryside. The finish line will be back at the castle. More info can be found here:
<https://www.maverick-race.com/products/the-maverick-exposure-lights-dark-castle-2023>

Changing places – we have received the tenders for a changing places facility based at Castleview. Funding is coming from the council's levelling up fund We are in the process of transferring funding at which point I will be able to instruct the contractors and get the ball rolling. Delivery date is still planned for the end of February 2023.