

# OCTOBER MEETING

## Dover District Council Update

**A presentation by Christopher Townend; Head of Place & Growth**

**Jayne Miles; Strategic Place, Tourism & Town Centres Manager**

**Aimee Langley; Venues & Visitor Services Manager**

**Jennifer Collier; Major Projects & Programme Manager**

**Reported by Alan Lee**

Unusually in October we had a team of four people, from Dover District Council, speaking about their roles and responsibilities within the council.

### **Christopher Townend: Head of Place & Growth**

Chris opened the meeting and outlined his responsibilities within the district and Dover in particular. He then introduced his co-presenters, and we learnt of their background, areas of expertise, and what their roles and responsibilities on the council were. Their areas of responsibility sometimes overlap but they work closely as a harmonious team.

### **Jayne Miles: Strategic Place, Tourism & Town Centres Manager**

Jayne described the latest tourism strategy and the way forward in attracting more visitors, both with day visits and longer

stays. She stated that we need to adapt our traditional high street model to one that combines some shopping with activities and things to do. That combines our history and heritage with art and education and places to meet. The town now has three major attractions, the Dover Museum and Bronze Age Boat, the Maison Dieu and the Roman Painted House. As well as being Town Centre Manager and co-ordinating activities in the town, Jayne is working hard to increase the number of visitors that are drawn to Dover.

### **Aimee Langley: Venues & Visitor Services Manager**

Now that the Maison Dieu is open to the public it is rapidly becoming a major hub, not only for the venue itself, but also for an increasing, far ranging, number of independent events. From Tea Dances to Pantomime.



*Roman Painted House*



*Market Square*

The Roman Painted House, now under council control, has been revamped and given a facelift. In early 2024, a range of works were carried out to make the attraction compliant and safe, including new electrics, new lighting, new toilets, structural repairs, a new fire escape, stair repairs, a handrail replacement, vision panels, a new floor and other health and safety works, which has included the removal of mould and environmental monitoring. Over 9,400 visitors have come to the Roman Painted House since it reopened on 14th September 2024.

A major 'Roman Dover' project is planned with aim to transform the Roman Painted House, Roman Bath House and Roman Lawn into a leading heritage-based visitor attraction. Celebrating Roman history, fostering community engagement, and promoting educational and cultural enrichment. The proposed visitor centre will link York Street via the Roman Lawn to the Market Square. It will feature pathways and landscaping which will connect York Street, the Market Square, and the seafront via Bench Street subway.

### **Jennifer Coller: Major Projects & Programme Manager**

"Topping Out", is when the highest point of the building has been reached, was celebrated on the 8th of September 2025 at

the Dover Beacon Project site. The new Bench building includes an education campus providing training opportunities in creative and digital industries, a business centre for start-ups and small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and a creative centre providing a gallery and studio space. A small riverside park is also to be provided. The project is on track for completion on 22nd May 2026.

Each side of the building faces a radically different context: a busy polluted dual carriageway, a pedestrianised shopping street, a town centre side-road, and the River Dour. It has been designed to ensure the building is striking yet appropriate from every direction, including when viewed from the Castle or Western Heights.

**Why is the building being called The Bench?** Bench Street was one of the key routes into Dover in medieval times, which is why it is such a prominent area for archaeology. The Dover Society had explained how it got its name from a bench in the gate tower where people gathered to chat or transact business, and this is why the new building will be known as The Bench as a respectful nod to the past.



*The Bench*



*Entrance Area, The Bench*