

**Okehampton Town Council**  
**Policy and Resources Committee 8<sup>th</sup> September 2025**  
**Meeting Report**

<b>Date:</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2025
<b>Name:</b>	Emma James

**6. Town Council Grants –**

**Feedback – To note feedback received from grant recipients:**

**c) Museum of Dartmoor Life and Tourist Information Point – In response to the grant of £3,500 awarded in July 2025**

21 August 2025

To Okehampton Town Council

Thank you for agreeing to support the Museum of Dartmoor Life continuing to thrive. As long term Okehampton Town Councillors will be aware, the museum has had some rough times with great financial difficulties and Okehampton Town Council has always supported it. This is greatly appreciated.

The museum is on a more even keel currently due to prudent management, the excellent work of the volunteers without whom we would not have a museum, and the fine quality leadership of our manager and curator. We do hope that councillors visit at least once each season and see the annual exhibition which is always of a very high standard.

We do have challenges of course. Urgent work is required to the fabric of the building, such as the roof, and the work requires major capital investment, which itself requires some matched funding. Hard work is in hand to apply for grants. It is hard, as I am sure councillors are aware, and we have been knocked back year on year as money is tight everywhere. But, our trustees continue to work at it and believe success can be achieved. If it cannot, the museum would be in danger of closing. The support of the town council makes this less likely.

I was concerned, however, that there was some misunderstandings about the tourist information service the museum provides and so I am taking this opportunity to clarify the situation. The tourist information centre (TIC) was located in the museum's courtyard for many years and funded and staffed by West Devon Borough Council (WDBC). Okehampton Town Council made a contribution of £1,500 annually towards the costs. When WDBC closed the TIC in Okehampton, there were various ideas as to how the provision could be continued in some form as there was great concern at its loss.

The museum was approached by Okehampton Town Council and asked if the museum could step into the breach and the Council said that it would continue its contribution, which it has done so ever since. The museum did step into the breach. It provides a tourist information service six days a week from Easter until the end of October. Volunteers are trained up to be able to respond to the many questions that get asked, good walks from Okehampton and so on. A lead volunteer spends considerable time every week making sure that the information provided on a wide range of activities and businesses locally is up to date (some organisations do take such information for their own uses and constant replenishment is needed). One enquiry can take some time to respond to in a proper and informed way. The manager (three days a week) takes time to train and support volunteers and answers queries herself when necessary.

The tourist information is kept in the Endacott Room which is dedicated for this purpose. The museum could use this room for other business, such as extending the museum which is bursting at the seams,

or renting out the space but it stands by its commitment made to the Town Council and the community.

The previous TIC did not have great success in getting those enquiring to visit the museum while outside its door, and nor do the volunteers now. Those making enquiries normally have something specific in mind that they want to do, and the conversion rate continues to be low.

We understand that finances are tight, that there are many demands on what resources are available and that decisions are tough, but I wanted to make sure that there was an understanding of the situation regarding the tourist information service made by the museum.

Thank you again for the continuing support of Okehampton Town Council to the Museum of Dartmoor Life.

## **6.2 Grant Format – To consider the format for the award of grants in future years**

Historically the Committee considered grant applications as they were received throughout the year. This worked well for a number of years, predominantly when there were funds remaining in the grant budget at the end of the year.

Grant Budget 2014/15 to present

2014/15	£27,000
2015/16	£28,000
2016/17	£27,500
2017/18	£28,500
2018/19 – 2024/25	£29,000
2025/26	£29,000 (excluding allotment funding)

Funding of the Allotments changed in 2025/26 when funding was provided additionally to the grant budget to the sum of £5,000. This will need to change again during the 2026/27 financial year as the Council is due to take responsibility for the allotments in autumn 2026.

In approximately 2024/25 the Committee changed the application process so that applications would be considered twice yearly. This was with the aim of giving all applicants the same opportunity, before funds started to become more limited as the year progressed.

It has become increasingly difficult for the Committee to commit to fully funding all applications, especially during the first round. The Committee is therefore requested to consider how it will consider applications from 2026/27 onwards. **Options include:**

a) Consideration of applications as they are received

This format worked well for a number of years when the grant budget was not fully expended at year end. As funding becomes more constrained it means that any applications received towards the end of the year are more likely to be refused because of lack of funding.

b) Consideration of applications on a twice yearly basis, as existing

As funding becomes more constrained it means that any applications received towards the end of the year are more likely to be refused because of lack of funding and those considered first are considered cautiously.

- c) Consideration of all applications on an annual basis

This would mean that all applications are considered together when the budget constraints will be known, resulting in a fairer process.

and/or

- d) Consideration of splitting the grant budget into two; smaller grants and larger grants

### **6.3 Town Centre Business Grant Initiative 2025/26 – To consider running the scheme for the remainder of the financial year, subject to a grant award from WDBC's Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) fund and the amount to put towards this initiative**

An application for funding from this scheme following advice from WDBC Officers for the sum of £10,000. This funding, if awarded, can be used partly towards this initiative, if approved by the Committee, and/or completely for improvement works to the Charter Hall and kitchen including fire audit requirements.

The initiative would run similarly to that in 2024/25 whereby WDBC would provide the funding to OTC to distribute following consideration of applications.

#### **Resolution Required**

Does the Committee wish to run the initiative, if yes how much of the £10,000 grant does it want to put towards the scheme, subject to the application be awarded

### **9.3 Investments – To review financial investments including interest rates and Tamar Energy Community Shares**

<b>Details</b>	<b>Account No</b>	<b>Interest Rate</b>	<b>Balance 31/07/2025</b>	<b>% of OTCs funds</b>
Nationwide 95 Day Business		3.54%	£ 264,132.35	25.67%
NatWest		1.1% Gross	£ 10,404.55	1.01%
NatWest		Nil	£ 1,000.00	0.10%
Lloyds		1.6% Gross	£ 313,459.37	30.46%
CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund		4.31%	£ 440,034.19	42.76%
			<b>£1,029,030.46</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

The investment of funds complies with OTCs Treasury & Investment Policy and Strategy which states *'The maximum of the council's cash deposits which may be held with one institution must not exceed 60%. Any exception to this limit must be approved by Full Council.'*

Tamar Investments is a long-term investment which is classed as an Asset in accordance with the requirements of the Practitioners' Guide: Governance and accountability for smaller authorities in England (p.31) which states:

Fixed asset investments:

- Ensure that all long-term investments (i.e., those for more than 12 month terms) are covered by the "Investment Strategy" and reported as Assets in the AGAR at section 2, line 9.

Details	Interest Rate	Balance
Tamar Investments (Ethex)	5% (Interest of £250 due to be received annually following the end of the financial year	£5,000.00