



Christmas Event Stakeholder meeting – 8 July at 10am at Castle Meadow Pavilion

Meeting Summary

In attendance:

Rachel – Baptist Church	Cllr Michelle Ditton	Ann-Marie – Radequip events
Dan – BigDog Media	Cllr Pete Edge	Graham – Greyhound Inn
Laura – Carnival Committee	Jen – Radequip events	Amanda – Sarum Dancers
Brie – Town Clerk	Neil – WTC Comms Officer	Carolyn – Sarum Dancers

Introduction

The Christmas event discussion recognised the importance of respecting the history and success of the important annual event, while considering how it can be strengthened for the future. The focus is on building on what has worked well, preserving the community spirit and local character of the event, and exploring opportunities to raise its profile so that Wilton's Christmas celebrations can develop into a recognised destination event for residents, visitors and local businesses.

Summary of Presentation slides

- **Christmas Lighting Scheme Planning:** Brie, Neil, Michelle, Pete, and other participants discussed the new Christmas lighting scheme for Wilton, including technical details, indicative costs, and community engagement, with input from consultants and local stakeholders.
 - **Scheme Design and Features:** The proposed lighting scheme includes a six-metre cone style tree opposite the pharmacy, motifs on the main road, a New York style tree at the crossroads, a lit photo frame near the churchyard, illuminated stars for Old Saint Mary's, festoon lighting along the Baptist Church, and potential uplighting of the iconic red cedar tree.
 - **Heritage and Tree Health Concerns:** Participants were updated on an arboricultural study – referencing that maintenance to improve the aesthetics of the red cedar tree could endanger its health, and discussed the high cost (£5,000 for a cherry picker) and technical challenges of decorating the tree, leading to consideration of alternative lighting methods.
 - **Community Engagement and Feedback:** Brie and Neil emphasised the importance of comprehensive public engagement, including consulting residents and framing communications

around respecting the tree's heritage and following technical advice, with a suggestion to publicly seek community input before final decisions.

- **Budget and Technical Decisions:** The projected spend for the scheme [as it stands] is currently over budget, with the cherry picker cost representing a significant portion; permanent up/down lighters are being considered for year-round use in the Old St Mary's red cedar tree, and the council awaits final technical details from lighting consultants and permissions from Wiltshire Council before proceeding.
- **Alternative Solutions and Actions:** Options such as attaching a star without harming the tree, using an arborist to climb the tree, and exploring new technologies like projecting displays onto the tree and drone shows onto the red cedar were discussed, with Brie agreeing to investigate these possibilities.
- **Event Management and Community Market:** Jen and Anne-Marie, and other stakeholders, discussed plans for the Christmas event, including market organisation, entertainment, event duration, local business involvement, and logistical considerations such as road closures and car park management.
 - **Event Structure and Schedule:** The event will be held on Saturday, 21st November, with a six-week lead-up, featuring a Christmas market, live entertainment, community performances, children's activities, seasonal food and drink, and the Christmas light countdown and switch-on, running from 12pm to 8pm. Timings were highlighted as too long – need to be reviewed.
 - **Local Business and Community Involvement:** The campaign aims to encourage shopping locally, with local businesses and the Wilton community at the heart of the event; Jen and Anne-Marie are tasked with curating the market and engaging local performers, while efforts are made to coordinate local business opening hours and maximise footfall.
 - **Logistics and Safety:** Discussions covered road closures, car park management (including costs and loss of parking spaces), marshalling requirements, and the need for qualified marshals, with Brie confirming that applications for closures and safety measures are being addressed.
 - **Event Management and Tendering:** Jen's team, as an established local company, was chosen to manage the event without a formal tender process, justified by their local connections to market traders, local entertainers and experience; cost breakdowns and value for money were discussed, with plans to review and confirm arrangements.
 - **Feedback and Adjustments:** Participants provided feedback on event length, stage production costs, and the importance of balancing investment in staging versus community engagement, with Wilton agreeing to evaluate the event post-implementation and consider sponsorship for future years.
- **Stage, Performance, and Nativity Arrangements:** Dan, Rachel, Jen, and other participants discussed technical and logistical arrangements for stage placement, PA systems, performance scheduling, and the traditional nativity, considering cost, audience experience, and integration with the event.
 - **Stage Placement and Design:** Various options for stage placement were considered, including positioning near the churchyard or in the market square, with the aim of aligning focal points for performances and the nativity, and ensuring visibility and accessibility for audiences.
 - **PA System and Technical Setup:** Dan and Jen discussed PA requirements, with Dan offering a charitable rate for the nativity and Jen's team covering the main stage; the need for cost-effective solutions and avoiding redundant setups was emphasised, with plans to coordinate technical arrangements.
 - **Performance Scheduling and Audience Experience:** Scheduling of performances, including school choirs, community groups, and dance schools, was discussed, with considerations for

audience seating, shelter, and the sequencing of events to maintain engagement throughout the day.

- **Nativity Integration:** The nativity will remain in Old St Mary's churchyard, with separate PA arrangements (TBC) ; the importance of maintaining tradition and ensuring smooth transitions between stage events and the nativity was highlighted, with actions to finalise logistics offline.
- **Budget, Sponsorship, and Cost Management:** Pete, Michelle, and other participants reviewed event and lighting scheme budgets, discussed sponsorship opportunities, and explored cost-saving measures, including marshalling, and technical solutions.
 - **Budget Overview and Constraints:** The lighting scheme and event costs [as they stand] are over budget, with significant expenses for technical elements like cherry pickers and stage production; year one costs are higher due to installation, but future years are expected to be more cost effective
 - **Sponsorship and Future Funding:** Pete outlined plans to seek sponsorship for future events, with the council funding this year's event as a pilot, aiming for successful outcomes to attract sponsors in subsequent years.
 - **Tendering and Value for Money:** The event management was not formally tendered, justified by Jen's local expertise; participants requested cost breakdowns and comparisons to ensure value for money, with Jen agreeing to review and provide revised costings.
 - **Cost-Saving Measures:** Suggestions included using existing PA systems, optimising stage placement, and reviewing marshalling arrangements to minimise expenses, with actions to investigate alternative technical and logistical solutions.
- **Community Engagement and Communication Strategy:** Neil, Brie, and other stakeholders discussed the importance of clear, proactive communication with the community regarding event changes, lighting scheme decisions, and accessibility, aiming to build support and manage expectations.
 - **Public Consultation and Feedback:** Participants agreed to engage the community early and transparently about challenges, such as tree health and event changes, seeking input and ideas to foster ownership and reduce resistance.
 - **Communication Framing:** Brie and Neil emphasised framing communications around respect for heritage, technical advice, and the rationale for decisions, ensuring messaging is clear and addresses potential concerns.
 - **Social Media and Marketing:** Plans include leveraging social media channels, local radio, and market connections to publicise the event, with lessons learned from previous years about timing and reach. The plan is for Event marketing to start much earlier than in the previous years.
 - **Accessibility and Reasonable Adjustments:** Discussions covered accessibility for meetings and events, including toilet access, mobility considerations, and the use of temporary ramps, with commitments to make reasonable adjustments and maintain consistency.
- **Logistics and Operational Planning:** Brie, Michelle, and other participants addressed operational details for the event, including marshalling, road and car park closures, safety requirements, and coordination with local authorities.
 - **Road and Car Park Closures:** Applications for road and car park closures will be processed, with associated costs and requirements for qualified marshals discussed.
 - **Marshalling and Safety:** Qualified marshals are required for road closures, with Brie tasked to investigate costs and arrangements, including for remembrance events, aiming to ensure compliance and safety.

Follow-up tasks:

Action	Details	Responsible
Christmas Tree Star Installation Options	Investigate alternative methods for installing a star on the Old St Mary's Christmas tree, including the possibility of using an arborist to climb the tree for less than £5,000	WTC Clerk
Community Engagement on Tree Decoration	Consider a public engagement campaign to gather community suggestions and feedback regarding the Christmas tree decoration dilemma, ensuring transparency before a final decision is made. (Brie, Neil) – it was noted however the order needs to be placed in the near future.	WTC Clerk WTC Comms Officer
Event Sponsorship Planning	Explore opportunities for event sponsorship for future years if the event is successful this year.	WTC Clerk
Stage and Nativity Coordination	Take offline the discussion regarding the nativity location and PA system, and arrange a follow-up conversation to confirm arrangements.	WTC Clerk Radequip BigDog Media
Cost Breakdown for Event Management	Provide a revised breakdown of event management costs excluding PA, including stage and event management only	Radequip
Marshall and Road Closure Cost Enquiry	Request cost estimates from Dorset Marshall for both Christmas and Remembrance event road closures	WTC Clerk

Meeting Presentation (double-click to open)

