

Friends of the West Bay Discovery Centre (CIO)

Annual Report for the year ending

31st March 2025



The formal objects of the CIO are :

To advance the education of the public in matters relating to the history and natural environment of West Bay and the surrounding area by supporting the operation of the West Bay Discovery Centre through volunteering and the support of activities to enhance the visitor experience.

Registered Charity No. 1209623

Registered Address : 24 Brit View Road
Bridport
DT6 4HY

1. Introduction

This is the first annual report of the Friends of the West Bay Discovery Centre (CIO), a charity registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales. The Charity was registered on 16th August 2024, and this report covers the period to the standard year-end, which is 31st March 2025.

The Charity was set-up as part of the transfer of the Discovery Centre from the Bridport Area Development Trust to the Bridport Town Council. There were two principal reasons for setting up the Friends: firstly, to provide a collective voice for the Centre's volunteers and secondly, to enable the continuation of activities that add value to the Centre but are likely to be beyond the capacity or financial regulations of the Council to deliver. This also includes obtaining certain types of grant funding and continuing to build local networks that enable the Discovery Centre to provide constructive input; an example of this was the Chair of the Friends Group's attendance at a Jurassic Coast Management workshop.

The report is compiled to comply with statutory reporting requirements for smaller charities. It also provides information for the West Bay Discovery Centre volunteers, who play a central role in the charity's operations and the benefits it delivers. All of the Centre's volunteers are automatically informal members of the West Bay Discovery Centre.

Given the timing of this first report, it inevitably includes references to some events and activities taking place after the formal year-end of 31st March 2025. We plan to bring the reporting date forward in future years.

2. How the Friends of the Discovery is organised and managed.

The charity was established as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (Foundation Model). It is managed by a board of trustees, which can number between 3 and 12. They are the sole decision-making body, though every opportunity will be taken to enable input from our volunteers.

There are currently 8 trustees of the charity, who are listed below. They are all long-serving volunteers at the Discovery Centre :

Pauline Bale
Penny Deacon
Sarah Fletcher
Alastair Gibson
Nicola Kelly
Sue Pollock
John West
Sarah West

In accordance with the constitution, *new trustees must be appointed for a term of three years*

by a resolution passed at a properly convened meeting of the charity trustees. In selecting individuals for appointment as charity trustees, the existing trustees must have regard to the skills, knowledge and experience needed for the effective administration of the CIO.

3. Activities, achievements and public benefit delivered during the period

The Centre's volunteers numbered 48 as of 31st March 2025. They contribute around 2,000 hours a year to helping the Bridport Town Council operate the Centre. This contribution equates to a monetary value of around £30,000. Their role is to provide a welcome to visitors (around 25,000 per year) and perform general stewarding duties, including operating the shop and helping visitors with information. Additionally, they help out with children's activities and lead guided walks around West Bay. A major part of the role of the Friends Group is preparing and delivering the Centre's seasonal exhibitions. As part of this and as a stand-alone activity, they also conduct research into West Bay, present and past, including the life of those who lived or worked here.

The Friends Group raise funds to support exhibitions and children's activities through grants, the summer weekly guided walks, and general fundraising activities (see finance section of the report).

The first exhibition delivered by the Friends Group during this reporting period was Smuggling in the 18th Century, Myth and Reality. This content was combined from the Shire Hall Museum and local research. Artefacts were borrowed from Sherborne Museum and members of the local community. The exhibition looked back to a time in the mid-18th to 19th Centuries when smuggling was widespread along the South Coast. The exhibition costs were funded entirely by the Friends Group. The exhibition ran from February 2025 until the end of June and was viewed by around 13,000 visitors.

The work on the Pier Terrace Through Time exhibition started "Pier Terrace Through Time" at the start of July. The exhibition will run until March 2026. Pier Terrace is West Bay's most iconic building, and 2025 marks its 140th anniversary. The building fascinates local people and visitors in equal measure and has appeared in TV and film. It was built as the first step in a plan to transform Bridport Harbour into West Bay, a popular tourist destination to rival resorts like Bournemouth and Weymouth.

The exhibition explores the social history of those who lived, stayed and worked in Pier Terrace from the Victorian era through to the modern day. The content of the exhibition comes from research conducted by the Friends, along with content shared by the Bridport House History, a project initiated by the Bridport Heritage Forum. Current and former residents of Pier Terrace and local people also contributed their knowledge and memories to the exhibition. A key feature is the celebration of the extraordinary women who have been associated with the building. They range from royalty to rock stars and from landladies to social reformers. A doll's house has been transformed to provide a representation of life in Pier Terrace in the 1900s and 1950s. The Pier Terrace design was created by renowned Arts and Crafts architect Edward Prior. The exhibition also provides a snapshot of the Arts and Crafts style, inspired by William Morris.

The supporting programme of events includes talks, walks, and children's activities. The children's activities include sessions led by popular local artists, Darrell Wakelam, who inspired 77 children to create bathing beauty models and Jo Burlington, who engaged 72 children in the creation of houses "made from cliffs, fossils and fish".

The programme of weekly guided walks, led by members of the Friends Group, offers visitors and local people alike insights into subjects that include West Bay's history and wildlife. The £5 fee for a walk of around 90 minutes offers excellent value. In autumn 2024, we were delighted to enter into a partnership with Bridport Town of Culture 2024 to offer a short programme of walks. The theme for these "West Bay a Painted Past" included images of historical paintings of West Bay in each walk. The Town of Culture sponsorship allowed these walks to be provided free of charge to the public. Members of the Friends Group also offer talks and walks to community organisations such as the WI, and income from these helps support things such as children's activities.

4. Financial Review

The Friends were established with support from the former owners of the Discovery Centre, the Bridport Area Development Trust. The Trust provided a £1,000 donation to help launch the Friends. Income for the period up to 31st March has included a grant of £ 1,200 from Dorset Council's Community and Culture Fund towards the Pier Terrace Through Time exhibition; the first of two equal instalments has already been received. The other main sources of income to date have been guided walks and the sale of second-hand books. As planned, income received has been used mainly to support the cost of exhibitions, and the grant will cover printing costs and fund the children's workshops provided by Darrell Wakelam and Jo Burlington.

As at the end of March 2025, the balance of funds held in the current and savings accounts was £2,067, of which £600 was restricted for use on the Pier Terrace Through Time exhibition.

The Charity has not yet adopted a reserves policy, but in the meantime, it is intended to maintain a minimum balance of £1,000.

The Charity's accounts fall below the threshold requiring an independent examination or audit, but we have agreed that one will be conducted to assure our volunteers that our funds have been properly managed.

John West
Chair of Friends of West Bay Discovery Centre
31.8.2025

The Friends of West Bay Discovery Centre

Receipts and Payments for 6 months ending 31st March 2025

	Restricted	Unrestricted	Total	Last year
Receipts				
Grants	£600	£0	£600	
Donations		£1,275	£1,275	
Talks		£140	£140	
Guided Walks		£150	£150	
Second hand books Sales		£57	£57	
Total Receipts	£600	£1,622	£2,222	
Payments				
Exhibitions		£130	£130	
Insurance		£24	£24	
Total Payments	£0	£154	£154	
Net of Receipts	£600	£1,467	£2,067	
Cash Funds last year end				
Cash Funds this year end	£600	£1,467	£2,067	

Statement of Assets and Liabilities at the 6 months ending 31st March 2024

	Restricted	Unrestricted	Total
Cash Funds	£600	£1,467	£2,067

Signed By Treasurer

Signature

S. West

Independent Examiner

Signature

S. Todd

Print Name

SARAH WEST

Date of Approval

30/9/25

Print Name

Steve Todd

Date of Approval

30/9/25