

UPDATE ON THE PULPIT INN AND THE PULPIT PROJECT – 6TH DECEMBER 2025

The Pulpit Inn is currently up for sale as a development opportunity, with planning permission for demolition and rebuilding as 11-holiday units with a restaurant and bar.

The pub is designated an Asset of Community Value (ACV), meaning any redevelopment proposal must include an element of community access. This is described in the current planning permission as access to the restaurant (with the ability to temporarily partition a portion of the restaurant for community events).

The Pulpit Project (on behalf of the Future Portland CBS) has submitted a community bid for the purchase of the property and is currently awaiting a formal response. This bid will be considered alongside other open-market offers. The owner is not obliged to sell to the community.

What's happening with the building now? The owner has informed us that the current tenant, who has reopened the Pulpit Inn as a pub, is on-site until the property is sold.

What about the land surrounding it? The land surrounding the building and its front car park is designated SSSI, SAC and Open Access. This means any planning permission for the site is tightly controlled and limited to the footprint of the current building only.

What are SSSI and SACs? Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Special Areas of Conservation are conservation designations that protect areas of land or water that are considered valuable for their wildlife, geology or landform features. SACs have a higher degree of protection than SSSIs.

While many might view these designations as constraints, The Pulpit Project sees them as valuable assets and is, therefore, actively working to protect them within its proposal.

What is the community proposal? The Pulpit Project proposes refurbishment of the current building as a multi-use venue, including a pub and restaurant, but with the benefit of a community, event and education space and visitor centre dedicated to the celebration of Portland, its community, heritage and environment.

This vision has emerged from a thorough understanding of community needs, extensive feedback from residents and visitors via the recent Pulpit Inn public survey, and an increasing recognition of the ecological and heritage significance of the Portland Bill landscape. It is essential to protect this area, which means that environmental education and engagement will also lie at the heart of the proposed community offer.

The business plan developed by the Pulpit Project Team, which reflects all identified needs and asks, has been positively received as a viable and innovative option due to the compelling and unique selling points mentioned, which combine the strengths of a hospitality venue with the adaptability of a community and education offer. This flexibility also means varied income streams and the ability to seek a mix of funding options through which to fund the project's delivery, from grants to community shares.

The Pulpit Project has the support of Dorset Council, which has provided an independent commercial valuation.

It is also supported by Dorset Wildlife Trust (DWT), Dorset Environmental Records Centre (DERC), Jurassic Coast Trust (JCT) Portland Bird Observatory, all of whom welcome the opportunity to support and collaborate with the project across its planned environment-based education and engagement programme.