THE FRIENDS OF DINOSAUR ISLE 2026

Chairs Report

The Museum:

Since the last AGM, there have been several significant and positive developments at the museum.

Foremost among these was the successful bid to the Museum Estate and Development Fund (MEND), led by Arts Council England, with additional support of £180,000 from the Isle of Wight Council. This funding has enabled a comprehensive programme of refurbishment works over the 2025/26 winter period, including the installation of a new roof, upgraded heating and air conditioning systems, and improved gallery lighting. These improvements will play a vital role in both protecting and enhancing the display of the museum's nationally important collection.

We are delighted to welcome a new museum Curator who brings with him a strong academic and research background. He is widely recognised for his work on dinosaur evolution, particularly in the study of sauropods and their feeding behaviour. His research applies modern scientific techniques, including biomechanical analysis, to better understand how dinosaurs lived and interacted within their environments. His expertise and dinosaur research connections will help to strengthen the scientific profile of the museum and support the development of future exhibitions to enhance the interpretation of our nationally important collection. We look forward to working with him and to the contribution he will make to the museum's continued development.

The next steps for the museum are to develop plans for the refurbishment of museum displays and how FODI can support delivery during this next phase of improvement. We are very pleased to have been asked to contribute and are keen to assist where we can and I am confident that we can make a meaningful contribution. By carefully prioritising our support in line with our charitable objectives, we can help ensure that our involvement has a lasting and positive impact.

The museum's collection of dinosaur holotypes has continued to expand. Last year saw the announcement of *Istiorachis macarthurae*, the Island's most recently named dinosaur. This discovery was formally presented by our own Dr Jeremy Lockwood just weeks before the museum's closure in early 2025. The species is known from a partial postcranial skeleton, including several vertebrae, incomplete ribs, and part of the pelvis. Its vertebral neural spines are notably elongated, giving it a distinctive sail-backed appearance. The museum's display of this specimen includes the majority of the recovered material.

2025 Events:

Over the past year, FODI has continued to provide valuable support across a wide range of museum activities. Members have contributed their time and expertise at major events,

including the Fun Day and the Palaeogene conference. As in previous years, FODI also hosted successful charity stands at the Chale Show and for the first time at a local classic car meet. These engagements have helped to raise our profile within the community while supporting our fundraising efforts.

In addition, we delivered our regular programme of walks, talks, barbecues and quiz nights, all of which were very well attended. We extend our thanks to Jeremy Lockwood for serving as quizmaster at these events, where his engaging style consistently inspires a lively and competitive atmosphere among participants.

Social Media:

Over the past year, the social media team has focused on developing our website alongside expanding our presence on Facebook and Instagram, both of which have seen significant growth. We have worked closely with the museum to produce “Fossil Friday” video content for social media, helping to engage a wider audience.

A new website platform has been successfully launched, providing access for trustees to support their roles more effectively. The site is now fully equipped to manage payments and member information. Website analytics show that the most visited pages since launch have been the “About FODI” section and the blog post “How to Fossil Hunt,” followed closely by the museum information page. The highest traffic days were 23 August and 31 March, with visitors spending an average of 4.5 minutes on the site. Since going live, the website has attracted 300 unique visitors.

A second phase of development is planned, which will include transferring membership administration to the website to streamline processes. We are also exploring the option of enabling event bookings online, which would reduce administrative pressure on museum staff and trustees while improving accessibility for members and the public. By directing users to the website through social media, we aim to create a clear pathway that encourages engagement, membership sign-ups, donations, and deeper involvement with FODI.

Treasurers Report for 2025/26

Reconciliation of funds. Total funds brought forward (April 2025): £14,471

Income:

- Membership fees: £700
- Donations and other income: £1857

Total Income for 2025/26: £2557

Expenditure:

- Purchase of specialist prep tool for insects and other small fossils: £604
- Purchase of documents by the Rev Fox about the finding of Polacanthus on the IOW: £750
- Donation to support museum attendance at the Lyme Regis Fossil Fair in 2025: £500
- Sundries: £35

Total Expenditure: for 2025/26: £1889

Total funds carried forward to the next financial year (April 2025/26) - £15,139

Statement on Financial Reserves:

FODI does not have any restricted funds so we are able to spend all its reserve funds in pursuit of our charitable aims with the following exceptions

We will hold a reserve of £500 to manage cash flow and cover essential bills such as insurance and website costs. The charity will also hold a reserve of £500 to cover the cost of closure should the charity need to close. The rest of our funds will for the be held as commitments to cover purchases of specimens for the museum and to support the refurbishment of displays.