

Re: THOMAS HOBBS FESTIVAL April 2025

1) Purpose of the report

To update members of progress by the Thomas Hobbes Working Party, to outline project suggestions, including partnering with The Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury Society and others. To request support for the project.

2) Background

- a) Thomas Hobbes is a famous and revered son of Malmesbury, and his philosophical works are taught in schools and universities worldwide. He was born in Westport, in 1588 and had a long and inspiring life until his death in 1679. This committee has been minded to organise/ support a public event or festival featuring Thomas Hobbes, but the Athelstan 1100<sup>th</sup> anniversary has taken precedence this year, due to the significance of the date.
- b) However, part of the Athelstan 1100 Big Dig was a test pit dug in the gardens of the United Reformed Church, where Thomas Hobbes family house was located, and a portion of a wall was uncovered. Time constraints of this community dig meant that no further investigation could be carried out at that point, but there is a local desire to explore this site more fully.
- c) In addition, Malmesbury Town Councillors were contacted by Dr. Vittorio Bufacchi of the University College, Cork following his visit to Malmesbury this summer. He has offered to provide some gratis support and notes the Thomas Hobbes connection to the well-known prequel to the 'Hunger Games', being 'The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes'. He also mentioned that as a first time visitor to the Town, he was surprised not to see more than the commemorative wall plate on the cottage in St. Mary's St.
- d) Incidentally, the author of this report, Cllr. Power, is also the Chair of The Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury Society. This is a 'not for profit' society, which was formed in 1996 to promote Thomas Hobbes' works and recognition of his roots and formative life in Malmesbury. Another member, Cllr. Doody is also a Committee Member of the Society. For information, the active work of this much valued Society included support of a yearly 'Philosophy Town' Symposium, which ceased due to the pandemic and movement of members. Lectures and debates moved online, however the society has been looking at re-introducing some form of in person talks. The popular annual Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury Supper was reinstated post-covid too. This commemorates his life and works, and includes an after dinner talk by expert speaker.
- e) On 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2024 an online meeting was held between Dr. Vittorio Bufacchi, members of this Town Council's working party and committee members of The Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury Society. After introductions, a willingness to work together was expressed, and with some outline ideas for an event in 2025, which all parties wished to investigate further. It was also discussed that the festival project could be organised working as a partnership between the Town Council and the Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury Society, but also including other community organisations, such as the Museum, the Town Team, Malmesbury History Society, Civic Trust, local schools and the like. This would be a smaller, but similar project to the very successful Athelstan 1100.
- f) Initial suggestions put forward as a starting point are as follows:
  - i) DATES
    - Thomas Hobbs Festival – 5th and 6th of April weekend. This date being the nearest weekend to his birth and the weekend before the Easter holidays. Plus the surrounding weeks for extra activities.
  - ii) PHILOSOPHY
    - To organise an in person philosophical talk, by Dr. Bufacchi with links to the Hunger Games prequel. Possibly stream/ record Dr. Bufacchi's talk as part of a small online programme, as some Society supporters live abroad and might not be able to visit. Arrange a visit to Malmesbury School by Dr. Bufacchi as the Head Teacher has already expressed an interest in having students involved in some way.
  - iii) ARCHEAOLGY
    - To organise a dig of the URC Gardens, working with Cotswold Archaeology. (This could be started a bit earlier on in the week before, so that the trench is visible by the weekend for visitors and hopefully some finds be available). Follow up on this, depending on what is found. Still to be decided and could be an exhibition/ talk later on or a booklet.

#### iv) HISTORY

- To organise an in person talk about Thomas Hobbes' life in Malmesbury in the Town Hall. To organise a guided historical walking tours of Westport (Explore Malmesbury ones already in place). Possible exhibition or other involvement by Athelstan Museum. Booklet?  
There is the existing booklet written by Tony MacAleavy and published by the Malmesbury History Society which could be sold/ even reprinted? Film work, especially re the dig and Thomas Hobbes Life, possibly another with a younger persons' view of his philosophy in connection to the Hunger Games etc. Invite Primary Schools to take part in some way.in some way. To organise an event for older and vulnerable local people, perhaps for a special session to hear the historical talk.

#### v) TOWN PROMOTION/ SUPPORT FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES AND ECONOMY

- In a similar way and building on the success of the Athelstan 1100, there is clearly an appetite for visitors to come to Malmesbury for these types of events, which encourages extra spend in the town. It is anticipated that residents and people from the surrounding villages will be interested, but also the festival will appeal to those with an interest in philosophy, history and archaeology.

### 3) Further Considerations

- a) To expand the Town Council Working Party (Currently Cllrs. Doody, Power and Ritchie), to include others, importantly another member from The Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury Society and other organisations.
- b) The Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury Society Supper this year will be on Friday 29th November and it has already been arranged that this will be held at Malmesbury Town Hall. The Supper would be an excellent launch event for the Thomas Hobbes Festival next year. There is likely to be an interested audience with connections to local organisations who may well wish to participate in, support or otherwise help with the Festival. It is also anticipated there will be additional and possibly new attendees, due to the talk being given local historian Tony McAleavy.
- c) As a partner, the Town Council would not be required to provide funding as such for the Supper, but to assist with promotion and other administration.
  - i) The Society will pay for the room usage, arrange the speaker, set up the dining area arrange catering.
  - ii) As is usual with other similar community organisations the Town Council (TIC/ Office) will assist with the selling of the tickets and promotion through usual channels.
- d) The working party considers that the Festival may become an annual event, building up to a larger project in 2028 commemorating the 440<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Thomas Hobbes' birth.

### 4) Financial implications and risks

- a) There will be a requirement for funding for the Thomas Hobbes Festival and activities. Until various groups and organisations have been consulted and activities agreed, this is not currently quantifiable. Excluding the archaeological dig, it is estimated that an initial budget of £1,500 would be required. However the intention is for the Working Party and associates to meet before the next Community and Town Promotions Meeting of November, and more detailed proposals will be presented to the Committee then, with a request for a budget.

### 5) Proposals

- a) To agree that the Town Council will work in partnership with The Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury Society and others in respect of next year's Festival. Also, to agree to the inclusion of others to the Working Party, as considered appropriate by the current members.
- b) To agree that the Working Party may pursue the options for a Festival as outlined. This is to be with an initial budget of £1,500 for the Festival, pending more detailed proposals and bearing in mind the funding for an archaeological dig, should it go forward, may need to be considered separately.

### 6) Recommendations

Members are requested to consider and agree to these proposals.

Cllr. K. Power 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2024