

MINUTES OF THE TOWN PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 31ST MARCH, 2015

Present: Councillor E Bell (Chair) and
Councillors Mrs M R Baird, Mrs G Bleasdale,
B Burn Jnr, S Cudlip, Mrs S Forster, R Meir,
N R Page, K Shaw, C Snowball,
R Whitehead, K Younger

Apologies: Councillors R Arthur, B Allen,
Mrs B E Allen, Mrs J A Bell, Mrs H Cahill,
I Paul, Miss S Morrison

Prior to commencement of the meeting the Chair advised members of this Committee and members of the public that in line with the amendment to 'the public bodies (admission to meetings) act 1960', which came into force in August, 2014, parts of this meeting may be recorded by photographic, video and audio means.

1. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded prior to the start of the meeting of the need to disclose any interests, prejudicial or personal, in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

2. PRESENTATION

The Chair welcomed Mr Tony Forster from Durham County Council to the meeting. Mr Forster was in attendance to provide Members with an update on the future proposals for the Seaham Marina following the acquisition of a Coastal Communities grant.

Mr Forster began by thanking the Town Council for the opportunity to attend the meeting. With the aid of a powerpoint presentation Mr Forster showed how the marina project had transformed the north dock and was now becoming a popular destination. What started as a project to save public access into the dock became much more with the provision of toilet facilities, improved slipway, launch facilities, provision of a dock gate, berthing, visitor pontoons and a viewing terrace. The Waterside building consists of 12 units 8 of which were let, 2 were at an advanced stage of completion, one was under offer and the Marina Management occupied the remaining unit. The occupants included an ice cream shop, a pancake kitchen, a hair and beauty salon, a gift shop, a wool shop, 2 travel agents, and a café. A burger bar would occupy unit 1 which was closer to the slope beach on the ground floor. He envisaged that by the beginning of the school holidays all units would be fully occupied.

The marina had 77 berths of which 66 were let and 4 were available for visiting craft. 7 applications were presently being processed. The facility opened for business in May, 2013 and would be funded by Durham County Council for the first 3 years of trading. The Seaham Harbour Dock Company provided the land. There was, therefore, a requirement for the marina to be self-sufficient by May, 2016. A lot of expenditure was still required to establish it fully within Seaham and more income needed to be generated to allow it to be fully sustainable.

Earlier this year it was announced that the application submitted to the Coastal Communities Fund had been successful with Seaham Marina being awarded £1.74m to be utilised over the next 18 months. The capital expenditure would consist of environmental improvements to make the marina more welcoming. The intention being to remove the industrial fencing with more decorative fencing, improved access gates and also to heighten the Spiles wall. Feedback had been received from berth holders about what was needed and a boatyard and boat hoist were to be introduced, the pontoons would be extended and a Watersports Centre would be established. With the aid of a visual plan Mr Forster outlined the area which was used currently as a parking area which was in the middle of the development area. He explained that all of their acquisitions were to be of a temporary nature with power supplied by a generator as the possibility for future developments to benefit the town as a whole had to be taken into consideration. This area had been identified as a potential boat yard which could be moved to another location if development happened in the future. Mr Forster went on to say that the biggest thing missing from the marina was the potential for water activities and some of the funding would be utilised in the creation of a Watersports and Coastal Centre with the purchase of canoes, kayaks etc. This was envisaged to be operational by autumn next year.

From a revenue point of view funding had been secured for a Business Development Officer, a Water Sports Development Officer and a Water Sports Activity Instructor. Discussions had taken place with the Culture and Sports Department of the County Council to try and secure match funding to develop a range of water sports activities. Pier works were to be undertaken during this year and as a consequence of this car parking would be limited availability.

Mr Forster then went on to talk about opportunities and stated that they hoped to work with Seaham Town Council on a programme of events. They had held some events last year but with limited success. He went on to say that they hoped to become a Coastal Centre and link in with schools and other organisations to encourage people to access the coastal walk, cycle ways etc. New facilities were envisaged for sea kayaking, canoeing, jet skiing, sailing etc. In summing up Mr Forster commented on the various awards given to the Seaham Marina during 2013 and 2014 by professional bodies such as RICS, RIBA, RTPI and Environment Awards.

At this point Members were invited to give their views on developing the offer to residents and visitors and the following comments were made:

- (i) Members stated that the Town Council was fully supportive of what had been happening but critical about the lack of communication with the Town Council by the Marina management. It was commented that the Mayor of Seaham should have been involved more, particularly when awards were given. Mr Forster agreed that they had not communicated well enough.

- (ii) The issue of dog fouling was a concern to the Town Council and the support of the Seaham Marina management would be welcomed with this campaign.
- (iii) DDA compliance was another issue of concern in relation to access to the marina and beach.
- (iv) Efforts should be made to facilitate more car parking areas within the marina as access is down a very steep slope and sometimes the gates were closed.
- (v) Safety was also a concern with irresponsible people going into the sea from the slope beach. Mr Forster stated that they had received enquiries from people wanting to launch from the slope beach but they were aware of the safety issues and often asked for evidence of the individual's capabilities. They wanted to encourage usage by water sport clubs which would set down criteria for suitably qualified individuals. By having a Water Sports Instructor this may address this issue but in the meantime they would ensure as many safeguards were in place as possible.

At this point the Chair thanked Mr Forster for his informative address and he then left the meeting.

RECOMMENDED the Council note the information now reported.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 3RD FEBRUARY, 2015

RECOMMENDED the Minutes of this meeting, a copy of which had been previously printed and circulated to each Member, be approved and signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

4. VISIT COUNTY DURHAM PUBLICATIONS

4.1 Wednesday Grapevine

RECOMMENDED the copies of the Wednesday Grapevines dated 25th February, 4th and 11th March, 2015 published by Visit County Durham, be accepted.

5. FUTURE SPEAKERS

The Committee was advised that Mr Niall Benson of the Durham Heritage Coast Partnership had confirmed his attendance at the next meeting of this Committee in June.

RECOMMENDED the Council note the information now reported.

6. **PRESS OPPORTUNITIES**

RECOMMENDED the Council advise the press of the collaborative work with the Seaham Marina.