

MINUTES OF THE TOWN PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 28th MARCH, 2017

Present: Councillor E Bell (Chair) and
Councillors B Allen, Mrs B E Allen,
Mrs J A Bell, B Burn Jnr, B Burn Snr,
S Cudlip, Miss S Morrison, K Shaw,
C Snowball, B Taylor, R Whitehead,
K Younger.

Apologies: Councillor R Arthur, Mrs G Bleasdale,
Mrs H Cahill, Mrs S Forster, R Meir, I Paul.

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. PRESENTATIONS

Mr Colin Burn, Seaham Harbour Activity Centre

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Mr Colin Burn, Watersports Development Officer, Seaham Harbour Activity Centre.

Mr Burn introduced himself as a local lad who moved to Seaham when he was six years old, lived in Dawdon, learned to swim at the pit pond and attended local schools. He moved away and lived in various parts of the country but returned to Seaham to live two years ago and an opportunity arose to start the centre. The slogan for the centre will be 'Adventure in the heart of Seaham'.

Mr Burn stated that his key objectives are to develop the centre and its offer of activities, creating opportunities for the local community to access adventurous activity, fitness, and recreation, and to establish ongoing customer base to secure the future of the centre. Sport England Funding is available until 2018 so the centre currently has to deliver Sport England's targets until then. However, there is some scope to deliver what local community groups, schools and local people want. Mr Burn also stated that the centre has to be self-funding and sustainable within the next two years.

Mr Burn informed the meeting that he has been involved in the setup of the centre since his employment commenced with Durham County Council in April 2016 as a Water Sports Development Officer. Mr Burn has a pool of freelance coaches who can come and run water sports and land based activities.

Most of the coaches are not local and Mr Burn stated that he would like to change this. He has an allocation of training budget from Sport England which he would like to use to train local people. There is a post being advertised this week for a Sports Activator, which will be an assistant to Mr Burn to assist with sports activities.

Mr Burn has a budget of £35k to purchase equipment which has had an impact on the range of activities which can be delivered. He has currently been working on operations for risk assessment, standard operating procedures, safeguarding, AALA (Adventure Activities Licensing Authority). This has to be in place when working with young people under 18 years old. Mr Burn is currently working on what budget he will have available over the next two years and he is currently in talks with organisations about working with people with disabilities.

Mr Burn has undertaken a vast amount of market research to build up a customer base and he noted there is also quite an appetite for people to access taster sessions. This is especially helpful for beginners who can see if they like the sport. They can then enrol on a 6 or 12 week course in sea kayaking or surfing. There is also a small group of people who are advanced users who can enrol on courses which are beneficial to them. The centre will be accredited with British Canoeing this year which means the centre can run British Canoeing courses which are a national standard.

A Kayak club was started two years ago and now has 60 members and has been quite successful. Durham Triathlon Club came to the centre last year to try some open water swimming. They had 3 people who were training to swim the channel so they wanted some sea water experience. They are interested in using the centre as a base which would be a good income for the activity centre. The centre is engaged with most governing bodies such as sailing, diving, kayaking, swimming, rock climbing and mountain biking.

An events calendar has been arranged. Some events are just ideas at this present time so may not come to fruition it depends on what the public want to engage with. Mr Burn is looking to pull together a stand up paddleboard club which is quite popular at the moment. He is offering taster sessions for this over the 2 weeks of the Easter holidays. Mr Burn noted that water sports is predominately a summer activity as the sea is not always accessible in the colder months so he is looking to have a winter timetable which will include walking. He has been running a walking group on a Wednesday called Walk for Life which is a national programme which is aimed at people who are retired to have some regular exercise. It's a 1.5 hour walk per week. He is also looking to hold rock climbing at Sunderland Wall on a Monday at 6.00pm. The centre will be running all year round even though it won't all be on the water.

Mr Burn noted that the centre has had some successes with their advertising. They have had articles in the County Durham News, This is Durham included a piece on the centre last summer and Ben Fogle came to Seaham Marina and took part in some paddle boarding with Mr Burn. Articles have appeared in the Northern Echo and the centre has its own Facebook page Seaham Harbour Activity Centre with 2500 likes in 5 months.

Mr Burn has also been trying to build up local partnerships so he has been working with local schools in particular Seaham High School with regards to GCSE PE. All children undertaking GCSE PE have to undertake an adventurous activity. This will be county wide for schools so could potentially provide a good income for the centre. Mr Burn also noted that local community groups such as the Sea Cadets, Army Cadets, Police Cadets and Youth Offending Service are also working with him. He has also received some NHS referrals for the walking programme for people who have had strokes or heart attacks.

In terms of this year Mr Burn is planning on running kayaking, canoeing stand up paddle boarding, cycling, snorkelling, mountaineering, hill scrambling, walking, swimming and rock climbing. There will not be any sailing, windsurfing or powerboating the reason being that the budget doesn't extend to those levels of activity. The plan is to get some income into the centre and then include sailing at a later date. To set up sailing the centre would have to purchase an inflatable emergency sailing boat which costs approximately £15k. A sailing dingy costs around £4k each. Mr Burn stated he will look at developing this activity next year. The centre has had some very good and positive user feedback with people wanting to continue using the centre.

The official sign off for the completion of the centre is this week although realistically it will probably be another couple of weeks before the keys are handed over and the centre can be fitted out. Mr Burn is hoping the centre will be fully operational by the end of April. The facilities at the centre are male/female changing rooms with showers, a disabled changing room with shower, a small office for the centre manager, two meeting rooms, one with a balcony looking out to the beach with doors opening out which will be an excellent club room/meeting room/multi-purpose room. The room can also be used for school children to run lessons from there. A room has been taken over by East Coast Fitness as he is going to run a gym from there which will provide a regular income to the centre in rent. There is a large boat storage area, a dry room and an equipment store.

Mr Burn stated that the activities ran last year were Sea Cadet Training, Seaham Harbour Kayak Club, Sea Kayak Journeys, Durham Triathlon Club, Reach for the Beach, Seaham Carnival, Go Canoeing, Walk For Life, Couch 2.5k, Get into Climbing, Water Sports taster sessions and schools programme. Last year the centre worked with 322 unique 14+ year old participants and 3924 attendances. There were 54 unique under 14 year olds with 83 attendances. The targets with Sport England are for working with age 14+ so Mr Burn is currently having to meet these targets but obviously he would want the centre to be used by all ages.

A pilot programme is going to be run with Kevin Woodcock from the Police. The programme is aimed at young people who have been in trouble with the Police to try and keep them engaged in activities with courses in health and safety and drugs awareness.

The Scouts have been in contact with Mr Burn to train Scout Leaders to be able to run activities. He is currently creating a training programme to do this so hopefully the Scouts will use the centre more to provide a further income to the centre.

Mr Burn stated that the centre would like to be involved with the SKIFF Project which is from the British Rowing Build a Boat programme. The boat will be built by the local community and takes approximately 6 months to build and is around 14ft. The only difficulty is where the boat could be housed. Seaham doesn't currently have anything like this so it would be a good opportunity for the local community.

Mr Burn has also been in contact with the Coast Guard around using the Marina as a training venue.

At this point Members were invited to ask any questions and the following comments were made:

- (i) A Member thanked Mr Burn for the informative presentation. He stated that he was particularly interested in the training for local people to create jobs for local people. Is there a requirement for a lifesaving certificate and where would you advise people to go to get this certificate? Is this certificate something that could be acquired from the centre in the future?

Mr Burn stated that the closest place to obtain the lifesaving certificate at present is at North Shields. He believes that neither Hartlepool nor Middlesbrough offer this training. Mr Burn hoped that in the future that this is something that the centre could offer. He had been in talks with Durham County Council's Aquatics Manager with regard to having a beach lifeguard programme in the future at the centre.

- (ii) A Member advised Mr Burn that the AAP are an invaluable resource for funding. The unique feature of the centre is the water sports and the Member questioned how the centre is going to get low income families involved with the activities?

Mr Burn informed Members that the centre has Sport England funding for 2 years and last year the centre ran everything for free. Mr Burn stated that he has been working on a pricing policy with Peter Coe and for the next 2 years can price activities at a reduced rate due to the funding in place but after that the centre has to be viable. The centre has been looking at charges from other organisations and is looking to set kayaking at around £8 per session which is not particularly expensive and is in line with competitors.

- (iii) A Member informed Mr Burn that Raich Carter were running a rookie lifeguarding and beach lifeguard programme along at Roker Beach. The Member then questioned what the uptake from the schools had been and how far wide out from schools have shown interest?

Mr Burn stated he had been working with the Heads at primary schools who hold a primary school partnership meeting which 30+ Heads attend. Senior schools tend to work more in isolation. Mr Burn has primarily focused on Seaham schools but has had a response from Wellfield School and Hopefield School. This is a work in progress.

- (iv) A Member stated that he would like to see the centre become a ‘Howtown’ where children love to go to. Parents spend a lot of money sending their children on trips to various places but if they have a centre here which is reasonably cheap and can have a great weekend is this something that you visualise especially for people who live in-land?

Mr Burn stated that a few of the schools and the Police Cadets have mirrored what you have said. The Police pay for children to go to the Lake District from Durham so they would be interested in doing something more locally. At the moment it’s all about Sport England and getting people on the water. In terms of turning the centre into a ‘Howtown’ the centre would have to be accredited with Outdoor Learning so we would need to set up the coastline and get the centre set up as a Beach School but that is a much longer long term project which will take a few years to set up.

- (v) A Member stated that Mr Burn mentioned the participation of the Coast Guards and wondered what they can do as he felt they were only involved in cliff rescues?

Mr Burn informed the meeting that he had been in talks with Andy Monaghan who is responsible for the whole northern region and not the local Seaham detachment. Mr Monaghan likes Seaham Marina and stated he could do a lot of training from there.

- (vi) A Member questioned what is the lower age range for children to take part in activities you mentioned age 14+ is there anything for younger children?

In terms of water sports it depends on height and weight and the smallest buoyancy aid is for someone around 6 years old. For climbing it is probably about the same age. There is a group on next Monday night at Sunderland Climbing Wall 6.00-9.00pm. All of the information is on Seaham Harbour Activity Centre’s Facebook page.

- (vii) Have you considered some training for swimming lessons as there used to be a swimming class in the docks many years ago I think it is essential that people who are on the water should be able to swim?

Mr Burn agreed and noted that there isn’t any facility for swimming lessons in Seaham. The issue with the centre doing swimming lessons is that it could only be done seasonally in the summer and having swimmers in the water is

particularly dangerous when crafts are in the water so there is a timetabling issue as well. It's not impossible but we would need to get open water instructors. Mr Burn stated that he didn't have enough time to set up a swimming club but he would offer his support for anyone who wanted to do this and let them have access to the centre.

The Chair thanked Mr Burn for attending the meeting and for giving an informative presentation. Mr Burn stated that Councillors are very welcome to visit the centre.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note the information.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 31ST JANUARY, 2017

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 from 1st February, 2017 to 15th March, 2017 which had been published by Visit County Durham, be accepted.

5. REQUEST FOR EXHIBITION OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Following further discussions held at a previous meeting it was agreed not to go ahead with the Exhibition of Photographs at Seaham Town Hall.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note the information.

6. PRESS OPPORTUNITIES

RECOMMENDED that the presentation given by Mr Colin Burn with regards to the Seaham Harbour Activity Centre could be used as a press opportunity.