

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON
26TH SEPTEMBER, 2017**

Present: Councillor E Bell (Chair) and
Councillors Mrs B E Allen, R Arthur,
Mrs J A Bell, Mrs G Bleasdale, Mrs K Brace,
S P Colborn, Mrs V Cummings, Mrs S Forster,
Ms R M Gratton, G N Hepworth,
Mrs L Kennedy, D McKenna, Mrs S Pratt,
K Shaw, T Shepherd, B Taylor,
R Whitehead, Ms L Willis.

Apologies: Councillors S Cudlip, D Cummings,

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

Tony Forster, Durham County Council

The Chair welcomed Mr Tony Forster, Durham County Council to the meeting.

Prior to the consideration of this item, Councillor K Shaw declared an interest, and took no part in the discussion or voting thereon.

Mr Forster stated that he last attended this Committee at the end of last year to give a summary of where developments had reached in Seaham. Mr Forster commented that he has been involved in the regeneration of Seaham since the 1990's and has invested a lot of time in Seaham. He is the Director of the Marina and the Marina has captured most people's imagination with the development of the water sports. The Marina was part of a £2m development with a grant secured through Coastal Communities fund for a boat hoist and boat yard to help the sustainability of the Marina. The one thing that was missing was about putting the sea back into Seaham. Durham wants to reinvent Seaham as a leisure/tourist destination. One of the things looked at from old photographs that was Seaham Marina was a place where people learned to swim and one of the things that Durham could do was to reintroduce water activities and an activity centre. Without the water sports on their own this wouldn't be enough as the

North Sea is not really the best place to do water sports for 6 months of the year so the activity centre was created which is almost in its final state. It is also proposed to take down the old security looking fencing down and replace this with a friendlier looking fence.

The water sports activities started running in May 2016 although the activity centre only opened earlier this year. The centre offers activities on both land and sea which include stand up paddle boarding, kayaking, canoeing, climbing, cycling, bootcamp and walking groups. Kayaking and paddle boarding have proved to be particularly popular as has the bootcamps. The activity centre has also recently secured 20 bicycles which include 3 electric bicycles which have a 50 mile radius. The bicycles are available to use now.

To date the activity centre have had 950 individual people who have participated in an activity on 11,185 occasions in just over a year which are excellent numbers. A lot of very young children aged from 6 years old are participating in the activities and it is proving extremely popular with the younger generation. It has proved so popular that the activity centre have had to purchase wet-suits that are almost suitable for deep-sea divers due to the cold water. These suits will allow the use of water sports to take place from February/March until October/November. The centre are now looking at a winter programme which will include off-site facilities. The Marina has a partnership with Durham University in terms of using the river and also Sunderland Climbing Wall. Within the next week or two a climbing wall will be based in the Marina. The dates for the climbing wall will be available on the Marina's Facebook page. Mr Forster stated that if Seaham Town Council have any further suggestions for activities the Marina would be welcome to hear them.

Mr Forster then went on to discuss the area next to Barclays Bank at North Railway Street and how improvements have been made to the road there.

Mr Forster discussed the bid which was made to HLF Townscape Heritage for £2m which was unsuccessful last year. Durham County Council have been encouraged by HLF to resubmit the application and they have suggested that there needs to be a greater engagement with local groups and business community which may make the bid successful. At the time Durham County Council was turned down for the funding two other applications were approved but they were re-applications which had previously been unsuccessful so hopefully Durham's reapplication may be successful next year. The bid will be re-submitted on the 8th December 2017 and the outcome should be known by mid-way through next year.

Mr Forster discussed the blue barriers at the bottom of Church Street which he noted has been subject to much debate over the years. The removal of the barriers has been out to consultation and full designs have been commissioned. The earliest the works can commence on the removal of the barriers is January 2018. Mr Forster stated that it is currently quite a convoluted route to be able to cross over the road from Church Street to Byron Place and not enough thought had gone into the design and it was taken very much from a traffic and safety point of view but not much thought for the shoppers experience and how they cross the road. Due to the number of buses

the Highways Department felt that the barrier was appropriate and fit for purpose. Concerns have been listened to by the local community, businesses and shoppers about what the barriers do and if anything it stops people from shopping there and crossing the road. The Highways Department have listened to the concerns and the proposals that have been made and it is hopefully the case that people will be able to come down Church Street and be able to cross directly across the road.

There is a lot of work taking place in the background with regards to the shop front improvements and working with traders. The Community Economic Team are leading the developments which are in the pipeline and are currently liaising with developers.

Mr Forster discussed the housing joint venture on the old school site, Malvern Crescent and the old Seaham Colliery site. Kier living are the developers. The joint venture is between Durham County Council and the Homes and Communities Agency which was created in 2010. The joint venture governed the reclamation of the sites and bringing forward a residential site which was held up for a time with the new school. The original figure for housing was 450 but it is slightly less than this number now, 95 at Burnhall Drive, 45 at Malvern Crescent and 290 on the Seaham Colliery site. It is a hybrid application and the detail has gone in for Burnhall Drive and Malvern and the rest is still a work in progress. The anticipated decision date for the application is December 2017. As part of the demolition work there was a lot of red shale found under the car parks so the developers want to assure themselves that the site is how they thought it would be and once the school is fully removed there is a little bit of work to do in terms of the concrete bases that were there they want to remove all of that and lift the drains to carry out further investigations. Durham County Council are hopeful that building will start in February/March 2018.

Mr Forster stated that there are some small scale town centre developments which have now been approved. The Harbour View has been approved for a four storey mixed use development.

Drive 2 Data is another application that has been submitted with the owner's intention to demolish and redevelop the building for mixed use. It is anticipated that a decision will be made on this application in November 2017.

There has been some developments with the Golden Lion and discussions are ongoing to redevelop the site.

Discussions are ongoing with the Inn Between site for a mixed use development. It is anticipated that a planning submission will be made shortly.

Mr Forster raised the issue of the there being lots of outages and power cuts in Seaham and that Northern Powergrid have met with Durham County Council. They are making a £10m investment programme in Seaham to improve the network. Mr Forster suggested to Northern Powergrid as a first port of call is to speak to the Members/Politicians so there is early consultation and he would like to extend an invitation to them. A Member noted that the Town Clerk would extend this invitation to Northern Powergrid.

Members were then given the opportunity to ask any questions and the following comments were made:

- (i) A Member questioned whether there would be a total removal of the blue barriers at the bottom of Church Street?

Mr Forster stated that he doesn't think it will be an entire removal as it has to go through a traffic safety audit so they will come up with a more detailed design which will go out to consultation. The traffic audit will still look at it from a health and safety point of view and there may be further tweaks that need to be made.

- (ii) A Member stated that it says full designs have been commissioned so when will Seaham Town Council see them?

They have been commissioned now but Mr Forster will have to take this back to Durham County Council to see when these will be shared as this is not a scheme he is directly involved in. He will report back to the Deputy Town Clerk with the relevant timescales.

- (iii) A Member stated that they have had quite a few people contact them in regards to housing and affordable housing is not the same as social housing so what kind of provision is likely to be involved with social housing ie the equivalent of the old council housing? Affordable housing is not always affordable to the people of Seaham.

In terms of these houses it will be affordable housing. County Durham Housing are looking at other sites with 160 residential homes proposed in Heathway, Parkside. The model is for 10% affordable. Mr Forster will report back with the exact tenure ratio. Planning approval has been granted subject to S106 agreement which is still pending at this moment in time.

- (iv) A Member queried what is a mixed use development?

Mr Forster stated that it could be a restaurant, café, pub and accommodation which they could use different levels of the building for.

- (v) A Member questioned whether groups from local schools use the Marina?

Mr Forster stated that they do. A number of Academies have used the facilities. Colin Burn the Water Sports Co-ordinator has spoken to the Head Teachers of the local primary and secondary schools and has sent them a number of proposals. As of the summer break there have been 4 schools who have been to the Marina. Over the summer months the Marina have been preparing programmes. All schools now have to participate in an adventurous activity and they have to have a Leaders Adventurous Qualification. Colin holds this certificate but most schools don't have this and schools receive a premium if

they have this qualification. The Marina are trying to tailor this so it hits the schools syllabus and the Marina can work with the schools to get this qualification. The Marina are also speaking to the colleges and universities.

- (vi) A question was raised about a young person who wants to do water sports but doesn't know where to go or who to ask about participating, can they walk off the street and knock at the door?

There is a dedicated water sports Facebook page and people can turn up at the centre or ring the centre. The activity centre is trying to understand what the demand is and they are trying to accommodate and create the courses to meet the demand. £1/4m was secured from Sport England to run a whole host of courses a lot of them have been put on over the summer which were free courses and money was also secured to purchase paddle boards, canoes and kayaks. Paddle boarding has been the thing that the younger people have wanted to do so we have tried to make this the fun factor and learning through play is what the activity centre are trying to encourage.

- (vii) A Member raised a question about what is happening to the Lord Byron pub at Hawthorn Square?

Mr Forster stated there may be talks ongoing in terms of its appearance and he had spoken to the Planning Department prior to this meeting and it isn't something that they raised. Mr Forster stated that he would try and find further information and report this back. A Member stated that there is firm proposals for the Lord Byron to be redeveloped and has been before this Council previously subject to the land being valued by the Legal Department.

- (viii) A Member stated that Seaham Town Council had a presentation a few months previously and they had a possible idea of the sea to sea finish at Seaham Marina. No-one has come back to the Town Council about this. It would definitely promote Seaham.

Mr Forster stated that this has been raised a few times. The reason the Marina was given bicycles is because Seaham is now a destination point and now that the Marina has an Activity Co-ordinator in place the Marina are now saying that they are perfectly placed and they have this on their radar to try and sort.

- (ix) A Member mentioned that they have tried for over a year now to have the lifeboat memorial moved from Bessie's Hole and for it to be moved to the Marina. Members of the family who lost relatives on the lifeboat have requested this to be moved?

Mr Forster stated that the Marina have been asked this question. The Marina believes that it is quite an emotive thing and the Marina are not averse to doing this but feel that some people will be averse and some people won't be. If the Marina are approached and have the backing of others to do this they would

give it some consideration. They do not want to be seen as asking and promoting this as their idea as they do not wish to upset people especially those people who lost family members.

- (x) A Member stated that they didn't hear anything mentioned about disabled provision at the Marina?

Mr Forster stated that the Marina have accommodated a number of people with different circumstances and they will do everything they can to accommodate everyone. There are no specific programmes but if people come down and ask for certain things then the Marina will absolutely do that.

The Chair thanked Mr Forster for his attendance and the information provided then Mr Forster left the meeting.

The Chair stated that the Town Council should keep their eye on developments such as the Golden Lion to ensure that the developments are what the Town Council wants in Seaham.

A Member also mentioned the works that Northern Powergrid have carried out at Cottages Road and that the back fill job is very poor. These are issues that the Town Council can raise with Northern Powergrid when they attend a meeting to discuss the works in Seaham.

RECOMMENDED that the Deputy Town Clerk invites Northern Powergrid to attend a meeting with Members to discuss their investment in Seaham.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 20TH JUNE, 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 7th June to 13th September, 2017 which had been published by Visit County Durham, be accepted.

5. BETTER PROMOTION OF THE COUNCIL AND ITS EVENTS

It was noted that the Town Council give out notices to shops some shops place them in the windows and some do not and people are complaining that they don't know about events. A suggestion was made that plastic covered notices could be placed on the Victorian Lights along North Terrace. A Member suggested a glass fronted notice

board with all events displayed in there which would fit in with the Victorian Lights theme.

RECOMMENDED that the Deputy Town Clerk investigates the possibility of the notice board and the costs involved and to report back to Members.

6. REVIEW OF COUNCIL GIFTS

The Deputy Town Clerk stated that the current gifts such as paperweights which are offered as civic gifts for twinning etc are quite dated. He would like the opportunity to explore updating the civic gifts using Seaham artefacts such as sea glass and the Seaham brewery.

RECOMMENDED that the Deputy Town Clerk explores this matter further and reports back with costs and possible ideas.

7. PRESS OPPORTUNITIES

RECOMMENDED the Council note that no press opportunities existed from this meeting.