

Devon's Creative Coasts

A Report of the
Creative Coasts Seminar

20th November 2007



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Summary:

This report follows the **Creative Coasts Seminar** held on the 20 November 2007 when the Coastal Towns of Devon came together to debate opportunities to work on the particular range of challenges facing them and consider the report of the **Governments Select Committee Inquiry** into Coastal Towns to which Devon County Council and Exmouth Town Council had made submissions.*

The Seminar was successful in bringing many of Devon's Coastal Towns together to see whether there was merit in joint action to areas of common concern and interest.

Over sixty people contributed to the day including: Councillors, Local Authority and Agency Officers, Community Organisations, Project Group Representatives and guest presenters.

The day also offered a Market Place Display Arena, Workshops, Interactive Sessions and inspirational presentations from **BBC Hit TV Series 'Coast' presenter Dr. Mark Horton** plus key specialist representatives from Devon County Council and Exmouth Town Council.



Creative Coasts Guest Dr. Mark Horton

The seminar was supported by a small multi-agency planning group who also undertook to facilitate the development of a package of potential actions that coastal towns could take forward based on the outputs of the day. These outputs have now been analysed and are presented within this report with supporting documentation for consideration as a basis for **moving Devon's coastal towns agenda forward**.

Delegates attending the seminar were asked to indicate their interest in being part of a Coastal Towns Network or Action Group to take further action collaboratively. The levels of interest and feed-back were extremely positive with many indicating a willingness to take part in a Coastal Towns Network or Action Group to work on **emerging issues such as branding, marketing, funding**, and prioritising those future actions.

The report concludes with an invitation to convene a second **Creative Coasts** workshop to address the issues raised herein and either review or develop the best approach to branding for each town, within a Devon context, and explore the **potential for ongoing collaborative working**.

* It was reported at the Creative Coasts Seminar that Government had announced its intention to re-visit its earlier report into Coastal Towns accepting that there were issues requiring further consideration. This was timely and welcome news and raises the prospect of making further valuable contributions to the debate.

The Creative Coasts Seminar Programme for 20th Nov 2007

- **'Welcome'** Cllr. Joy Whipps Mayor of Exmouth Town Council opened the Seminar with a warm welcome from the people of Exmouth
- **'The National and Regional Context'** by Angela King of the DCC Regeneration Team who provided the background to recent Government inquiry into Coastal Towns and the work Nationally to address the issues and the context for further Joint Action. (You can view this presentation at www.devontownsforum.org.uk)
- **'Socio-economic patterns in coastal Devon'** by Jamie Evans of DCC Economy Unit outlining current trends and their effects relating to: health, employment, disability, deprivation, business and investment and particular issues affecting younger and older people. (You can view this presentation at www.devontownsforum.org.uk)
- **'A local perspective: The Exmouth Experience'** by John Workersien Clerk to Exmouth Town Council sighting Exmouth response to the recent Coastal Towns inquiry and the challenges and opportunities faced by Exmouth and as a case-in-point for Coastal Towns generally
- **'Who Cares for the Coast?'** by Dr Mark Horton of University of Bristol gave a presentation of the sheer importance of recognising the value of our Coastal Towns and associated Heritage. Also, of the need for coherent and imaginative approaches for its preservation, use, enjoyment and value to present and future generations.
- **Panel Question & Answer Session:** in which all presenters responded to a lively and instructive session of questions from delegates reflecting the compass of Coastal Towns challenges and opportunities around which future actions could be based.
- **Themed Workshops:** Introduced and facilitated by Lesley Smith Secretary of the Devon Association of Parish Councils and Roger Grainger DCC County Community Strategy Officer. Provided in-depth facilitated sessions to test and tease out some of the priority issues.
- **Résumé:** by Dr Mark Horton who gave a rounded summary of the day, revisiting several of the emerging themes from earlier discussions and setting a context for the next steps
- **Close:** Tom Langdon Davies Event Chairman and Chairman of the Devon Towns Forum thanked all participants and closed the event with an invitation for delegates to come together again following the distribution of the event report.



Creative Coasts Market Place Displays

A great many displays and information boards provided a lively and informative Market Place including the following groups and organisations:

- Devon Tourism and Skills Network
- BURA Seaside Network
- Devon Association for Renewable Energy
- Dawlish Town Council
- Devon Rural Network
- Devon County Transport
- Teignmouth Community Association
- North Devon District Council
- Marine Plymouth
- Senior Councils for Devon
- Devon Reinvestment Service
- DCC Economy Team



Networking:

- It is worth noting that many delegates found great value in the Networking opportunities offered throughout the day. The ability to meet informally with so many delegates from Devon's different Coastal Towns and Organisations proved both popular and productive.
- The day also included an excellent lunch and refreshments provided by our venue hosts at the Devon Cliffs Holiday Park which greatly added to the Networking experience enjoyed by all



Talk Training Display



Dr Mark Horton and Lesley Smith MBE



Teignmouth Together Display

Seminar Analysis

The following analysis includes a summary of delegates and facilitators comments, workshop discussions and event feedback sheets.

1. Seminar Feedback Sheets

An analysis of the event feedback sheets revealed the following:

1.1 Statistics:

- The event was attended by over 60 people including Councillors, Local Authority and Agency Officers, Community Organisation and Project Group members. There were also 12 individual organisations displaying in the Market Place Arena.
- **96 %** of the 27 delegates who completed feedback sheets thought issues could be better tackled by Coastal Towns working together.
- **82%** were prepared to be part of a Coastal Towns Network for Coastal towns to work together
- **89%** felt a Task Group to work on particular issues was a good idea and
- **70%** were willing to be part of such a Task Group
- Devon's Coastal Towns and District Councils were well represented including: Brixham, Budleigh Salterton, Dawlish, Exmouth, Seaton, Ilfracombe, Sidmouth, Teignmouth plus Torridge and North Devon.
- Local organisations and agencies were also well represented including: Devon County Council, Exmouth Town Council, the Devon Rural Network, the Market and Coastal Towns Association, the South West Regional Development Agency, the Devon Association for Renewable Energy, the Devon Towns Forum and Exeter University

1.2 Emerging Themes

Several themes emerged as the 'delegates priority issues' these were analysed and are summarised below as:

- **Working Together:** General concerns about ***lack of a joined up approach*** at present between local authorities, service providers/agencies, communities and between coastal towns themselves. ***Working together seen as essential*** for delivering better services and to solve problems by reducing duplication and using shared strengths. Particular opportunity identified for ***improved and co-ordinated branding and marketing*** of coastal towns unique & joint selling points, and continued lobbying of central government & politicians.
- **Employment & Skills:** Concerns about ***seasonal employment***, commuting out for work, low incomes, lack of skills. Importance of retaining and attracting employers through promotion and training the workforce (especially young people) to improve employability & skills. Need for quality, year-round jobs – opportunities identified through development of sectors including renewable energy, maritime and quality tourism offer.

- **Environment Asset Management:** Concerns expressed about the threat of *climate change* and the *quality of the built and natural environment*. Need identified to both preserve and use the natural and built environment to maximise the great value of our landscape, heritage and culture, whilst avoiding risk of inappropriate development and overbuilding. Particular opportunities identified to improve the quality of the built environment through investment and to use the natural environmental resources to develop renewable energy.
- **Investment & Funding:** Concerns about *lack of investment* (public & private), especially in infrastructure and the built environment over many years, and need to reverse this through working together and *maximising funding opportunities*.
- **Transport and Access:** Some concern about congestion, *inadequate transport infrastructure*, and access to services. Identified need to invest to improve transport links and achieve a better integration of different and alternative modes of transport widely recognised. Need for *joined-up and innovative approach* to deliver better integrated service provision generally.
- **Community Well-being & Cohesion:** Concerns expressed around *increasing populations* & divisions between different groups within the population, impact of second homes, levels of poverty & deprivation, lack of pride/apathy. Tackling need for affordable housing, *tackling deprivation*, addressing high levels of incapacity benefit and health issues were seen as important issues.

1.3 Success Stories

There was recognition that there was a lot to be gained from looking at the many success stories and learning what had worked well; a sample of the reported notable successes include:

- [The North Devon Biosphere](#)
- [The Jurassic Coast](#)
- [Teignmouth Regeneration](#)
- [A vibrant Arts, Crafts and Culture sector in Devon](#)
- [Brigham Regeneration](#)
- [St. Ives and other areas of Cornwall](#)
- [Ilfracombe Transform](#)
- [The Market and Coastal Towns initiative programme](#)
- [Renewed Interest in Marine Heritage](#)
- [Increased community interest, awareness and involvement](#)
- [Visitor Centre Exmouth a centre for Sustainability](#)

1.4 Opportunities Risks and Challenges:

1.4.1 Opportunities:

Delegates identified the following as significant Opportunities

- **Harnessing the renewed interest and opportunity presented by the marine, renewable energy, tourism, arts and craft sectors**
- **Identifying and building on the towns unique and joint selling points,**
- **Integrated and sustainable transport development**
- **A joined up approach with multi-agency and cross-sector working.**

1.4.2 Risks and Challenges

When asked to identify what delegates regarded as the most serious challenge or risk facing Coastal Towns the following themes emerged and are summarised here:

- **Development:** staying prosperous without being ruined by too much development
- **Social:** Social problems relating to poverty including apathy, demographic change and lack of long term funding
- **Economic:** Overseas competition, lack of employment, relevant skills and investment particularly a continued lack of investment by government
- **Environment:** Climate, environmental quality

1.5 Need for Collaborative Working, Coastal Towns Network and/or Action Group:

1.5.1 Finally delegates were asked if they thought working collaboratively on the issues identified would be helpful. Significant numbers agreed with many expressing an interest in being part of a Coastal towns Network and/or an Action Group.

1.5.2 Based on this high level of interest and commitment this report concludes with an invitation to come together again to discuss a range of fairly specific issues gleaned from the first Creative Coasts event and to explore ways forward.

Please see the invitation and RSVP slip for the follow-up Creative Coasts 2 workshop on page 14

2. Workshop Outputs and Conclusions:

2.1 The workshops took the form of small groups identified by theme and geography to consider the following topics:

- Economy
- Natural & Built Environment
- Heritage
- Social and Cultural Issues

2.1.1 Each group had an appointed facilitator and note taker and were asked to consider the following questions in relation to a given theme; for example economic or environmental, marketing or demographic issues. The groups were then asked to discuss the following:

1. What are we doing about this theme now?
2. What more can we do about this theme

Each group was then asked to identify:

- a) Which of these suggestions would benefit from collective action, and
- b) To identify up to 3 priority Actions for creating successful Coastal Towns

2.1.2 Each workshop was visited in turn by an observer to pick-up emerging issues. Although the subjects discussed in each group varied the workshops provided valuable commentary and formed the basis of an analysis which revealed the following key issues:

2.2 The comments and notes arising from each of the workshops are summarised here:

- There were strong indications of the need to unlock skills and to utilise the positive experience of successful partnerships and initiatives to support the work of others
- There was a widespread understanding of the need to develop brands, skills and a culture to ensure that visitors have a high quality experience – at the moment the quality offered is very variable
- More needed to be done to make it clear to potential employers that there is a workforce available in coastal towns, and it is therefore worth bringing employment opportunities to those towns and to help people, where appropriate, who are on disability or long term benefit back into employment.
- There was potential for those who might have retired or moved to the coastal towns to become involved in their new community and to give the benefit of their skills
- There was some concern that those on low incomes and those who are comfortably off may become entrenched in isolated neighbourhoods leading to poor social cohesion
- Use community skills to build on the heritage and cultural life of the area, as a rich and valued culture has economic value in attracting inward spending, good employment opportunities, as well as building positive social cohesion.

- Concern was expressed that we did not always make the best use of Devon's many special designations and were not always good at communicating our successes. There was a need to ensure local people are well informed about the special designations and of their national and international value
- Connect up those talking about environmental quality, and those talking about the quality of the built environment and pay proper regard to the protection of these areas when making planning decisions
- Increased and improved co-ordination of resources was needed to ensure all areas benefited, but specific targets could be agreed and tackled systematically. No area should fail to benefit from shared experience.
- To continue with plans for the development of a network and /or an action groups to pursue priority issues.

2.3 Conclusions and Reflections of the Day

Dr. Mark Horton concluded the Seminar with a reflection of the topics discussed and debated and offered some personal observations as to the challenges and opportunities; in summary Dr Horton stressed the following:

- **We** are the custodians of a **precious national and international heritage** which brings special responsibilities and extra costs. These have to be met if we are to realise a better future for our coastal towns and not destroy the means by which these areas can ensure their long term economic and environmental sustainability.
- This heritage also brings **great opportunities** and we need joined up thinking along and between the coasts of Devon if we are to see it valued and enjoyed in the future we need to take stock of what we have and market it appropriately. For example the untapped interest and cultural connections between Devon, America and the Continent.
- There is a **vital role** for the external agencies to play, for example the superb railway at Dawlish which is probably one of the best loved railways in the world.
- The need to site **renewable energy** installations and all development with great care.
- There is a **bottom up/top down tension** in communities between grassroots ideas for regeneration and strategic priorities for funding and a need to interface these through a joined-up approach and **better communication**
- Tourism industry hospitality needs to be of a consistently **good quality** and this is not always the case;
- Integrated **transport** is important to move people around sustainably
- Facilitation and support for Local Communities to become **more active and involved**
- Must remember that **communities own the places they live in** so in order for change to be sustainable and successful it needs to be developed and implemented with robust involvement and engagement of those who live there which will induce a real sense of pride.

- Finally we need to work out ***what is special, unique and interesting*** and ***market these unique selling points***. This will maximise the economic value of the designations with high quality, culturally sensitive and distinct identities that are attractive to the visitor, inhabitants and investor alike.

2.4 Seminar Chairman ***Tom Langdon Davis of the Devon Towns Forum***, closed the seminar by thanking all contributors, in particular Dr Mark Horton for his excellent presentation, enthusiasm and for so generously giving of his time.

3. Proposals and Next Steps:

3.1 Following an analysis of the material emerging from the Seminar and Delegate feedback the Creative Coasts Project Steering Group proposes ***Creative Coasts 2*** as a follow-up workshop. This will enable a review of the emerging issues and priorities and consider developing unique brands for each Coastal Town but to do so within a Devon-wide context.

3.2 Proposal:

A specific proposal of this report arising from the Seminar is to invite all interested parties to a follow-up Workshop that would further explore the issues raised at the first Creative Coast Seminar and determine a set of priority actions such as:

- Deciding if a Network or Action Group should be formed to pursue these issues
- Building on the lobbying/influencing aspect of Devon's Coastal Towns
- Unlocking skills and capacity for employment and volunteering
- Pursuing the branding and marketing issues raised.
- Developing an appropriate action plan to address the agreed priorities
- Consideration of available funding opportunities (see appendix 3)
- Developing a 'Devon' response/ reaction to the Govt's 2nd Coastal Towns report involving representatives from the towns to put together a position statement

If you would like to attend the *Creative Coasts 2*** workshop please reserve your place ***NOW*** by contacting the Devon Towns Forum by Phone, Post or E-mail as per attached invitation on page 14**

Appendix 1

Presentations and Information

To preserve resources all Creative Coasts document are available to view or download from www.devontownsforum.org.uk including:

- Devon County Council Approved Response to ODPM Inquiry into Coastal Towns
- Coastal Issues Special Interest Group summary of The Select Committee Report on Coastal Towns
- Event Feed back Analysis
- PDF version of the Creative Coasts Report

The following presentations are also available to view or download at www.devontownsforum.org.uk

- 'The National and Regional Context' by Angela King of the DCC Regeneration Team
- 'Socio-economic patterns in coastal Devon' by Jamie Evans of DCC Economy Unit
- 'The Exmouth Experience' presentation by John Workersien Clerk to Exmouth Town Council

Appendix 2

Acknowledgements

The Creative Coasts Steering Group wish to acknowledge the contributions of all those supporting or attending the Creative Coasts Seminar, including:

Dr Mark Horton
Angela King DCC
Jamie Evans DCC
John Workersien Exmouth TC
Lesley Smith MBE
Roger Grainger DCC
Tony Collins Exmouth TC
Cllr Joy Whipps Mayor Exmouth TC
Tom Langdon Davies Chairman DTF
All those providing displays
The Manager and staff of the Devon Cliffs Holiday Park
The Catering staff at Devon Cliffs for an excellent lunch
Devon County Council
Devon Association of Parish Councils
Exmouth Town Council
The Devon Towns Forum
Devon Tourism and Skills Network
Devon Rural Network

Appendix 3

Potential sources of funding to regenerate coastal towns, as at February 2008

| | | | Empl & skills | Environment | Public Space |
|-------------------------------|--|---|---------------|-------------|--------------|
| Access to Nature | New in 2008; up to £500k; potential to link with PROW projects to improve access to SWCP | http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/leisure/grants-funding/default.htm | | X | X |
| Adventure Capital Fund | Under review | http://www.adventurecapitalfund.org.uk/ | X | | |
| Aggregates Levy | Projects which reduce affects of aggregates extraction - only available in eligible areas | http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/conservation/grants-funding/alsf.htm | | X | |
| Architectural Heritage Fund | For Building Preservation Trusts and charities | http://www.ahfund.org.uk/ | | | X |
| CABE Coastal Towns | New £45m government grant to regenerate coastal towns through arts and culture | http://www.cabe.org.uk/ | | | X |
| Community Spaces | New in 2008; £50m scheme | http://www.community-spaces.org.uk/ | | X | X |
| Competitiveness (EU) | For innovation & knowledge - work will be commissioned so may not be appropriate | http://www.southwestrda.org.uk/what-we-do/policy/european-prog/competitiveness.shtm | X | | |
| Co-operation (EU) | For transnational co-operation - potential for cross-border network of coastal towns | http://www.southwestrda.org.uk/what-we-do/policy/european-prog/territorial-co-opera.shtm | X | X | X |
| David Knightly Pride of Place | Small grants (up to £5,000) for public space enhancements | Tel: 01264 738268 | | | X |
| Devon Renaissance | Projects with an economic benefit - rural focus (larger towns may be excluded) | http://www.ruraldevon.org/ | X | | |
| English Heritage | Includes local area partnership funding for conservation areas | X | X | X | X |
| Esme Fairbairn Foundation | Cultural life, environment, education & social inclusion - esp. enterprising approaches | | | | |
| European Fisheries Fund (EU) | UK consultation on the fund due early in 2008 | | | | |
| LIFE Plus (EU) | Innovative environmental projects with European significance | | | | |
| RDPE (Defra/EU) | For rural areas so less scope for coastal towns but possibilities re access to rural areas; rural/urban fringe; training | X | X | X | X |
| South West RDA | For projects in line with the Regional Economic Strategy | | | | |
| Tudor Trust | Flexible funding - responding to imaginative solutions to tackling difficult issues | | | | |
| Townscape Heritage Initiative | Up to £2m grants to regenerate historic areas in towns | X | X | X | X |
| Big Lottery Fund | For social and environmental initiatives | X | X | X | X |

Appendix 4 Invitation to Creative Coasts 2 on 24 April 2008

Your Invitation to attend Creative Coasts 2

Creative Coasts 2 follows the Creative Coasts Seminar of the 20th November 2007 to offer an opportunity to those attending the first Seminar and those with an interest in exploring a collaborative approach to the issues affecting Devon's Coastal Towns and to consider the conclusions of this report.

Creative Coast 2 is free to registered delegates and will be held on the **24 April 2008** in Bideford, Northern Devon. **Please note details of the venue will be confirmed at time of making your reservation.**

Reserve your places ***NOW*** by using the reply slip below or by contacting the ***Devon Towns Forum*** by e-mail at info@devontownsforum.org.uk or by phone on 01805 624874

Draft Programme for Creative Coasts 2

- 11.00 Welcome and introductions
- 11.15 Review of Creative Coast Seminar and Report
- 11.30 Creating a Creative Coasts Network and Action Group in Devon
- 12.00 Developing a 'Devon' response to Govt's 2nd Coastal Towns Report
- 12.30 **Lunch and Networking**
- 1.30 Focus groups to look at:
 - a) branding & marketing,
 - b) Unlocking skills & capacity for employment and volunteering
- 2.45 Summary of agreed actions
- 3.15 Tea Close

Cut Here -----

Yes, I would like to attend *Creative Coasts 2* to be held on Thursday 24th April 2008. Venue will be confirmed by return.

Postal RSVP's to: Creative Coasts, c/o The Devon Towns Forum, PO Box 25, Torrington, EX38 7WY. Please notify any dietary or special requirements.

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Your Name: | |
| Your Telephone Number | |
| Your e-mail address | |
| Your Coastal Town or Area | |
| You will be representing | |
| Any Special Requirements | |

Creative Coasts is supported by: Devon County Council, Devon Towns Forum, Devon Association of Parish Councils, Exmouth Town Council, Devon Rural Network, Devon Tourism and Skills Network, Devon Economy and Skills Unit,