

## Appendix 1

### The Ilfracombe Regeneration Programme

Recognising the need to implement a step-change in Ilfracombe in response to the town's socio-economic challenges, North Devon Council has led the establishment of a Regeneration Programme for the town. This has been stimulated and shaped by the 2005 Town Centre Study, undertaken by Terence O'Rourke, that recommended a number of key actions that could reinforce Ilfracombe as a visitor destination, build on its under-utilised maritime assets, and considerably improve linkages and connections within the town. Working with partners, including Ilfracombe Town Council; Ilfracombe CIC (born out of Ilfracombe Alliance, the MCTi organisation); Transform (a pilot rural Neighbourhood Management Programme in the south west); Devon County Council; SWERDA; and the private sector, a range of projects have been prioritised, focusing on physical regeneration.

The projects within the Regeneration Programme include:

- **Harbour development** – redevelopment of the open southern quay area, and of the northern quay, to provide residential, retail and workspace. To develop a southern breakwater providing greater capacity and protection to the popular harbour, reclaiming land to create a much larger commercial quay, and development of a pedestrian lift-up bridge to provide a circular route around the harbour.
- **A new Ilfracombe ferry service** – led by the private sector, a fast cat passenger ferry service to Swansea and Cardiff
- **High Street enhancement** – improvement of the public and private realm, and of the retail offering
- **Workspace provision** – provision of start up workspace with business support facilities
- **Seafront enhancement** – redevelopment of Ilfracombe Museum (in partnership with neighbouring Landmark Theatre), to create a sustainable attraction with additional, flexible space for exhibitions and performance activity and workshops for artist/makers.
- **Improved movement and connection throughout the town** – better located and signed car parking, improved traffic flow, and better pedestrian connections between key sites within the town

Based on the large task ahead North Devon Council and SWERDA are working to establish additional capacity for this Regeneration Programme, in the form of a Northern Peninsula Delivery Team. Funded by SWERDA, Devon County Council, North Devon Council and Torridge District Council the Northern Peninsula Delivery Team will comprise 3 regeneration posts plus support, and will focus on delivering the regeneration of key sites within Ilfracombe and Bideford (within Torridge District Council). Final stage negotiations are currently underway between all parties. In their corporate plan 2008 – 2011 SWERDA identify a number of priority locations within the south west, where there are issues and opportunities surrounding socio-economic conditions. The 'Northern Peninsula' an area touching northern Cornwall, covering Torridge and North Devon, and reaching to West Somerset, is SWERDA's only priority rural area for investment.

While the Northern Peninsula Delivery Team posts are being agreed and recruited North Devon Council has been driving forward the next stage of redeveloping the harbour. A funding package is confirmed for £250,000 from North Devon Council, Devon County Council and SWERDA. This funding will be used for detailed design work for a new breakwater, commercial quay and pedestrian bridge; full exploration of the costs and values of residential development on the southern and northern quays – which will make a significant contribution to the development costs – and a detailed traffic and transport

assessment and strategy for the whole town. This latter piece of work is particularly important as it will inform a number of other projects within the Regeneration Programme, including the Seafront, High Street and workspace development.

The development of the passenger ferry service is led by a private sector operator. Research and feasibility work has been completed and the company has identified the vessels to purchase. Their intention is to have a pilot service between Ilfracombe and Swansea up and running by late 2009. The key market for the passenger ferry includes holiday and short break visitors to North Devon, the VFR market (visiting friends and relations), the student opportunity, and cultural links with sport and performance in South Wales. The passenger ferries proposed, known as 'fast cats' are able to use Ilfracombe harbour as it currently is and do not rely on any maritime infrastructure investment to operate.

In anticipation of many of the projects being delivered, and acknowledging the overall desire to position Ilfracombe as a good quality, accessible and attractive visitor destination, partners have also been working with traders in the town to start looking at strengthening the product being offered to visitors. Work with the High Street Traders on this area, led by Devon County Council, is at an early stage, but is nevertheless an integral part of the programme to ensure local businesses are able to maximise the opportunities afforded by a larger harbour, ferry service, improved attractions and public realm, and a generally more appealing destination.

Whilst the Town Centre Study recommends the development of a number of key town centre sites and connections, it is also accepted that an important consideration in the regeneration of the town is that of employment space. A 2007 study into the supply and demand of workspace within and around Ilfracombe revealed that a number of larger employers lacked space to expand, and that start up and growing firms had very limited options within the town or even close by. Alongside the harbour development work SWERDA, Devon County Council and North Devon Council are also funding work investigating the potential of developing managed workspace at two locations on the outskirts of the town.

The Seafront is one of Ilfracombe's three key sites alongside the harbour and the High Street. Historically this area has always attracted those interested in health, leisure, and pleasure pursuits. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the focus was on the unique Tunnels beaches with their bathing pools to the west of the site, the promenade eastwards, and the Pavilion and winter gardens on the Seafront. The Tunnels beaches have been restored in recent years, and now provide a contemporary and curious attraction. The winter gardens have long since disappeared, along with the Pavilion, but the arresting Landmark Theatre with its award winning, cooling tower inspired architecture has been built here, alongside the Ilfracombe museum, ensuring that the Seafront remains a cultural hub and still acts as a natural draw for visitors. The public realm is extremely poor here however, dysfunctional and unplanned, and the Seafront as a whole is shabby, with poor connections within, as well as to other areas of Ilfracombe. Despite its assets and potential assets the town as a whole lacks a strong proposition and identity. The development plans for the Seafront centre on improving the public realm, cementing the identity of the town, and enhancing the existing assets to provide a contemporary, exciting and all weather offering to visitors.

Ilfracombe has topographical challenges, and the layout of the town is not conducive to encouraging visitors to explore. The 3 main areas – the harbour, the seafront and the high street – are detached from each other by street layout and steep hills, despite a relatively close proximity in reality. An important and overarching piece of work within the Regeneration Programme is that of a traffic and transport strategy. This piece of work is

included with the harbour studies and is due to commence in summer 2008. It will assess and recommend options to improve traffic flow, to encourage better and more sustainable travel around the town, and to connect Ilfracombe's main assets, particularly in pedestrian terms.

Alongside all these physical regeneration projects are a number of social and employment regeneration projects. Transform, the neighbourhood management programme, are driving activity to reduce benefit claim rates, increase skill levels, and encourage people to take the first steps towards a more economically active lifestyle, and are supported by the local authority partners plus other government agencies in delivering such activity.