

Appendix 4

The Vision for the Seafront

The Ilfracombe Seafront project aims to develop a strong cultural theme based on the Victorians love of the curious, including the natural world. Contemporary architects and experimental artists will be engaged in every aspect of the project, to develop the town's potential as a focus for performance and visual art.

Ilfracombe grew from a fishing village to a fashionable 19th century resort in a very particular manner – constrained by its spectacular topography of towering cliffs and rocky inlets and encouraged by its warm climate and stunning biodiversity. The area encompassed by the project is a Victorian creation – a long pier, cliff walks, bathhouse, theatre and a museum of curiosities from all around the world.

But today the seafront area is dysfunctional and unplanned, suffering significant underinvestment to address current or future needs and aspirations. The assets in this area need linking in both a physical and a thematic way to create a coherent public area by:

- developing the town's existing cultural infrastructure (Landmark Theatre and Pavilion, Museum, Tunnels, Bath House, Pier and interlinking spaces)
- creating a new attraction and visitor centre that will develop the themes of Victorian exploration and overseas links for fun and for education purposes
- producing a programme that links and contrasts the dynamic nature of Victorian curiosity and experimentation with contemporary themes
- harnessing the resident artistic community (especially visual arts and crafts), including high-profile artists such as Damien Hirst.

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This project is intended to increase both the number and profile of people using this space and visiting this area, and maximising opportunities from the planned Welsh ferry service and enhanced harbour. In terms of visitors there is a desire to expand the reliance on the coach holiday market and in particular to increase the family visitor market, short break market, and active holiday market (walking, yachting, extreme sports) based on an enhanced cultural, heritage and environmental offering. A key aspect to the project is increasing all-weather activity in Ilfracombe and providing a high quality seaside resort experience.

The seafront project will include:

- 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.

- investment in the urban space of the Seafront to champion Ilfracombe's identity, and improve visual and physical connections around this dramatic but rather disjointed area. Specific ideas include creating a huge external 'stage' for performances, exhibitions and site-specific installations and a reworking of the Crazy Golf as a contemporary work of art.
- the use of innovative arts and science projects that will utilise the Victorian dynamic to override the stereotype of this era and provide imaginative links with other towns, cities and countries for residents and visitors (e.g. 'visiting' towns previously linked with Ilfracombe via internet satellite 'telescope' or sound dishes)
- development of trails around Ilfracombe, including signage and interpretation, high quality street furniture and fixtures, innovative paving, installations and possibly a steel and glass walkway to Capstone. These trails will ensure specific sites and the dramatic landscape contribute to the enhancement of the town as a whole.