Seaton Urban Renewal Forum 27.07.22

Attendees:

- Alison Hayward - EDDC
- Keir Duffin – DCC
- Zoe Smith - DCC
- Carl Northcott- Northcott Building Contractors
- Sophia Mosely – Gateway Theatre
- Linda Perry - EDDC
- Cllr Cheryl Wood – Seaton Town Council
- Cllr Marcus Hartnell – EDDC
- Steve Waites – Seaton Tramway
- Cllr Dan Ledger - EDDC
- Cllr Nick Hookway - EDDC
- Eleanor Carr – Unique Boutique Events
- Cllr David Wright – Seaton Town Council
- Cllr Jack Rowland - EDDC
- Julia Mutlow – Seaton Town Council
- Jo Hemery – Seaton Town Council
- Gareth Jones – HJA
- Isabel Compton – HJA

Apologies: James Tribble, Cllr Amrik Singh, Cllr Paul Hayward

1.2 Appointment of Cllr Paul Hayward as Chair of Seaton Urban Renewal Forum

1.2.1 In absence of Cllr Hayward, Cllr Rowland to Chair today's meeting.

1.3 Presentation by Hardisty Jones Associates

1.3.1 Gareth Jones presentation – the process of urban renewal is about strategic intervention for structural economic change in Seaton.

1.3.2 Five themes were identified in the previous online workshop on 15 June. These include; Quality of economy and employment, Education, training, and opportunities for young people, Seafront and town centre public realm, Underutilised assets and Housing affordability and availability

1.3.3 Interventions as part of the programme for Urban Renewal are specific to Seaton, however it is important to think about Seaton in its larger functional area. There may be benefits to linking Seaton and Axminster together, via the Stop Line Way, but also through identifying shared themes in transport and accessibility and skills to make a stronger case for funding. The fortunes of Seaton are linked to Axminster and other rural towns. A collegiate approach to regeneration will help tackle complex issues like accessibility

1.3.4 Discussion on the impacts of homeworking/remote working on the population of Seaton and East Devon. Are more young people and families staying in or moving to the town as a result of this? Could this be driving up house prices? It would be helpful to understand the wider impacts of the pandemic and remote working on the population in Seaton.

1.4 Quality of economy and employment

1.4.1 The data suggests that there is an overreliance on tourism and hospitality in Seaton, but that other sectors are also important to the local economy, including health and social care, construction, agriculture and education. We should aim to support other sectors to diversify and strengthen the local economy. This could be done through the provision of flexible workspaces to support small businesses and startups as well as employment land provision for industrial uses.

1.4.2 There are staff shortages in hospitality and care in Seaton. Through providing skills training in these sectors to young people it would help hospitality and care employers but also provide young people looking to stay in Seaton with local jobs. Jobs in these sectors are not necessarily low paying due to current high demand for workers.

1.4.3 Raising awareness of apprenticeships among local employers would also help provide opportunities for young people. There seems to be a lack of knowledge on the avenues through which to take on apprentices and the support provided to employers to do so. This issue is particularly prominent in the construction sector. Digital training could be provided in Seaton so that apprentices do not need to travel elsewhere to attend the weekly training.

1.4.4 Despite the need to broaden the economy, the importance of tourism to Seaton cannot be overlooked and its strengths should be capitalised on to support tourism businesses and improve the quality of employment in the tourism sector. The tourism season is nearly all year round given the type of visitors the area attracts, such as walkers, cyclists, and those seeking outdoor activities. The tranquility and peacefulness of Seaton also appeals to many.

1.4.5 Seaton can attract crowds and large amounts of visitors when it is marketed and branded effectively. A recent example of this is the Diamond Jubilee festival which attracted 3,200 visitors.

1.4.6 Seaton could be more unified in selling itself as a place to visit. A solution is to create a joined up and cohesive identity through marketing, publicity and a tourism strategy promoting the natural environment and events and festivals which already run. Quick win funding could be available for a tourism vision and the joining up of events.

1.4.7 There is the need to support hospitality businesses to provide the level of comfort required for attracting visitors. Furthermore, investment in the quality of places to stay, restaurants and the public realm is crucial to attracting more visitors all year round.

1.4.8 Attracting visitors from local areas in Devon is an achievable objective. Solutions surround improved transport options from Axminster to Seaton and extending national cycle routes to the seafront.

1.4.9 Provide a wider range of outdoor activities such as wakeboarding and paddleboarding, but also provide indoor activities for rainy days such as an indoor climbing centre.

1.5 Transport and Accessibility

1.5.1 Active travel options allow young people to access more educational and leisure opportunities but it also allows more people to get to Seaton. Linking Seaton to Axminster via the Stop Line Way would be a significant step to improving accessibility in Seaton, as this route connects the town to Axminster Railway station, and therefore could be used by commuters and for leisure. E-bikes and car sharing options could also be considered.

1.5.2 Currently, it is very difficult for young people to access other places for training, education and leisure. A more regular and affordable bus service linking Seaton to other nearby towns is a simple solution to this.

1.5.3 Seaton has a sufficient provision of parking so a park and ride is not necessary. The park and ride in Lyme Regis has anecdotally had only moderate success as feedback suggests that visitors prefer to park in town or close to the sea, so this option would not be effective in Seaton where seafront parking is available.

1.6 Seafront and Town Centre Public Realm

1.6.1 A LUF bid has been submitted for the Axe Valley which includes the seafront enhancement scheme. If the bid is successful a delivery process will follow which will require more consultation and detailed plans drawing up. The Seaton Project Group will be engaged in this as it is acknowledged that the seafront is a key asset to the town and forms a large part of its identity. If the bid is unsuccessful, EDDC will need to consider the alternative options for delivering some improvements dependant on alternative funding being available

`1.6.2` There is potential to use some Town Council and EDDC assets for community uses such as the open spaces including Windsor and Cliff Field Gardens. Could these be hired out at a reduced fee for example, to help placemaking events take place. Could better signage in and around Seaton be installed as a quick win to attract more visitors and improve awareness of cycling and walking routes amongst visitors and locals.

`1.7` **Housing affordability and availability**

`1.7.1` DCC are looking into this through the One Public Estate Programme. EDDC is attempting to provide more social housing.

`1.8` **Next steps**

`1.8.1` Members of the Group are asked to contact Alison Hayward with regard to engaging in some small group work, and to identify which theme is their preference. Each group will cover one theme of either quality of economy and employment (including training and education), transport and accessibility (Stop Line Way and active travel initiatives) and the seafront and town centre public realm. The Chair will attend each working group meeting to ensure continuity and reflect any overlapping themes (where possible).

`1.8.2` HJA will host the small working group meetings to discuss the main themes and identify potential quick wins.

`1.8.3` HJA will present the findings from the small working groups to the wider group in the next Urban Renewal Forum meeting in September. The exact details of this to be arranged by EDDC at a later date.