

EXMOUTH AND SEATON VISITOR CENTRES

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Dated: 2 December 2005

Background

The Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site, also known as the Jurassic Coast was inscribed in December 2001. It is England's first and only natural World Heritage Site. A Site Management Plan was submitted with the Nomination which has led to a Framework for Action 2003, the implementation plan. Within these plans, there are policies to develop interpretation provision along the length of the World Heritage Site, including the provision of new visitor centres.

During the preparation of the Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site Interpretation Action Plan, meetings were held with interested parties in all the WHS Gateway Towns. Arising from discussions with local stakeholders in both Exmouth (10th March 2004) and Seaton (28th January 2004), amongst other towns, was the concept of providing high quality visitor centres in their towns which would tell the story of both the World Heritage Site and local stories including, in the case of Exmouth, the other internationally designated site, the Exe Estuary. These ideas, together with the recommendations of the Natural History Museum's Interpretation Scoping carried out during 2003 were incorporated into the Interpretation Action Plan published in March 2005. Subsequent meetings were held in each town of those stakeholders who might be involved in taking the project forward.

These centres were seen as having a pivotal role in contributing to the economic regeneration objectives of both the towns. The East Devon Local Plan Revised Deposit identified the Imperial Road area for comprehensive redevelopment (Policy LEX6) and this was part of the "Unlocking Exmouth" consultation published in October 2004. The Devon Structure Plan (Policy ST21) and the Local Plan (Policy LSE2) identify Harbour Road, Seaton as the only regeneration area in East Devon and a Development Brief was published in 2004. The East Devon Economic Strategy will target effort to help the regeneration of both Exmouth and Seaton.

In both Exmouth and Seaton, it was recognised that the first step in each town was to commission Economic Feasibility Studies. East Devon District Council undertook to lead on this work with all partners providing financial contributions. It was mutually agreed that the two gateway town groups would work together in order to avoid duplication, provide mutual support, obtain best value for money and to reinforce the message of the whole Jurassic Coast interpretation package. Hence, a Feasibility Study Steering Group was formed of technical officers from the funding partners which, on completion of the studies, became the Interim Project Management Group.

Aim

To achieve Visitor Gateway Centres at Exmouth and Seaton in accordance with World Heritage Site Interpretation Action Plan and the recommendations of the Options Appraisal and Preliminary Feasibility Reviews undertaken by Locum Consulting and published in September 2005.

These are "special projects" falling outside the scope of normal mandatory service provision of the public sector and have the following characteristics:

- Expectations of high quality, world-class and imaginative execution;
- Fundamental elements of the programmes of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site and the regeneration opportunities of the Gateway Towns;
- Many stakeholders and communities with a range of expectations

- Funding which will require private sector, public sector and voluntary involvement in development and operation and future re-investment.

A partnership of interested organisations is required to progress these projects.

Membership

The development of the projects will be through the East Devon Visitor Centres Interim Project Management Group (IPMG) which is a partnership of the following organisations;

Devon County Council (DCC)
 East Devon District Council (EDDC)
 Exe Estuary Partnership Cycleau Project (EEP)
 Exmouth Project Promotion Group (EPPG)
 Exmouth Town Council (ETC)
 Exmouth Town Centre Management (ETCM)
 Seaton Development Trust (SDT)
 Seaton Town Council (STC)
 South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA)
 World Heritage Steering Group (WHSG)

- As a technical group, IPMG membership will be the most appropriate technical officer from each organisation.
- Each organisation will have just one voting member.
- Where the organisation provides the Chair, it will be entitled to have an additional voting member but on the basis that the Chair will not normally vote and only in the event of a tied decision, will have the casting vote.
- Normally, attendance at the IPMG meetings of additional representatives of organisations will be discouraged, except that specialist officers may attend in support of the voting member where the agenda requires it and with the prior agreement of the Chairman.
- In addition, organisations and specialists may be co-opted to the Group as advisors without voting rights and with prior agreement of the IPMG eg RSPB.

Chairmanship

- The position of Chair will normally be held by the County Council but as necessary and with the agreement of IPMG, may be a person who is completely independent of any of the representative partner organisations.
- The position of Vice-Chair will be held by East Devon District Council, as the key delivery body.
- The Chair will draw up the agenda for each meeting.

Minutes

- Formal minutes will be made of each meeting, distributed to all IPMG members within seven working days, and approved by the Chairman at the beginning of the following meeting following discussion by the Group.
- East Devon District Council will provide a Minutes Secretary.
- In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act requirements of the partner local authorities, the minutes will be generally available on request (except those elements which relate to commercial interests or are subject to the Data Protection Act).
- The minutes will be available to the World Heritage Steering Group, the Gateway Towns Working Group and the Exe Estuary Partnership as required. They will be published on www.jurassiccoast.org

Management

- The IPMG will operate as a sub-group of the World Heritage Site Steering Group in order to progress the two visitor centres and in particular to facilitate funding from the major grant bodies.
- This group will progress the delivery of the Exmouth and Seaton visitor centres until the creation of a single-purpose venture organisation for each centre.
- The IPMG will have delegated authority to commission feasibility studies and research and development proposals that progress the overall deliverability of the visitor centres.
- The IPMG will lobby and advocate the delivery of the two visitor centres to other organisations, partnerships and influential decision makers on behalf of the interests of the stakeholders.
- A specific role within IPMG of the Exmouth Projects Promotion Group and the Seaton Development Trust will be to represent the local community interests, encourage local community support and to raise funds locally towards the Centres.
- Minutes of meetings of the Exmouth Projects Promotion Group and notes of the Seaton Gateway Group will be presented to the next available meeting of the IPMG.
- It is the responsibility of individual IPMG members to report decisions of IPMG to their constituent organisations and to seek endorsement.
- Financial management will be co-ordinated by East Devon District Council, including acting as banker for funding contributions and letting of consultancy contracts etc. This is an interim arrangement and will be reviewed once the visitor centres move towards implementation when separate financial management may be needed for each centre.
- The IPMG will be advised by Locum Consulting during the term of the contract dated November 2005.
- A lead consultant will be contracted by East Devon District Council who will provide professional advice to IPMG in accordance with the terms and conditions of the contract.
- The reporting line of the Lead Consultant will be through the Chair and Vice-Chair to IPMG.

This management structure is illustrated in the attached organigram (Appendix 1).

Objectives

- To progress the recommendations of Locum's Feasibility Reports for the Visitor Centres towards the achievement of implemented projects.
- To recognize the special importance for the region of these inspirational projects and to ensure total commitment and special efforts from all partners to achieve complete success.
- To ensure the community aspirations are accommodated in the development of the visitor centres.
- To engage a wider group of stakeholders to support, and become actively engaged, in the projects.
- Through the World Heritage Team, to contribute to the submission of external funding applications such as Big Lottery Living Landscapes and Heritage Lottery Funding.
- To co-ordinate all publicity and media engagement relating to the two visitors centres. Individual partners, who wish to promote or publicise specific aspects of their contribution to the realisation of the visitor centres eg fund raising, will do so in accordance with the Communications and Publicity Protocol or with the agreement of IPMG.

Review

- The Memorandum of Understanding will be reviewed on a six monthly basis at 1st January and 1st July each year and at other times if required.
- The relationship to other formal structures necessary to develop the visitor centres project, such as the World Heritage Site Steering Group or newly created charitable trusts, will be considered at the reviews.

Signed by: Date:

On behalf of Devon County Council

Signed by: Date:

On behalf of East Devon District Council

Signed by: Date:

On behalf of Exe Estuary Partnership

Signed by: Date:

On behalf of Exmouth Project Promotion Group

Signed by: Date:

On behalf of Exmouth Town Council

Signed by: Date:

On behalf of Exmouth Town Centre Management

Signed by: Date:

On behalf of Seaton Development Trust

Signed by: Date:

On behalf of Seaton Town Council

Signed by: Date:

On behalf of South West Regional Development Agency

Signed by: Date:

On behalf of World Heritage Site Steering Group