



NORTHAM TOWN COUNCIL SEAGATE BOAT PARK BUSINESS PLAN

**Northam Town Council
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OUR VISION

Northam Town Council has agreed that, to move forward as a responsible organisation, it needs to acquire, gain control of and provide various land, buildings and facilities within the Town Council area. With this in mind, it has prepared a list of assets and facilities that it wishes to gain control of for the benefit of the whole community. These assets cover a wide range of items from Car Parks to Open Space and Leisure Facilities which when under the Council's management will provide a stable infrastructure for the foreseeable future, in line with current Local and Parish plans.

Furthermore, Northam Town Council believes that the most effective and productive results for local residents are achieved when authorities work together and hopes to achieve its aims by working in partnership with the District Council. Northam Town Council fully supports the Strategic Aims and Objectives of Torridge District Council and would promote these objectives in the following ways:-

Improving Quality of Life for All

By bringing the control and management of the Seagate Boat Park under the control of Northam Town Council, it would give local residents a more immediate sense of involvement with the area. Over the course of the last few years, the area has been used more intensively for various local events where there is a need for an area of land that can be made available for public use, such as the carnival, festivals and the regatta. Also, the area has been used by the local Gig Club for storage of their gigs, enabling easy access to the river. Because the land has open access to the main road, with a large Car Park near by, it also makes the site ideal for staging events with easy access for the elderly, handicapped and those with young children.

Supporting Sustainable Economic Growth

The variety of events being held in Appledore has significantly increased over the last few years. Apart from the annual regatta and carnival - both long-established traditions - there are now two festivals which take place over a period of days, the Appledore Visual Arts Festival and the Appledore Book Festival - the latter of which has been listed in the top ten of Book Festivals nationally. There has also been a dramatic interest in gig racing, which has grown nationally and has produced two teams on the Torridge. It is important that land is made available to support all these activities, which is central to the village and is close to car parking facilities. If Northam Town Council were to take over Seagate Boat Park, it would be able to make the land available to the organisers of these events, thus supporting the economic growth and drawing in more visitors, who would then be able to use Churchfields car park, which would provide TDC with more funds.

Safeguarding the Environment

The area was once used as a Boat Yard. As interest in the maritime history of the area is increasing – as witnessed by the establishment of C.A.S.H. (Celebrating Appledores Shipping Heritage), the making of the film Appledore's Maritime Heritage commissioned by Appledore Visual Arts Festival and funded by the National Lottery etc. - it is certain that Appledore wants to preserve more of its maritime connections. Because the Seagate Boat Park has been maintained as an open space and not been developed, it has been used extensively for marketing the appeal of Appledore to the tourist market, showing the view from the Quay across the Park and focusing on the Church. Transferring the Seagate Boat Park to Northam Town Council would ensure that this open space would be maintained.

The Aim to be an Excellent Council

The acquisition of the Seagate Boat by Northam Town Council from Torridge District Council would not only fulfil the aspirations of local residents, preserve the area for the requirements of the Village and engender a closer working relationship between the council and the community, but would also generate a very positive appreciation of both Torridge District Council and Northam Town Council.

Northam Town Council also supports the ideas promoted in the white paper regarding 'Communities in Control' which encourages including 'the improvement of life and well-being of the community' and 'empowering the community and supporting its aspirations'. All of these points have been referred to in association with the Objectives above.

BACKGROUND

As identified in the National Maritime Museum Report No. 22 (1976), the Sea Gate was a site of shipbuilding from an early date, the earliest named builder being James Cock (1800-66). His yard was known as the Tavern Yard and was located in the site now used as the boat/car park. A dozen vessels can be identified with this site, all schooners and brigantines up to the 196 tons of Eliza Sherry. His son, Robert (1837-98) ceased building at Tavern Yard in about 1879 and became the tenant of Richmond Yard.

The land was traditionally associated with the Grand Hotel, now known as the Seagate Hotel, and was eventually taken into Council' ownership.

Until the improvement of the road system serving Appledore, the Seagate area had marked the boundary between Appledore and the, then, separate village Irsha.

In the 1970's, this land was transferred to Torridge District Council.

Discussions had been initiated between the councils as far back as eighteen months ago and, in the Finance Committee Meeting of Northam Town Council Meeting at Windmill Lane, it was proposed that there should be discussions regarding the transfer of certain assets from Torridge District Council to Northam Town Council. The motion was agreed by the council and one of the assets referred to was the Seagate Boat Park in Appledore.

PROPOSAL

Inspired by the commitment of local residents through independent conversations with Councillors, the Appledore Residents Association and the involvement of the general public - and supported by the previous discussions with Torridge District Council about the transfer of certain assets to Northam Town Council - Northam Town Council wishes to confirm its wish to acquire the land for the benefit of the district of Appledore, to be held in perpetuity.



FUNDING

The funding of this proposal is fully in line with the structured plan of Northam Town Council to safeguard and improve facilities for local residents. Funds have already been aside within the precept to support this intention, but the Finance Committee is also committed to sourcing match funding for future enhancements from external agencies. The Baker Report states the importance of the improvement and provision of community facilities so this proposal fulfils a significant direction of the Report. Informal discussions have already been held between the two Councils to consider a reasonable figure deemed fair to both. It will be the role of the Finance Committee to source and secure the best fund provider, a function which has already been evidenced in the securement of suitable funding for the purchase of Bridge Hall. An Anticipated Income and Expenditure Sheet is attached Appendix 1.

With regard to maintenance, any transfer of the Boat Park to Northam Town Council would relieve Torrridge District Council of the expense. Northam Town Council would propose to raise some funds directly through income from leasing part of the area to the owner of The Seagate Hotel to ensure regular car parking space for his clients. An approach has already been made to the Seagate Hotel's owner. Additional funding will possibly be raised by offering space for the Gig Club to house their boats, which would also benefit the club in that they would be secure in the knowledge that they had a designated base in the village which offered good river access – just a few hundred yards from the main slip – and good road access – important because of the combined length of gigs and the vehicles transporting them.

MANAGEMENT

Following the purchase of the Bridge Hall, a Management Committee has been specifically formed which comprises a mixture of Councillors and later community stakeholders, the combination of which will offer the best possible mix of skills and appropriate knowledge. This Committee will be used to manage other assets which come under the authority of Northam Town Council, ensuring effective enhancement and optimum employment of the facilities within the area. Upon reaching a successful conclusion, it is anticipated that a project such as the Seagate Boat Park will fall under the remit of this Committee.

The Committee currently comprises 4 members of Northam Town Council who hold the following responsibilities:-

Finance and Building Regs.

Insurance and Licenses

Marketing

Day to Day Management

The Chairmanship of this Committee operates on a rotating system. Other members will be co-opted onto the Committee for specific projects if deemed necessary. Once established the membership will be expanded to include lay members.

As the responsibilities of Northam Town Council increase it is anticipated in the long term that the current staffing level of the Council will be reviewed.

RISKS

The Business Plan Sub-Committee considers that there are only two basic possible risks, i.e. funding and health and safety. With regard to the former, it will be the responsibility of the Finance Committee to source the best possible option for funding and they have already evidenced their ability in this matter with regard to the purchase of the Bridge Hall in Northam. It has been confirmed by the Finance Committee that allowances have been made for such projects. The second possible risk is that consideration is not paid to ensuring sound insurance to cover the use of the area by the general public. Any new asset to come under the Northam Town Council umbrella will automatically be added to the Council's current insurance policy. Any enhancement undertaken will be done exercising full professional consultation and Regular Risk Assessments will be carried out and insured accordingly.

BENEFITS

The main benefit is of that to the Community, whereby the land would be under the ownership, and management of a body committed to protecting the land from being built upon and thus ensuring that the sweeping vista of the church and the war memorial is never lost. This view is an integral part of Appledore, visible not only from the Village, but from the River and from the Villages on the other side of the River, and has used been extensibly in images promoting tourism.

The Finance Committee has already discussed plans for making the site self supporting financially by offering potential for usage by the Hotel, General Public and possible Gig Clubs.

Apart from providing the Appledore Gig Club with a secure site for a base, and thus directly benefiting the local community and an emerging sport, which is financially supporting the area and attracting visitors, the site could be used as the central place for any village functions. This would alleviate Churchfield Car Park as a place used for information etc., and allow the area to be used solely for car parking, which would be another financial benefit for Torridge District Council. At the moment, when events are taking place in the village, often parking space in Churchfield is taken up by vans providing information – eg. St. John's Ambulance service commentaries etc.

Much has been written about meeting the aspirations of local communities by improving the quality of life for all. Safeguarding this area for use by the village, when required, for Regattas, Carnivals, and Festivals etc., would inspire a very positive re-action. There have been two applications for building on this site. Both of which have drawn vehement opposition from the local community and both of which have been turned down. A third application would provoke as intense a reaction and would involve another wave of costs which would have to be born by the tax payer and may be not allowed as the area now forms part of the Flood Plain.

STATUS QUO

To do nothing, and leave the future of the area undecided, would fuel the concerns of the general public that an important part of Appledore's history would be designated for intrusive building, which would have a negative effect on the character and identity of the village.

Any costs would remain the responsibility of the District Council and the potential of the area would probably remain unrealised. By transferring the site to Northam Town Council it would bring the Seagate Boat Park more into local ownership and would generate more involvement from the local community.

CONCLUSION

The proposal, as mentioned above, meets with three principal conclusions from the Quirk Review of community management and ownership of assets (Launched 15.05.07) viz.-

1. Asset transfer should take place where it can realise social or community benefits, without risking wider public interest concerns
2. The benefits of community ownership of assets can outweigh the risks involved, in appropriate circumstances,
3. Risks can be minimised and managed by drawing on the experience of others.

Northam Town Council is of the opinion that it more than amply meets the conclusions above and addresses each conclusion within this plan. More importantly, Northam Town Council knows that the acquisition of this site, to be managed and maintained by the Council, would be welcomed by the community as a whole.

Appendix 1.

SEAGATE BOAT PARK

EXPENDITURE (YEAR 1)

	<u>£</u>
Business Rates	420
Surface Repairs & Other Maintenance	500
Total Expenditure	<u>920</u>

INCOME (YEAR 1)

Rents Receivable	1360
Gig and Boat Storage	500
Business Rates	420
Total Income	<u>2280</u>
Net Income (Year 1)	<u>1360</u>

EXPENDITURE (Year 2)

Business Rates	420
Surface Repairs & Other Maintenance	500
Total Expenditure	<u>920</u>

INCOME (YEAR 2)

Rents Receivable	1360
Business Rates	420
Gig and Boat Storage	500
Total Income	<u>2280</u>
Net Income (Year 1)	<u>1360</u>

Note:- All Net Income to be set aside for Full resurfacing of the area, currently estimated at £9850 and born at present by TDC.