

**Notes of the meeting of the DOVER TOWN Neighbourhood Forum held on 1 October 2009 at the Dover Town Council offices, Dover at 6.30pm**

**Present:**

Town Councillor: Jan Tranter Chairman  
 District Councillor: Marian Munt  
 County Councillor: Nigel Collor

Officers: Emma Carey, Anne Charman, Community Liaison Managers, Kent County Council

Other councillors, officers, representatives and 41 members of the public

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor Roger Frayne, District Councillor Kevin Mills, Pauline Hodding, DDC and Caroline Hargreaves DDC.

1.	<p><b>Welcome: Cllr Jan Tranter (Chair)</b>                  District Cllr Jan Tranter welcomed those attending.</p>
2.	<p><b>Sea Change Dover</b></p>
	<p>Amanda Lumley, KCC's Regeneration and Project Manager introduced herself and her colleague, Dave Hughes and then went on to describe <i>Make Dover</i>, the Sea Change programme in Dover.</p> <p>Sea Change is a three year funding programme set up by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport that aims to kick start wider economic regeneration in coastal areas through specific investment in culture and heritage. The programme is being led by CABE (the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) who seek to use the Sea Change programme as a driver for cultural and creative regeneration in seaside towns by funding inspiring, creative and innovative projects, bringing a sense of pride, enjoyment and celebration. By attracting additional funding, it is hoped that Sea Change projects will act as catalysts for further economic regeneration in the towns, bringing in new visitors and revenue and giving the local residents a new cultural heart and a renewed pride in the community. The key criterion in choosing the coastal resorts is that they are areas of social and economic deprivation in need of regeneration.</p> <p>Dover was invited to apply for this funding and was one of only three successful seaside resorts to be awarded a grant (the other two were Blackpool and Torbay). The bid was put together with Dover Pride and based on the Dover Masterplan, highlighting Dover's historical, archaeological, cultural and strategic importance as a port.</p> <p>There is £7.75m available for this project, 50% of this funding has been from the Sea Change programme, the rest from partners who include; Kent County Council, Dover District Council, Dover Harbour Board, English Heritage, SEEDA.</p> <p>The Sea Change programme is all about making cultural connections. It is hoped that by working with English Heritage and using outreach and other 'bridge building' cultural projects, e.g. festivals, and events, it will help the Castle connect with the town and sea front better. A recent event <i>Here and Now</i> held at the Dover Discovery Centre during August by Dover Arts Development was very successful and included</p>

	<p>drawing, dance and food workshops. The High Speed Rail link will also provide opportunities for Dover as cultural regeneration will attract visitors and employment and encourage people to move out from London to Dover. And by looking at existing businesses the programme can connect with what's going well at the moment and build on this success.</p> <p>Projects that are specifically being looked at are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Castle refurbishment. Working with English Heritage improvements will include refurbishment of the Great Tower, a new admissions and visitors centre and improvement to the secret wartime tunnels.</li> <li>• Esplanade. This will refresh and improve the new sea front connecting the new Sea Sports Centre and harbour area with the town. Architects Tonkin Liu won the recent national seafront design competition which will make the area more accessible and vibrant. As funding needs to be spent by March 2010 this project is being fast tracked, plans have been submitted and it is hoped the project will be completed within two years.</li> <li>• Bleriot Monument. The restoration of this historic monument will be pivotal to raising the profile of Dover and it is hoped that there will be connecting trails to Dover's other historical attractions.</li> <li>• Cable Car. This will connect the castle to the town and sea front as well as becoming an additional community and visitor attraction in its own right. The commercial feasibility study has been favourable, now a technical feasibility study is being undertaken which will be completed by end 2009.</li> </ul> <p>A key element to the Sea Change programme in Dover is community engagement and outreach. Support from local communities is recognized as being a key element for any regenerative projects and a firm of consultants, MUF architects, has been commissioned to undertake a cultural survey and framework to determine how the cultural potential of Dover can be raised over the next ten years.</p>
3.	<p><b>Dover District Council</b></p>
	<p>Nadeem Aziz, Chief Executive described the aims and aspirations that DDC has for its local communities when developing its regeneration vision. The Local Development Framework shapes the regenerative work being undertaken and acts as a backdrop to this. DDC is a firm advocate of growth and providing good housing and employment opportunities to create sustainable communities.</p> <p>Currently two-thirds of the employees from the two largest employers in the area, Pfizer and the Port of Dover, commute from outside the district. This means that the economic benefits are taken out of Dover. But a combination of good quality housing and good transport links, e.g. the High Speed rail link will draw people to the area, and at the same time will address any demographic imbalances. Other projects include the Sea Sports Centre, White Cliffs Business Park, Connaught Barracks, Morrisons, Dover Gateway and Dover Priory. However, some regeneration brings about changes that are controversial, e.g. the Big Screen, but local issues and events could use this facility and it could provide a springboard for Dover having the Olympic Torch. The hope is that Dover residents will continue to support the regeneration initiatives to keep driving Dover's prosperity forward.</p>
4.	<p><b>Dover Pride</b></p>

	<p>Sarah Lang, Programme Officer described the partnership's work to commission large scale images to be used on empty shop windows and hoardings while regeneration takes place in Dover over the next few years. Images were shown of work completed already, transforming the appearance of areas such as the Indoor Market that has been empty for 15 years. The project is aiming to uplift blight spots and create a better local environment. Dover has an empty shop rate of 16%, which is comparatively good to the rest of the county, for example Margate has 25%. Jonathan Wright and Edda Jones have been commissioned to work on the 'Dover Visuals' project and produce images that can be used as artwork in shop windows and they will be working with Dover Pride to install this artwork while areas are undergoing development.</p>
5.	<p><b>Questions for the Speakers</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Why can't DDC's Planning Committee be more flexible with new developments?</b> Nadeem Aziz commented that sometimes planning mistakes have been made, for example Tesco at Whitfield had taken 50% of the retail spend away from Dover and a food retail anchor was now needed in the town. The Sea Change regeneration has specific criteria attached to it for projects that would not be affordable if DDC were to go it alone. Partnerships such as this are essential for the scale of regeneration required. It is important for the people of Dover to be positive about this regeneration and realize there can be constraints imposed upon planners who have to balance European and National legislation when making their decisions.</li> <li>▪ <b>Are there safeguards in place for local people to secure employment with the new contracts that this regeneration will attract?</b> DDC can require major house builders to encourage local apprenticeships, but they cannot override National and European legislation.</li> <li>▪ <b>What money is available to protect heritage and conserve existing architecture? If money were made available to homeowners they could renovate listed buildings and make them more attractive. Plus some areas in Dover need cleaning up.</b> In past years similar schemes have been in place but the take up has been very poor. This illustrates the problem, which is a combination of the community taking responsibility for its environment and the inability to spend on renovation when average earnings in Dover are below the SE average. The English Heritage projects will renovate our historical assets and make them work for their living. DDC is also in the process of procuring a new cleaning contractor which may solve some of the littering, but with increased aspiration in the local community from regeneration, this may resolve itself</li> <li>▪ <b>When are the proposals for the seafront going to the Planning Committee?</b> Amanda Lumley confirmed this would be 22 October 2009. The Dover Harbour Board is working closely with the designers to ensure the sustainability of the proposals.</li> <li>▪ <b>The historical attractions are not linked up so how will visitors get around without a car?</b> There are talks currently taking place between the National Trust and English Heritage to provide a footway between Bleriot and White Cliffs. Linkages are being explored but landowners will have to agree to any proposals put forward.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>There could be better signage around Dover to enable people to navigate between attractions, perhaps looking to Sandwich as an example.</b> The Town Council is looking into this and is encouraging Stagecoach to move some of the existing bus stops, plus providing a subsidy for an open top bus.</li> <li>▪ <b>There is no bus service from the Market Square to the sea front and the underpass is unpleasant.</b> The 15A is an hourly bus service that covers this area.</li> <li>▪ <b>What happens after the money runs out in two to three years?</b> The <i>Make Dover</i> partnership will use Sea Change projects as a catalyst to attract additional funding.</li> <li>▪ <b>Is there a possibility of a department store in Dover?</b> This is a commercial decision and currently the catchment area of 40,000 people may not be incentive enough. The Asda development could create an environment that is attractive to a department store and other commercial concerns, e.g. multiplex cinemas, but this type of development is only really possible within the context of a wider regeneration scheme.</li> <li>▪ <b>Many people feel that the Promenade is acceptable and fear the Prince of Wales Pier will be lost as an amenity. Why not re-develop Shakespeare Beach and Admiral Pier?</b> Dover Harbour Board (DHB) will build a new pier and the lighthouse and clock tower will be moved. Improvements have begun at Shakespeare Beach. But good connections are important for Dover and the new road crossing planned will be more pleasant than the underpass.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Break</b></p>
<p>6</p>	<p><b>Questions to Speakers (continued) and Councillors</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>The Western Docks area is an eyesore and the first thing visitors from abroad see.</b> DHB are submitting a revision order for Terminal 2 and soon full details will be available for residents to comment on.</li> <li>▪ <b>Will buses connect the historic sites? Will there be new shops on the Esplanade?</b> DDC are looking into this for environmental reasons as well as providing good links because the use of the car is not sustainable, creating poor air quality, etc. A rapid transit system, similar to the one at Bluewater is being investigated. The Sea Sports Centre will have a restaurant and the existing kiosks will be smartened up.</li> <li>▪ <b>Why was a tunnel not built for lorries to get to the port?</b> A road was cheaper and there were only three protesters 20 years ago. Dover handles 10,000 trucks a day and this number is growing. There is a need for better signage along the A2 and addressing the issue of increasing congestion in and around Dover.</li> <li>▪ <b>Why has the area of the Crypt where a restaurant was burnt down remained vacant for 20 years?</b> The land is owned by a developer and DDC does not have enough money to impose a Compulsory Purchase Order. It needs a combination of developers with commercially viable schemes and a CPO.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Why doesn't Dover have a ring road?</b> When the A20/M20 extension was undertaken it was generally considered that Eurotunnel would result in the port's demise. But consolidated port business has had the opposite effect. This also needs political will and money as a scheme this size could cost up to £500m.</li><li>▪ <b>Why isn't Sea Change funding being used to restore the Victoria Fountains?</b> Because this funding has strict criteria and projects needs to meet these.</li></ul>
7.	<b>Information on KCC Funding Streams</b>
	Emma Carey, KCC Community Liaison Manager reported the two funding streams that are still available through local County Councillors; the Member Community Grant which is available throughout the financial year and the Local Schemes Grant which has a closing date of 30 October 2009. Please contact Emma on 01622 694599 for more information.
8.	<b>Any other Business</b>
	The Dover A20 Action Group will be featured on BBC One's <i>Inside Out</i> programme on 12 October at 7.30pm. It will focus on marine pollution.
9.	<b>Future Discussion Topics: What do you want to discuss?</b>
	None suggested.
10.	<b>Meeting Closed</b>
	The meeting ended at 8.45pm