



Exmouth Town Council –Newsletter

Newsletter 5

September 2009

Exmouth's Future

Much has been talked about Exmouth's Future over the years with frustration at the slow pace of change often displayed and yet when ideas are put forward worries arise about what might be lost from the past. Communication between authorities can be difficult. Trust and suspicion can grow between communities and authorities, between groups and between individuals. Worries that people are in it for themselves or that power seeking is more important than action rumble on. Local newspapers publish as soon as they have information and this is often the first time people hear about ideas. Insecurity arises and before you know it the idea is going to happen. Rarely is this the case as it takes a long time to achieve agreement on ideas let alone find the cash to put them into effect. Honest communication is therefore the key to gaining trust and understanding and to prevent sensationalism and panic taking hold.

In some cases the private sector is pretty independent and able to do what it wants if it has the resources available. In others local authorities own land and have more control which results in greater community involvement and consensus being sought. So what has all this to do with Exmouth? Here is a review of some of the things which have already happened or are currently being worked on:-

Lifeboat Station – The building is complete and will be operational soon subject to problems with the ramp structure being resolved. Local Authority involvement occurred as land owner – Devon County as the Highway Authority and East Devon District Council as the beach owner. To achieve a result the RNLI had to negotiate with both authorities for the land and had to obtain planning permissions for the site. The finance and responsibility for the design and appearance of the building rested with RNLI with some Planning input. The Town Council was a planning consultee and gave its views at planning application stage.

The New Ten Pin Bowling Alley, Shops and Leisure Area – The District Council owned the old swimming pool site and was pressed by the Town Council for some time to find a use for it and to stop leaving it derelict behind the hideous blue boards which surrounded the site for so long. The Town Council was instrumental in the early process of encouraging the developer to look at providing a high quality contemporary building for the site. There was concern from the outset that the site would be used as another public house and it was felt at the time that a more

imaginative scheme was needed to provide another string to the bow of Exmouth's Seafront when it is not beach weather. The new building is set to be a stunning example of modern architecture and the finishes that can be seen growing on the site are of high quality. The District Council planners worked hard with the developers to obtain what will be an iconic building for the town. There will be people who do not like it and are sorry that some views of the sea have been lost but it is important that the town gets behind the decisions which have been made and to make sure that the businesses are well supported in every way. Their success means a successful thriving town with employment opportunities and a town more able to sustain itself rather than be totally reliant on Exeter.

Carlton Slipway – The District Council has decided not to pursue further with Clinton Devon Estates the buying out of all the covenants along the seafront in one go. Instead it will deal with potential development sites as they appear. The site beside Carlton Slipway is to be put out to tender and covenants bought out in respect of that site only by any successful bidder. Planning permission exists for the site but will become time expired if not pursued. Whilst this provides an opportunity for supporting water sports in Exmouth this does not indicate that all the other green space along the seafront is under threat because there are no plans to develop other sites on the grass and flower beds between the road and the beach.

Mamhead Slipway

Planning permission exists for a café adjacent to Mamhead Slipway. The Board responsible for promoting the Exmouth Visitor Centre scheme is currently seeking to work with the site owners to provide a smaller version of the original visitor centre, with a café and pontoon for pleasure boats. Money is available from Devon County Council in the sum of £500,000 which was allocated from the sale of Exeter Airport. A bid has been put in for the 'Seachange Grant scheme' of £1m. If that is successful then a very worthwhile interpretation centre for the World Heritage Site and Estuary could be provided. If unsuccessful with £1/2m it would still be possible to do something with some style on this site with the help of the owners. One way or another this would be a good first step towards achieving better interpretation of our area and adding to the core offer which can be made to visitors and residents of the town making it worthwhile to visit all year round.

Elizabeth Hall Site

The District Council is currently reviewing options for the future of this site in order to maximise the benefits for the town. This may take some time, given the current state of the property market.

Town Centre Regeneration

Few would argue that something needs to be done to perk up Exmouth Town Centre. With the number of visitors and shoppers in town it is already popular but lacks some of the essentials of a modern town centre. The devil is in the detail though and different individuals and groups have different perceptions as to what is important. ASM/ASDA did not manage to create a scheme that would meet everyone's needs and a new approach has now been agreed to move things forward. The District Council will be commissioning an analysis of the town centre area, including extensive public consultation and economic feasibility studies. The intended outcome is a master-plan and a vision for Exmouth which leads on to a comprehensive development brief and a clear delivery route that has consensus support and will attract inward investment.

The Strand Scheme

Exmouth is probably one of the last towns to be lucky enough to be receiving a significant capital injection from East Devon District Council and Devon County Council for a public space enhancement scheme. After extensive consultation a scheme is now being put out to tender which will provide a Strand without constant traffic flow and a pleasant space for people to enjoy the town and café seating areas to rest. The potential for using this space for entertainment, military parades and pure enjoyment of the area will be great. Where the shelter currently is will be a quality mixed use building which has yet to be designed but could include a relocated Tourist Information Centre, Performance Stage and bus shelter. Work will be done with the existing take aways to make sure they raise their game as they will benefit from a much more attractive area designed to appeal to people of all ages.

Extension of Liverton Business Park

This site provides the potential to relocate some of the uses close to the town such as the bus depot which would be better located on the edge of town.

Workload

All this amounts to a huge workload for Exmouth and a dynamic image for the town which it truly deserves. The Town Council recognizes that it is important that people who live in the town have a say and that the Community Groups are involved in what is going on. To this end it has formed a Community Organisation's Liaison Panel where Town Councillors meet representatives from each of the Community Organisations – two representatives from each. The groups are Exmouth Residents Association, Exmouth Citizens Forum, Exmouth Community Association, Transition Towns Exmouth and Exmouth Civic Society.

Whilst there is still suspicion from some that the Council is doing this to tick boxes it is hoped that with good lines of communication trust will build. Groups are only part of the public consultation study and the wider community has a role to play too and the Town Council is keen to make sure that methods of consultation to obtain views are broader based and more scientifically carried out.

The shape of all future schemes will arise from developers, planners, businesses, the Chamber of Trade and Commerce, community groups, individuals, customers, car users, pedestrians etc. The needs are many and diverse and all schemes will contain compromises to obtain the best fit for the town. Good communication will, it is hoped, enable people to be heard but also provide them with the reasons for decisions so that they understand why things are happening. Together we can achieve great things.

Rolle College Site

Exmouth Town Council made a last minute bid to delay a decision by Devon County Council's Cabinet to NOT purchase the Rolle College site for educational purposes. The Cabinet nevertheless decided not to purchase which is disappointing to all those who hoped to see a continued use of the site for education. This leaves the way clear for the University of Plymouth to sell the site to the highest bidder thus ending for ever a long history of education on this site in Exmouth with its economic and cultural effects on the town. The crumb of comfort coming out

of the debate is a pledge by Councillor Barker to improve library provision in Exmouth. Let's hope that within regeneration of the town it is possible to turn this from rhetoric into reality.

Exmouth is a Seriously Winning Town

Exmouth is capable of great things for sure. Because it was the best Coastal Town in the National Britain in Bloom Competition last year it could not enter that competition this year. However it was able to enter the South West Regional Competition and what a result – no flash in the pan this, just hard work and great multi-agency working:-

- Littleham Silver Gilt – one step away from Gold now
- Exmouth – Gold and clear winner of category and holds on to the St Bridget's cup
- Liverton Business Park – Wheatley Trophy winner for an Industrial area.

All well deserved and demonstrates when the Councils, private sector and volunteers work together Exmouth has the winning formula. Next time you write a letter to the paper talking Exmouth down just think about what a great town you live in and that it is 'Smiles' better than most other places.

World of Country Life – Our thoughts must be with a local business which has been caught up in the national press feeding frenzy related to E Coli and so called 'Petting Farms'. The BBC, ITV, Sky TV etc swarmed in to put the business in the national headlines making judgments before any conclusive tests have been published. The sensational reporting that another business had had to be closed on account of EColi was wrong as The World of Country Life has a whole series of great attractions all of which are open and unaffected. The damage this does to a business can only be imagined and this well established and strong local business needs our support as a community. It's worth a visit and amazing to see what is on our doorstep. They say that no publicity is bad publicity and let us hope this to be the case.

Foreign Students

It is clear that Exmouth is becoming an important town for visits by young students from abroad, over here to experience our culture and the English Language. This is important for Exmouth as it brings business into the town and promotes Exmouth on a much wider base. It is important that we welcome these young people, treat them well and leave them with a great impression of our town. Exmouth Town Council provides a civic welcome to foreign students when it can to let them know that they are welcome and to help create an experience for them that will stay with them for the rest of their lives. They will return home knowing that Exmouth is a lovely and friendly town and that they will speak of us often

Forth Coming Events

Watch out for:-

- Garth Gibson and John Nettleton memorial concert 'Heaven's a Bar' on 2nd October at the Pavilion – not to be missed;
- Christmas Cracker weekend event in town on 4th December;
- New Year fireworks and more at midnight on the seafront;

For more information – contact the Town Clerk on 01395 276167, visit the Town Hall, contact your Local Councillor or visit www.exmouth.gov.uk
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