

# ILFRACOMBE REGENERATION BOARD

Wednesday November 19<sup>th</sup> 2025, 14.00 – 15.30

## Notes

### 1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

Present: Councillor Paul Crabb (chair), Councillor Sara Wilson, Councillor June Williams, Councillor Malcolm Wilkinson, Geoff Fowler  
In attendance: Laura Donovan, George Carlo-Paat, Keir Duffin, Matt Brown, Alison Mills, SarahJane Mackenzie-Shapland, Dominie Dunbrook, Clare China (notes)

Apologies: Charmain Lovett, Steve Seatherton, Rod Donovan & Councillor Malcolm Prowse, Lucy Martin, Mike Edmunds

### 2. Agree notes and actions from last meeting

The notes from the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record with no matters arising that weren't picked up during this meeting.

### 3. Council Updates

#### Ilfracombe Town Council

- Culture Club

The Culture Club provided a comprehensive update. A range of promising ideas is being developed to support the Employment and Skills Programme within the Creative Industries strand. Work also continues with Silk Crystal on a funded project delivered through the North Devon Coast National Landscape scheme, focusing on new art installations in and around Hillsborough.

It was confirmed surveys of Rapparee Cove site are underway, and activity will not be encouraged until the area is deemed secure and safe to access. Clarification is still required regarding the long-term plans for Rapparee Beach, with a report expected in two weeks' time.

The group continues to support the Film & Photography Sub-Group as they develop plans for a Photography Festival in 2026. Considerable attention is also being given to how best to integrate youth participation, so young people's voices are represented meaningfully within Culture Club's work.

Mel, a Culture Club member, secured funding from High Street businesses to place a rolling slide of Christmas events on the large Church Street digital billboard, with an estimated 3,500 views over a 30-day period. Late-night Christmas shopping has been moved to Friday evenings for this season. The Board also congratulated the Art Trail team on the success of their new Christmas Market event.

The Culture Club also discussed Ilfracombe's intention to develop an Expression of Interest for Town of Culture of the Year. The consensus was that Ilfracombe has a strong case, with heritage and cultural assets ranging from the UK's oldest working lighthouse to Verity. Only brief details have been released about the programme so far, but it is understood that an area can put forward bids for multiple towns. So, Ilfracombe and Barnstaple could be supported. As part of the programme,

development funding for an application of up to £65,000 will be available. The advent of this opportunity will run alongside the planned 2028 local summer programme.

## North Devon Council

- Whitbread/Premier Inn

The senior board have approved a £100,000 budget to design and submit amended plans for the slightly more modest development. Whilst this shows continuing commitment to developing the site, even given the £10-£12m budget window, we should proceed with some caution as planning processes are undertaken.

- Harbour

At the Harbour, winter works have begun following the successful removal of boats, and appreciation was expressed for the team's efforts given recent challenging weather. Reports of stranded dinghies were clarified as buoys. The Watersports Centre continues to perform well, with the café proving an asset. The ambition is to broaden usage and attract more visitors from outside the area, and strategies are being developed to support this. The Environment Agency has installed safety signage advising against the use of the seating, prompting concerns about the condition of benches on the quay.

**Action:** Write to the Environment Agency regarding the safety issues.

A recent meeting with the Damien Hirst team confirmed that Verity will remain in Ilfracombe indefinitely. The team also offered access to smaller maritime-themed sculptures currently in storage, which could be used as short-term installations to support local events or festivals. It was noted the potential for an expanded arts trail in the harbour area.

**Action:** Refer this opportunity to the Culture Club for development

- Current Planning Updates

Planning updates included confirmation that the Royal Mail change-of-use application will be submitted within the next few weeks, with a decision anticipated before Christmas.

Funding has been secured from the CCA and North Devon Council, and an application to Homes England for affordable housing is underway.

There has been no significant movement on stalled sites, although some work is recommencing at Harleigh House and the owner of Osborne has indicated slow progress. Activity has been observed at the Culvert site, and Planning is liaising with the landowner; the installation of hoarding is on hold pending further resolution.

Staffing updates confirmed that Sarah Maddocks is now working with Kier Duffin at Devon County Council. Derelict housing responsibilities have transferred to Neil. A list of derelict properties previously compiled by Fred Shelton and Matt Brown will now continue under Neil's management. Funding for these projects remains complex.

There was some discussion around increased housing targets, but it is unclear how these are calculated

**Action:** SarahJane Mackenzie-Shapland to provide the methodology behind the revised housing targets.

## **Devon County Council**

Devon County Council reported strong progress across the Work & Skills Programme. The Employment Hub is open and supporting both learners and residents seeking training to re-enter the workforce. The 18–24 programme is significantly oversubscribed, with the first cohort of 12 now in their third week and performing very well. Countryside Skills and Customer Care courses are operational, and Petroc continues to deliver Functional Skills in Maths and English. Meetings have taken place with a broad selection of employers across tourism, hospitality, housing associations and early years. Maritime courses are scheduled to begin in January. The team will meet to finalise KPIs, and DCC expressed satisfaction with both engagement levels and programme outcomes to date. Work also continues on arts and culture elements of the wider programme. The Board expressed its appreciation to Steve, Laura, Sarah, Dom and SJ for their contribution.

Regarding the nursery site, Laura reported that the previous tenant has vacated, and no Expressions of Interest have been received to date. Collaboration is now underway with the Family Centre (Action for Children), who are exploring a business plan for a nursery that also functions as a training facility. This would be a first for the area and could become a destination facility for the wider community. With the government highlighting national shortages of childminders, the proposal may start with provision for 0–2-year-olds and expand in partnership with other childcare providers. Funding of £15,500 has also been awarded to improve local transport access to training and employment.

### **4. AOB – any other updates for the Board (All)**

The Board welcomed the positive updates received across the meeting. North Devon Council and Ilfracombe Town Council have jointly funded street marshals for a further year. A recent meeting involving the Police, the Town Centre Manager and other stakeholders explored ways to strengthen anti-social behaviour responses using a multi-agency approach. Although agencies are working effectively, gaps remain, particularly where cases involve complex needs or individuals arriving from larger cities. Strengthening communication and coordinated responses should drive positive impact. A case study from Blackpool regarding HMOs and ASB was discussed, and a potential learning exchange is being considered.

It was noted that perceptions of street marshals can vary, although they generally make a positive contribution. Cllr Williams spent time observing their work and was impressed by their approach and the cooperative relationships they build. ONE Ilfracombe will be updated, given that many of their partners work closely with street-attached individuals. The Town Team has now added this matter as a regular agenda item to ensure responsiveness. Overall, progress in this area was acknowledged as encouraging.

**Action:** Keir to speak with SJ to explore learning opportunities, particularly around managing the arrival of homeless individuals from larger cities such as Bristol.

### **5. DONM**

Wednesday 11th February 2026, 2:00pm