

# ILFRACOMBE REGENERATION BOARD

Wednesday 29th April February 2026, 14.00 – 15.30

## Notes

### 1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

Present: Councillor Paul Crabb (chair), Councillor Sara Wilson, Councillor Malcolm Prowse, Councillor Malcolm Wilkinson

In attendance: Laura Donovan, Keir Duffin, Matt Brown, Charmain Lovett, George Carlo-Paat, Kara Stevens, Dominie Dunbrook, Clare China (notes),

Apologies: Alison Mills, Geoff Fowler, Councillor June Williams Rod Donovan, SarahJane Mackenzie-Shapland, Steve Seatherton.

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

The notes from the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

Outstanding actions:

*PC to send Whitbread Site figures to MP and SJMS for review*

### Matters Arising

Ongoing issues at the Golden Coast site were discussed, including damaged netting and the need for a more coordinated and practical approach to enforcement. It was agreed that previously circulated information on enforcement powers should be developed into a clearer operational guide to support a multi-agency response to streamline environmental planning enquiries

*DD to investigate how the PMO can support 'team around the problem' enquiries such as these.*

The Board acknowledged the passing of Mike Edmonds and wanted to record their thanks and appreciation of all the work Mike had done for Ilfracombe in various roles, including more latterly on the IRB. His contributions will be missed. A request for a memorial bench overlooking the football ground was also considered; Laura Donovan will confirm land ownership, and the Board agreed to support the installation and recommend it to Full Council.

### 3. Coastal erosion, protection and impacts – discussion around the current issues, work plans and future priorities - Tara Jenkins, Senior Engineer (NDC)

Tara Jenkins, Senior Engineer at North Devon Council, provided a detailed update on coastal protection activity. She explained that the Council's role under the Coastal Protection Act which allows them to carry out work to maintain defences to protect land and shoreline management plan. She clarified that the Council's responsibility relates specifically to coastal protection rather than flood defence, which is the Environment Agency, and that its responsibilities are also limited to land within its ownership. This creates challenges in managing risks across the wider coastline, particularly where land ownership is unclear or lies with third parties.

Tara highlighted the increasing complexity and cost of coastal management, particularly as more frequent severe weather events continue to impact the coastline.

At Rapparee Cove, inspections identified significant safety concerns. Approximately £174,000 of repair works are underway and expected to be completed within the next year. Works to repair steps have already been undertaken to improve safety, although the area remains heavily used despite warnings. It was also noted that rough sleepers had occupied areas beneath the cliffs, but this has been addressed and alternative accommodation arranged.

Updates were also provided on ongoing harbour works and planned interventions at Capstone. Concerns were raised regarding the condition of the pitch and putt area and sections of the footpath.

At Wildersmouth, behind the Landmark Theatre, a rockfall has resulted in closure of the site following discovery of a substantial void beneath the surface. Further geophysical investigations are planned, with estimated costs now exceeding £500,000. Development of the business case is progressing, and the project is close to tender stage once funding is secured. Additional coastal asset works relating to steps and the viewing platform near the Landmark Theatre are currently being designed and costed.

Hele Bay remains a significant concern due to cliff instability on unregistered land. Discussions with the Crown Estate are ongoing, although progress remains challenging. Adjacent landowners have previously contributed to mitigation works but are unable to meet the estimated £1.5 million cost of major interventions. Members discussed responsibilities in the event of a major collapse, noting that North Devon Council would manage any required beach closures.

Members recognised the limited maintenance budget available for coastal works and acknowledged that larger projects are generally funded individually as issues arise. Concerns were also raised regarding the impact of closures on tourism and access routes.

The Chair thanked Tara Jenkins for her update and recognised the scale and complexity of the work being undertaken. It was agreed that a further written update would be circulated following the meeting.

#### **4. Council Updates**

##### **Ilfracombe Town Council**

- One Ilfracombe Updates

One Ilfracombe programmes continue to progress well, particularly youth-focused initiatives.

- Stalled Sites & Vacant Units

No significant changes were reported.

Concerns were raised regarding hoarding, netting and the visual appearance of several stalled development sites. Members discussed the potential for temporary community or promotional uses to improve visual amenity.

### **Premier Inn / Whitbread Site**

The future use of the Premier Inn location continues to be explored, with members reflecting on the need to balance viability with local housing needs, particularly for affordable and older persons' accommodation.

It was noted that Whitbread's property agent suggested the most commercially viable option may be another hotel operator, such as Travelodge. Homes England was discussed as a potential option, although concerns were raised regarding the suitability of the site for housing due to the church structure and party wall issues.

Residential development remains a possible fallback option if alternative proposals do not emerge.

### **Emmanuel Church**

Members discussed the loss of community space following the church closure and the challenges associated with bringing the building back into use.

Potential feasibility work was discussed, including the possibility of alterations to improve viability.

### **Golden Coast Site**

Discussions are taking place regarding temporary advertising on hoardings for local activities or charity events to improve appearance, subject to planning considerations. Consideration of a tolerance zone for advertising in order meet planning regulations. There is no benchmark for this but will discuss the possibilities.

### **Promenade Repairs**

Concerns were raised regarding dangerous areas along the promenade. The Planning Team is following this up.

### **Devonshire Homes Site**

It was noted that the football and rugby clubs do not wish to use the premises, although a gym operator has expressed interest.

Questions were raised regarding whether this would satisfy Section 106 requirements.

Safety concerns associated with ongoing building work were also highlighted

- Culture Club

The recent Easter, Culture Club activities were a fantastic success Workshops youth day – oversubscribed very successful recent Easter and Culture Club activities had been highly successful, particularly youth workshops, which were oversubscribed.

Upcoming projects include Beach of Dreams, the Ilfracombe Arts Trail, a photography festival, a history and vintage fashion event in partnership with the Landmark Theatre, and a live music trail.

The closure of “The Space” was recognised as a major loss for local clubs and community groups. Feasibility work exploring the reuse of buildings, including the church, was discussed.

The proposal for a seafront art wall was highlighted as a potential “quick win” project linked to the Culture Plan and Arts Trail, although a project lead still needs to be identified.

An update was also provided on the proposed Damien Hirst sculpture project, which remains under discussion for possible delivery in 2028 alongside Town of Culture activity.

The 'Town of Culture' application submitted in March is awaiting a response later this spring.

- Potential of a MUGA

There was further discussion regarding the ongoing demand for improved recreational facilities for young people, including the potential development of a multi-use games area (MUGA) or alternative open recreational space. The matter had previously appeared on the agenda several years ago, with consultation proposed at that time. The item was raised again to reignite discussion and explore current opportunities.

There was a general consensus that there is currently a lack of safe, designated spaces for young people to gather and take part in recreational activities without being moved on. It was noted that previous consultation work, including responses from Ilfracombe Academy, had produced broad feedback. Members also noted that the newly established youth club could help lead or support future consultation work. Several possible locations were identified for consideration:

- Bicclescombe Park, near the tennis courts
- The museum site, which is more secluded and less likely to disturb nearby residents, although concerns were raised regarding the existing building and car park income
- Oxford Park, due to the availability of open space
- The skate park, which may require levelling works but could potentially be developed into a wider community sports complex; it was recalled that this had been proposed previously
- Greenways, where there is a significant amount of unused green space

Discussion also considered whether the priority should specifically be a MUGA, which could be expensive to deliver, or a more flexible open recreational space. There was a preference towards creating open recreational space due to cost considerations and the potential for wider community use, including overspill provision for rugby, netball and other sports.

It was recalled that a draft PNP report published in 2005 may contain supporting evidence relevant to this proposal.

Members suggested that, before pursuing a formal business case, a clearer proposal should be developed setting out several possible options and identifying a preferred direction.

It was also noted that Active Devon has previously provided funding for MUGA projects, and this funding avenue should be explored further. Richard Slaney was suggested as a key contributor to future discussions, as he had previously undertaken research into similar proposals.

It was agreed that further work is required to assess feasibility, funding opportunities and community need before any decisions are made.

#### **Actions:**

- LD to meet with Richard Slaney to discuss possible options and consider the establishment of a working group, potentially led by Dan T.
- Laura Donovan to meet with relevant partners to review previous work and consider next steps, including the potential formation of a working group.

## **Section 106**

Members discussed the importance of proactively identifying priorities for future Section 106 funding allocations. It was noted that maintaining a clear and deliverable list of potential projects would strengthen the town's ability to secure and direct funding as opportunities arise.

The potential for Section 106 funding to contribute towards a MUGA or wider recreational project was raised for consideration.

It was noted that the issue had also been discussed at the Town Meeting, where concerns were raised about existing allocations, with a significant proportion reportedly directed towards the rugby club. Members also noted that the Community Land Trust may have additional funding opportunities becoming available.

There was agreement that discussions should begin at an early stage, before funding is allocated without wider community consultation.

Members heard that approximately £140,000 of Section 106 funding had been spent over the past ten years. It was therefore considered advisable for the town to maintain a prepared "wish list" of priority projects in order to maximise the likelihood of future schemes being selected for funding.

It was further noted that the Town Council has the ability to prioritise projects, and members agreed that the IRB is the appropriate forum to oversee and coordinate this process.

### **North Devon Council**

- Harbour

Harbour programmes are progressing well. A recent rockfall on the southern side has been inspected, with no significant concerns identified beyond limited netting works.

- Seafront Master Plan

The Seafront Master Plan was discussed in detail. Members acknowledged that while significant work had gone into developing the original document, delivery to date has been limited. There was agreement that the plan now needs to be refreshed and focused on realistic and achievable projects capable of delivering visible improvements in the short term.

Members were asked to review the existing plan ahead of the next meeting, where it will form a substantive agenda item. Laura Donovan will circulate the draft version and identify key sections for discussion. It was also noted that an investor is expected to present proposals for seafront projects at the next meeting, alongside the Community Land Trust.

### **Actions**

- All members to review the Seafront Master Plan before the next meeting.
- LD to circulate/sc an the draft version and identify key sections.
- Seafront Master Plan to be added as a substantive agenda item for the next meeting.
- Ideas to be assembled and presented to Ilfracombe Town Council Full Council.
  
- Planning Updates

Planning updates included progress at Leigh Bay Hotel and a new residential application at 96 High Street, which was viewed positively in terms of regeneration. A

number of untidy and development sites were also reviewed, with enforcement action progressing in some cases. Members noted that additional planning enforcement capacity is now in place, which should support more proactive case management. A road closure remains in place following Devon County Council concerns regarding an unsafe culvert.

### **Devon County Council**

Keir Duffin left the meeting early but advised that current works underway form part of the wider regeneration programme.

An email update will be circulated.

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

The Board discussed the importance of strengthening member engagement in setting priorities and guiding delivery. It was suggested that a dedicated strategy session or workshop could be held to assess potential projects against criteria such as impact, deliverability and available resources (desirability vs achievability).

### **6. Date of Next Meeting**

Wednesday 10 June 2026, 2pm – 4pm

It was agreed that the meeting duration will be extended to two hours.