



ILFRACOMBE HARBOUR BUSINESS PLAN 2024 -2029

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1. DOCUMENT CONTROL

This is a controlled document which is subject to annual review and amendment.

Major changes will be issued as a new version with all minor amendments to that version annotated by a decimal point e.g. V2 will become V2.1, V2.2 etc.

Amendment proposals should be sent to the Harbour Master using the following means:

Email: harbourmaster@northdevon.gov.uk

Phone: 01271 862108

Post: Harbour Masters Office, the Pier, Ilfracombe EX34 9EQ

2. RECORD OF REVIEW & AMENDMENTS

| Review (R) or Amendment (A) | Date | Page | Description of changes |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------------------------|
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| | | | |
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3. INTRODUCTION

- 3.1. This Business Plan sets out our plans and ambitions over the next five years and will, when adopted by the Harbour Board, and subject to acknowledgement by the Strategy & Resources Committee, be submitted to Full Council for adoption.
- 3.2. The Harbour Board continually strives to achieve a balance between the needs of the present and future users of the harbour.
- 3.3. In the coming years we will face the challenge of becoming a significant catalyst for regeneration of the wider Ilfracombe. Whilst we do this we will continue to serve the needs of all our current stakeholders. This will involve affordable, maintenance and safety led improvements to the infrastructure of the harbour.
- 3.4. Vital to this will be working with the Harbour Advisory Committee, Ilfracombe Town Council and other invested stakeholders to ensure a broad acceptability of our plans, balanced by the statutory obligations under which we operate.
- 3.5. We have detailed our objectives for the next four years in the attached tables and have clear monitoring of our outcomes.
- 3.6. This Document has been developed in line with the corporate plan and strives to encompass the five priorities set out by the Council those being;
- **Financial Security** – to reduce our reliance on core government funding, increase income and be risk aware not risk averse.
 - **Housing** – to plan and deliver housing provision to meet local needs and to increase the availability of decent, affordable and accessible accommodation.
 - **Climate and Environment** – to protect and enhance the natural environment, tackle climate change and protect biodiversity.
 - **Pride of Place and Prosperity** – to promote economic development, support the regeneration of our Places and improve the quality of life for residents and visitors by making North Devon more attractive, vibrant and successful.
 - **People Matter** – to be seen as a vibrant, attractive employer by being an ambitious and caring council that develops and looks after its communities and delivers excellent customer focussed services that meet the needs of residents.
- 3.7. This reflects the need to prepare for an increasing funding gap in the public sector. By planning our activities, or strategy, through this document, we aim to be proactive to the risk of having to make 'knee jerk' reactions to find savings.

4. OVERVIEW OF THE SERVICE

- 4.1. Ilfracombe Harbour is the largest Municipal Port on the North Devon Coast and is a strategic asset to the economy of the area. It is set partially within a Marine Conservation Zone and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Within its boundaries it has Grade 1 and Grade 2 Star listed buildings and structures. It is adjacent to Sites of Special Scientific Interest and County Wildlife Sites and immediately adjacent to the Harbour is a site designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Part of the Harbour footprint includes a section of the North Devon Heritage Coast and a Local Nature Reserve. All of these factors reflect the unique nature of the harbour, its long history and its place in the community.
- 4.2. The Harbour caters for a wide variety of users encompassing commercial Trawlers and Potters, commercial day trip activity boats, leisure and recreational activities which meet the needs of the community and its visitors. These activities also aid the economy of the area by providing tourist attractions, employment and supporting the people's wellbeing with a safe and healthy Harbour environment.
- 4.3. The Harbour Board are committed to comply with the standards as laid down in the Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC). Compliance with it and strict adherence to an approved Marine Safety Management System (MSMS) ensures that a robust safety culture exists within the Harbour undertaking. Embedded within that culture are provisions for the equality and diversity of those who wish to enjoy the Harbour environment.
- 4.4. The Harbour board welcome development ideas such as the Cross Channel ferry and renewable energy strategy and are committed to investigating the potential of all ideas as to suitability for the continued growth of the Harbour.
- 4.5. Many studies into the future of Ilfracombe Harbour have been completed over the years and are held by North Devon Council. These are likely to form the focus for development work to establish an optimum design configuration for future Harbour regeneration and development proposals.

5. STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITY

- 5.1. North Devon District Council is the Harbour Authority by virtue of the Ilfracombe Harbour Improvement Act 1905 and the Local Authorities (England) (Property etc.) Order 1973 and subsequent amendments thereto.
- 5.2. Management of the Harbour is governed by the Act of 1905; the surviving provisions of the Harbours Docks and Piers Clauses Act 1870 and the Harbours Act 1964.
- 5.3. Works in and around the Harbour are authorised and controlled by the MMO by means of Harbour Revision Orders made under The Harbours Act 1964.
- 5.4. Activities in and around the Harbour and the enforcement authority of the Harbour Master are controlled and authorised by the surviving provisions of the Harbours Docks and Piers Clauses Act 1870 and The Ilfracombe Harbour Bye-Laws 1992 and 1994 made under the order of that Act.

6. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

- 6.1. The Harbour Board (The Board) operate as a Committee of the full Council and is therefore bound by its policies and procedures. The Board is progressing plans to secure the port's future for the local community and stakeholders by ensuring sound financial planning and building for the future.
- 6.2. The Ilfracombe Harbour Advisory Committee is made up of representatives from all Harbour stakeholder groups. It is linked to the Board within its own and the Board's constitution and provides a statutory voice for harbour related issues and consultation on proposed projects to be conveyed to the Harbour Authority via the Board under the draft Harbour Revision Order 202[].

7. BUSINESS STRATEGY

- 7.1. The Boards business strategy is one of balanced regeneration and development. This requires continued mixed use with redevelopment geared towards activities that add most financial value to the Harbour account.
- 7.2. The importance of enhancing the economic contributions of the Harbour to the local area and safeguarding environmental interests is also recognised.
- 7.3. To, as far as is possible and practicable, reduce the Harbours carbon emissions.

8. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

8.1. INTRODUCTION

8.1.1. A summary of the main Strengths and Weaknesses attributable to the Harbour and the Opportunities and Threats that face it are outlined below.

8.2. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

8.1.2. The fundamental strength of the Harbour is its location as the only 'open sea' harbour on the North Devon Coast and its long history and tradition. It is the 'Gem' of the Town and as such is the focal point for tourism. Primarily leisure and recreational based, the Harbour is a popular haven for vessels visiting from other harbours and marinas around the Bristol Channel. It is also home to a small but active fishing fleet and provides a base for multiple commercial 'day trip' operators.

8.1.3. With the opening in 2023 of the award winning Larkstone Water Sports Hub, non-powered water activities have increased significantly and with the Hubs onsite Café this has generated increased visitor numbers to the Harbour area from the locality and the wider community.

8.1.4. Ilfracombe Harbour is a Royal Yachting Associations recognised training centre, under the name of Ilfracombe Sea School and is the only training centre in North Devon offering the widest range of recognised courses. This has seen an increase of visitors and activity within the Harbour.

8.1.5. However, the 10m tidal range and resulting fully drying harbour does restrict commercial productivity and flexibility.

8.1.6. Funding has continued to be a very difficult issue with current running costs barely breaking even with income generated. This makes any development and regeneration currently untenable within our own resources.

8.3. OPPORTUNITIES

8.3.1. The development of Ilfracombe Sea School to encompass both the Merchant Navy and Fishing sectors would set Ilfracombe as one of the main training providers in the Country.

8.3.2. The provision of electrical charging facilities for the growing Green boating community

8.3.3. The rejuvenation of the available land on the south side of the harbour. The existing landscape offers few opportunities to undertake this but with the provision of a protecting northern outer breakwater would allow marine and tourism related businesses to prosper within a safer marine environment.

8.3.4. Potential to relocate the Harbour Masters Office and associated store area to the Cove for better Harbour management in the changing climate. Explore potential for the vacated spaces.

8.4. THREATS

8.4.5. Rising sea levels without further protective measures would limit the viability of operations and for commercial growth

8.4.6. The wider economic problem with restricting funding availability

SWOT ANALYSIS - ILFRACOMBE HARBOUR



STRENGTHS

- Historic Harbour
- Motivated, trained and experienced staff
- Easy Access to the Bristol Channel
- Strong governance regime
- Protected from majority of prevailing weather conditions
- Upgraded facilities for all users
- Proactive local community
- Close to local facilities
- Large area of Car Parking
- Focal point for tourism in North Devon
- Ilfracombe identified as a centre for regeneration and development
- Located in Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, adjacent to and surrounded by a Marine Conservation Zone



WEAKNESSES

- Inner Harbour dries at low water
- Physical structures are aging
- Vehicular access to the harbour is limited due to narrow roads
- Development of land is limited
- No room for expansion of marine area, moorings at present
- Directly raised finance through charges is limited
- South side of Harbour entrance has rocky foreshore restricting use
- Listed structures reduce development opportunities



OPPORTUNITIES

- Support facilities for offshore renewable energy schemes in the wider vicinity
- 'Green' tourism and increasing environmental awareness amongst staff and customers
- A cross/trans channel passenger/vehicle ferry
- Developing Ilfracombe Sea School from its present recreational training into a marine training destination for the Merchant Navy and Fishing sectors increasing visitor numbers and income generation
- Protection of harbour and it's listed quay by construction of a Northern Pier



THREATS

- Rising sea levels increase risk of flooding
- Economic conditions reduce ability to raise working finance through charges
- Restrictions on fishing industry may reduce viability
- A ferry service may prove to be unviable
- Unfavourable economic climate, reducing resident and visitor spend
- Environmental and archaeological objections may reduce the ability to expand the development potential
- High cost of harbour infrastructure

9. SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN

| No. | Plan Title | Action No. | Action title | Timeline in Years | Remarks |
|-----|---|------------|---|-------------------|---------|
| 1 | Promote the Harbour as a venue for safe recreational watersports activities | A1 | Commence and advertising exercise to increase Larkstone Hub complex income | 0-5 | |
| 2 | Improve performance by monitoring Customer needs | A2 | Customer feedback forms to be implemented | 0-5 | |
| 4 | Plan to achieve savings during the life of this plan in accordance with the requirements of NDC | A3 | Investigate ways of reducing costs and increasing revenues for Kayak Storage & Signage | 0-5 | |
| 5 | Research external funding streams to continue Harbour upgrades | A4 | Replacement of diesel tank and delivery system | 0-3 | |
| | | A5 | Provision of electrical charging facilities for vessels | 0-2 | |
| | | A6 | Provision of new Harbour Office | 0-3 | |
| | | A7 | Provision of wider Marine training facilities | 0-4 | |
| | | A8 | Provision of new visitor's shower facilities on the Cove | 0-3 | |
| 6 | Investigate Research & Development technology | A9 | Configuration of inner Harbour moorings and mooring techniques to take full potential of area and protect the Harbour seabed. | 0-5 | |

10. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- 10.1. Number of 'Paid for' Signage boards
- 10.2. Number of Kayak/Dinghy bays
- 10.3. Number of Customer satisfaction surveys
- 10.4. Number of Watersports Hub permits issued
- 10.5. Number of Training courses run & students attending

11. CONCLUSION

The geography and history of Ilfracombe differentiate it from any other port or harbour on the North Devon Coast. It has its own unique charm, which needs to be carefully considered when establishing the nature and extent of any future development opportunities.

Regeneration needs to be balanced, sensitive to the Town's character and properly focussed to the needs of existing stakeholders and the wider community as a whole.

The accepted business strategy is to support continued mixed use, with redevelopment geared towards activities which add most financial value to the harbour account whilst, at the same time, enhancing the economic contributions of the Harbour to the local area and safeguarding environmental interest.