



introduction

Dawlish Beach



1.1 Background

This report presents a **recommended strategy and master plan for the regeneration of Dawlish Town Centre**. The report, which was commissioned by Dawlish Community Trust, has been prepared by the consultants yellow book in partnership with WMUD and MRC McLean Hazel.

The study has been funded by the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA), with contributions from Devon County Council, Teignbridge District Council and Dawlish Town Council.

Dawlish Community Trust is the successor to the Dawlish Regeneration Group which was set up with assistance from SWRDA's Market and Coastal Towns Initiative (MCTI). The group carried out a series of public consultations in 2004-05, leading to the publication of a town *Healthcheck* for Dawlish.

This provided the springboard for the development of the **Dawlish Community Strategic Plan 2005-2015**, which was published in September 2005. The present commission flows directly from the *Strategic Plan* which highlighted a number of concerns about aspects of the town centre including:



- the overuse, poor condition and poor maintenance of the Lawn and other public spaces
- the deterioration of the town centre townscape
- poor first impressions of the town at the railway station and Tuck's Plot
- the need to improve the quality and quantity of food and other retail outlets
- traffic congestion and inadequate parking at peak times
- poor conditions for pedestrians, disabled people and cyclists.

The plan contains a long list of proposed projects, including priority action to:

- improve the Lawn, Manor Gardens and other public and open spaces
- increase turnover, footfall and employment by making the Strand safer and more attractive to visitors.

1.2 The brief

Against this backdrop the Trust issued a brief which called for the preparation of:

"...a comprehensive master plan for the Town Centre. It is to address shortcomings in the functioning of the central area,

The Lawn and bowling green



which is a centre for tourism".

The brief called for the master plan to address in particular:

- **economic drivers** for Dawlish
- **retail and service industries**
- **tourism**, and
- **barriers to growth** such as congestion, parking and pedestrian access.

In our response to the brief we proposed a strategy-led approach. We recommended that a **vision and strategic proposition** for the town centre should be prepared in order to establish a clear set of objectives for the master plan. The process of developing the strategy would enable the trustees and the community to discuss and agree priorities for action, and to turn a long list of "nice to do" projects into a focused proposition designed to contribute directly to the regeneration of the town centre.

That approach was agreed, and the final brief called for a work programme comprising three key stages:

- the development of a robust **baseline analysis** of the town centre's assets and liabilities, trends and future prospects
- based on this analysis – and an extensive programme

of consultations with stakeholders and the community - the development of an agreed **strategic proposition** for the future direction of the town centre, and

- finally, the preparation of a **master plan** for the town centre.

1.3 Consultations

The brief stressed the need for consultations with the community, building on the work of the Dawlish Regeneration Group. We carried out an extensive programme of consultations, focusing on three main groups (in addition to the Trustees themselves):

- **local organisations** including the Carnival Committee, DARE, business and amenity associations, Dawlish Repertory Company and others; regular communications with Dawlish Town Council maintained links with local representatives: we made one formal presentation to the Council and also attended a special meeting
- **funding partners:** we had two series of meetings (one-to-one and small group) with representatives of the funding partners: SWRDA, Devon County Council and Teignbridge District Council
- **local residents:** to avoid the risks of “consultation fatigue” we used the comments and feedback



Dawlish Tomorrow

generated by previous consultations in the early stages of the study; when the study had progressed to the point where there was something new to say, we organised a major community consultation event, **Dawlish Tomorrow**.

The *Dawlish Tomorrow* event took place in September 2007, and was an outstanding success. It took place in a marquee on the Lawn and comprised two elements:

- during the day we organised a **drop-in session:** the yellow book team prepared an exhibition and visitors were able to post comments and suggestions on the display boards; DCT Trustees, Town Councillors and members of the consultant team were present for informal discussions
- in the evening, we held a **public meeting**, chaired by the Mayor of Dawlish, at which the consultant team presented its diagnosis of the condition of the town, the proposed strategic response, and headline measures from the action plan.

More than 400 people came to the drop-in session, with another 100 people at the public meeting. The success of the event is attributable to the hard work of the Trustees, the Town Council and others who encouraged people to attend and also orchestrated a successful publicity campaign



including a press release, leaflets and posters, and a banner on the railway bridge.

1.4 Structure of the report

The report is in 13 sections, including this introduction:

- Section 2 looks at **Dawlish in context**, with a brief review of key trends in English seaside towns and a description of the town's socio-economic profile
- Section 3 presents the findings of a **review of policy** at the regional, county, district and local level
- Section 4 focuses on the **town centre**, describing key stages in its development and describing its present condition
- Section 5 discusses the **attitudes of the community** to the town centre, highlighting key messages from the consultations and addressing the supermarket question
- Section 6 draws together some of the key themes of this analysis and presents a **balance sheet of assets and liabilities**
- Section 7 looks at lessons from **small town regeneration** initiatives elsewhere and presents a series of concise case studies.

Our key recommendations are contained in Sections 8-13:

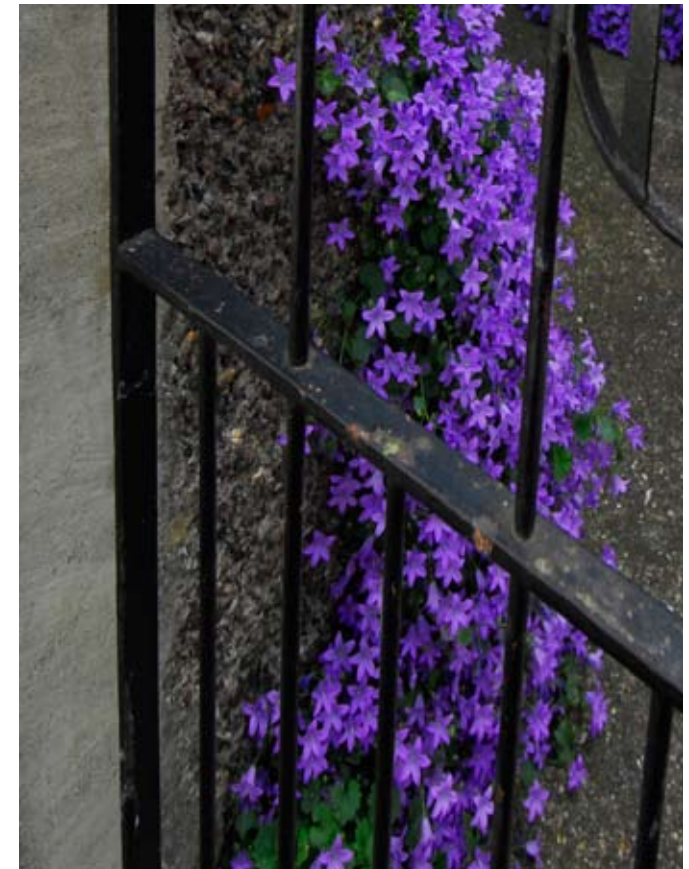
- Section 8 sets out a **vision of Dawlish Tomorrow**
- Section 9 describes the recommended **strategy** and sets out guiding principles, objectives, targets and priorities for action
- Section 10 contains a detailed, illustrated description of the **master plan for the heart of the town**
- Section 11 describes the **other key elements of the master plan**
- Section 12 discusses **delivery** and future **management, maintenance and promotion**
- Section 13 sets out proposals for **making it all happen**, including a 3-year action plan.

There are two annexes:

- Annex 1 presents the results of a literature review on the **economy of coastal towns**
- Annex 2 contains a list of **sources consulted** for the study.

1.5 Acknowledgements

We are grateful to many groups and individuals in Dawlish who have made time to speak to us and share their knowledge, insights and ideas. Dawlish is an active



community with a great tradition of self-help: the energy and commitment of local people has made Dawlish Carnival one of the biggest events of its type in the region, and turned the Shaftesbury Theatre into an excellent modern facility.

The attendance at the *Dawlish Tomorrow* event was unprecedented in our experience and the response reflects both Dawlish residents' affection for the town and their determination to tackle some of the tough problems facing the town centre. We were impressed by the realism, openness and optimism of those who attended: the community will have a key role to play in turning the plans set out in this report into an exciting reality, and achieving the vision of a lively, stylish and prosperous town centre.

We are indebted to those elected members of Dawlish Town Council and Teignbridge District Council who took part in the Dawlish Tomorrow event, and for their interest throughout the project. In particular, we would like to thank the Mayor, Councillor Rosalind Prowse, who was present throughout the day, and Councillor Geoff Wills who chaired the evening meeting.

We want to thank the Trustees of DCT for their enthusiasm and support throughout the project. Illness in the consultant team resulted in a significant delay in completing the project, and the Trustees' patience and forbearance was

much appreciated. Above all, we would like to thank the Chairman of the Trust, Bob Vickery, and Councillor Geoff Wills for their help, advice and practical support throughout the project.

Dawlish Town Centre Conservation Area

