



making it happen

13.1 Introduction

One of the distinctive features of the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative is the emphasis SWRDA places on the **role of communities** in setting the agenda and developing strategies for regeneration and renewal. At its best the MCTI model is a powerful way of generating **community involvement and ownership**, especially when – as in Dawlish – community activists are prepared to seize the opportunities it creates.

We do not claim that that all the ideas in this report will command universal support – that is not possible – but we are confident that the analysis presented here, the assessment of future prospects and the priorities for action all reflect a **strong community consensus** about the challenges facing the town and the need for change.

The task now is to turn the commitment, interest, and even excitement that the study has generated into practical **action on the ground**. We believe that there are good reasons for optimism, not least because of the growing number of small and coastal towns in the UK which have responded to similar challenges and succeeded in changing for the better. Implementing this strategy will **place Dawlish in the first rank** of these revived coastal towns, but what is proposed here is **realistic and** achievable: the scale and

content of these proposals is commensurate with what has been delivered in Bridlington, Whitehaven, Whitby, St Anne's and many other places in the past decade.

However, we are under no illusion that delivering the strategy will be easy. In Dawlish a Regeneration Group (DRG) was formed to lead the initial stages of the MCTI, and this group has evolved into the Dawlish Community Trust (DCT). DCT has been an effective **agent for change**, but it is not an executive body and it does not have significant resources at its disposal. DCT has been very successful in producing the Strategic Plan and securing resources for this study and a number of other projects, but the **scale of resources – people and money** – that will be needed to implement the master plan will be of a different order of magnitude.

The job of a master plan is to describe and map the overall development concept for an area, addressing issues of land use, urban design, built form, infrastructure and services. It is a **spatial strategy** for the town centre, not a detailed blueprint, although we hope and expect that the completed designs will be informed by the strategic objectives, priorities for action and design concepts contained in this report.

The coming year, 2008-09, will be critically important, and should be devoted to building on the economic and spatial

strategies presented here and turning them into a set of detailed proposals which will be procured over the next 3-5 years. We will start the year with a compelling vision of the future and a strategy and master plan in place. **By the end of March 2009 Dawlish should be ready to start work on delivering the plan.** To achieve this, action is required on three fronts:

- to **confirm and consolidate the support and commitment of the community and partner organisations**
- to develop a **detailed, costed operating plan**, and
- to establish the **organisational capacity** to take the work programme forward.

13.2 Building support and commitment

One of the key legacies of this project will be a **high level of public awareness** and a significant level of **in-principle support** for the master plan. But early action will be required to consolidate community support and commitment. We believe that, on acceptance of this report, the immediate priority for Dawlish Community Trust must be to **secure the support of Dawlish Town Council** for the vision and master plan. One of the encouraging features of the study has been the way in which the Trust and the Town Council have come together. Some mutual suspicion was evident at the start



of the process but this has evaporated and the two bodies have worked together effectively, most notably on the organisation of the *Dawlish Tomorrow* event. The roles of the two organisations should be complementary and mutually supportive. Dawlish Community Trust is a **special purpose body** formed to promote the regeneration of Dawlish. It has developed a wide-ranging agenda, but our strong advice is that the Trust should now focus its efforts firmly on the town centre and the delivery of the master plan in particular. By definition, the Town Council's role – statutory and advisory – ranges across every aspect of life in the community and every part of town. The Council cannot be expected to devote its attention exclusively to the town centre, but as the elected body accountable to the people of Dawlish it is uniquely well placed to represent residents' aspirations and to influence the operational and spending priorities of the District and County Councils and others.

It is important to stress that it is never possible to achieve unanimous support. It is for the town's elected representatives and community activists to provide leadership and make the key decisions, but they must continue to **listen carefully** to what the community has to say and they should be **flexible** enough to respond to new ideas and changing circumstances without compromising the integrity and strategic focus of the master plan. At this stage it is particularly important to **focus on the big**

picture, and not to revert to the pattern of opportunistic and ineffective tinkering which has characterised the recent history of the town. Chasing small pots of money is tempting, but it can be counter-productive: the heart of the town needs **transformational change, not fine-tuning** and the approach to regeneration should be **strategy-led, not funding-led**.

Generally, the approach should seek to identify and expand areas of agreement. Successful partnerships find the **common ground**; failing partnerships get mired in the issues (usually much fewer in number) that divide the community. Getting on with the things that everyone agrees about is an excellent way of building mutual trust and confidence before some of the hard choices and contentious decisions need to be confronted. For example, opinion in the town is divided on the desirability of a supermarket, but this study has shown that people see the need for action to improve trading conditions in the town centre *whether or not the supermarket goes ahead*.

The strategy and master plan will be presented to a **public meeting** in spring 2008. Ideally, the proposals should carry the joint imprint of the Trust and the Town Council. The people who attended the *Dawlish Tomorrow* events in September 2008 were told that they would have a chance to see the final proposals, and the meeting will fulfil that

promise. The purpose of the meeting can be summarised as follows:

- first, to **assure people that they have been listened to**: the strategy and master plan reflect many of the themes of the *Dawlish Tomorrow* consultation
- second, to confirm that the strategy is **tackling the right issues and focusing on the right priorities**: we are confident from earlier meetings and consultations that the community will endorse the agenda
- third, to give people a chance to **see and comment on the master plan**: it is a *strategy* for the town centre and people can be assured that these are not detailed plans, but it will be helpful to get an insight into the aspects of the plan that command most support and those that may be contentious
- finally, to **enthuse people and create a climate of optimism**: we should be honest about the challenges we will face in trying to secure funding for the capital programme, but we should also focus on the experience of other, similar places; it is important to confront the sceptics, **to show people that it can be done and ask "why not in Dawlish"?**

Concurrently with the process of engagement with the local community, the Trust will be seeking the support of the funding partners, SWRDA, Devon County Council and

Teignbridge Council. Throughout the study process we have operated a “no surprises” policy. We have taken detailed briefings from officers of all three organisations, they have attended progress meetings and the *Dawlish Tomorrow* event, and we have briefed them on our emerging conclusions. So we can be confident that the strategy and master plan is essentially *the document they are expecting*.

At this stage the Trust should be seeking the **support** of the funding partners and aiming to secure **financial commitments** to the programme. A first round of exploratory consultations should help to clarify what assistance might be available, the decision making process and the appraisal criteria.

Establishing a funding strategy for the major capital programmes will be a key task for the coming years, and this is discussed in Section 13.3. However, a more immediate priority which will need to be addressed with the partners is the need for **development funding** to cover the costs of preparing a business plan and developing detailed proposals for the first stage of the capital programme, as well as the creation of the Dawlish Tomorrow Partnership and the appointment of a manager.

Developing a **partnership approach** is essential: a multi-agency approach is the best way to deliver a positive result.

We have recommended that the Trust, the Town Council, the funding partners and other local groups should form the **Dawlish Tomorrow Partnership** as quickly as possible. Developing a sense of common purpose in this group is a pre-condition for success, and a **strong and coherent** partnership will be very persuasive when the partners are seeking support from the Big Lottery and other sources (see 13.3 below). It will also help to encourage private sector developers and entrepreneurs to **invest in Dawlish**.

13.3 2008-09 Developing the operating plan

The major task in 2008-09 will be to develop an operating plan and budget for the implementation of the first stage of the master plan. This process will need to be designed, scheduled and costed in detail, but **early action** will be required by the Dawlish Tomorrow Partnership (DTP) to review the work programme, firm up cost estimates, assess the fundability of the various projects, appraise the likely benefits in terms of the objectives and performance measures set out in Section 9, and conduct a risk appraisal. DTP’s immediate priority should be to secure resources for and appoint an executive team. In the short-term, one of the partners may be willing to second a part-time **project manager** to maintain the momentum until DTP is in place.

The yellow book team estimates that **the total cost of the**

Heart of the Town master plan described in Section 10 will be between £5m and £8m, depending on the scale of river engineering works. The other projects described in Section 11 are likely to cost between **£1.5m and £2m**. These broad brush estimates should be tested by cost accountants, but they will provide a starting point for a discussion about deliverability, funding and priorities.

A capital programme of this scale is very substantial but by no means unusual. Nevertheless, the resources available to public sector bodies are constrained and this means that a **phased programme of works** will be required, aiming to deliver the Master Plan over, say, a 5-7 year period. The partners should give priority to those parts of the Master Plan which will have the greatest impact on the strategic objectives, taking account of the availability of resources.

It is clear that the **Heart of the Town** proposals described in Section 10 must be the top priority, ideally linked to the implementation of the **Townscape Heritage Initiative** (Section 11.4). There are no significant barriers to implementing most of the Master Plan proposals, but discussions will be required with, among others:

- the **Environment Agency** on the river engineering and flood prevention issues
- **Devon County Council** on the proposals for the A379 at



- Tuck's Plot, and
- **Network Rail** on the restoration of Dawlish station.

The Heart of the Town project will itself need to be implemented in stages, partly because of the need to synchronise some elements of the programme with other agencies' capital programmes. It is clear that **implementation of the core public realm proposals for the Lawn (west of Jubilee Bridge) and the Strand are the most urgent priority**. These are the projects most likely to have an immediate, direct impact on trading conditions in the town centre and on the quality of the visitor experience. We recommend therefore that the **first stage of the capital programme** should focus on planning and implementing proposals for:

- Strand Car Park (Section 10.2 above)
- Bowling Green (10.3)
- Café/performance space (10.4)
- The Lawn (10.5)
- The Strand (10.6)
- Market Place (10.7)

Every effort should be made to link implementation of proposals for the Shaftesbury (10.6) and the eco-centre (10.7) to this programme, but as they are not contingent on the implementation of the public realm works they may be

treated as discrete though connected projects.

The Townscape Heritage Initiative (11.4) will complement and underpin these projects so every effort should be made to introduce this programme while the public realm works are being carried out. This will encourage traders and property owners to invest in the town centre at this critical stage.

Work on the rest of the Heart of the Town programme will form the **second stage**, and should be scheduled to start by the time the first stage is complete. Work at the east end of the Strand and the Market Place will need to be coordinated with the re-introduction of 2-way traffic at Jubilee Bridge (10.10) and the creation of Piermont Square (10.11). Work at Dawlish station (10.12) and on the Sea Wall (10.13) should be timed to coincide with these major projects.

The **third stage** will comprise:

- Barton Hill Action Plan (11.1)
- Sea Front Action Plan (11.2)
- Lea Mount (11.3)
- the walking and cycling network (11.5).

Detailed plans for these elements of the master plan should be finalised while work in the Heart of the Town is

under way. However, subject to developer interest and the availability of funding, the Dawlish Incubator project could proceed earlier and might act as a catalyst for the rest of the Barton Hill plan. Proposals for the Sea Front and Lea Mount should be treated as a package.

The **key tasks for DCT and its partners in 2008-09** will therefore be to:

- develop detailed, costed plans for the Stage 1 work programme
- prepare a funding strategy and secure financial and planning approvals
- develop indicative plans and budgets for Stages 2 and 3.

The aim should be to **have the Stage 1 programme "ready to go" by the end of 2008-09** (subject to funding) with **contractors appointed early in 2009-10 and work starting in Q2**. The work schedule should aim to minimise the impact during the peak holiday period, and contingency plans for the Carnival will also need to be agreed. Excellent **communications** between the contractors and town centre businesses will be particularly important: the arrangements currently in place for a major streetscape scheme in the Grassmarket, Edinburgh are a good model.

In discussions with the trustees we have suggested that

a **design competition** should be considered for the Heart of the Town project. This can be a very effective way of generating public interest and building trader confidence. We recommend that DCT and the public sector partners should seek guidance at an early stage from the **Architecture Centre Devon & Cornwall** (ACD&C). ACD&C may be able to offer guidance on the conduct of competitions as well as a design review service.

Whether the design is commissioned by competition or conventional procurement, the partners will need to find funding for it, as well as **professional fees** for cost accountants and others. We have already suggested that in addition, a **funding package** will need to be agreed to create the Dawlish Tomorrow Partnership as well as arrangements for ongoing **revenue costs**. Contributions towards some of these costs may be available from the funding partners described below.

13.4 Funding strategy

A project of this scale will require **funding from a range of sources**. One of the key tasks for the project manager/town centre manager will be to put together a funding strategy, but the Trust and Town Council will also have key role to play in **mobilising support** for the project and **lobbying** potential funding partners. Advice and support may also be available

from the Devon External Funding Advisors Network (DEFAN).

The Trust should, of course, seek financial support from the bodies that have funded this report, SWRDA, Teignbridge District Council and Devon County Council. Although none has made a commitment at this stage, all have been very supportive of the study and we have recommended that they should come together with DCT and the Town Council to form the Dawlish Tomorrow Partnership.

SWRDA has just announced changes in the way it will make decisions on future investments in market and coastal towns. Essentially these changes will mean a tighter focus on activities that meet the RDA's core purposes. SWRDA will only "invest to unlock business potential", which is of course very much in line with the strategy-led approach of the master plan.

Teignbridge District Council – in partnership with the Town Council - has a key role to play in the formation of DTP, and is currently discussing the **transfer of resources and responsibilities** to Dawlish Town Council; some elements of the Master Plan may secure capital funding from the Council.

Devon County Council will have the primary responsibility for the proposals for the A379/Jubilee Bridge; demonstrating that these are not stand alone proposals but an integral

part of a **comprehensive regeneration strategy** for the town will help to strengthen the case for priority treatment in the forward capital programme.

Other potential sources of funding include:

- the **Environment Agency** can be expected to provide advice on river engineering and flood risk management, and is a potential source of financial assistance
- the **Big Lottery Fund** (BLF) distributes over £600m a year, more than half the money available to good causes from Lottery sales; key themes for BLF include:
 - strengthening communities, and
 - improving the environment
- the **Heritage Lottery Fund** (HLF) supports heritage and regeneration projects through grant programmes including:
 - *Parks for People* which offers grants ranging from £250,000 to £5m
 - *Heritage Grants*: this programme is changing in 2008, with applications under the new scheme due by September
 - *Townscape Heritage Initiative*: a new THI will be launched in April 2008 with a deadline for applications in November.



Competition for these resources is, of course, intense and funds are routinely over-subscribed, but the onus is therefore on bidders to make **a compelling case**, with a sound evidence base and to demonstrate the benefits the projects will bring.

The Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) has recently announced a 3-year £45m programme for investment in **heritage and culture in English coastal towns**. This is to be managed by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). It might be a good target for the Shaftesbury proposals. Details of the scheme will be announced shortly.

Other potential sources include **Network Rail**, whose planned programme of maintenance on the coastal route should be factored into proposals for the sea wall and the cobweb bridge. Merging these projects should help to secure commitments to renovate the station and its precincts.

If a decision is made to approve a supermarket on an out of town site, there will be an opportunity to negotiate a **Section 106 agreement** with the developer. Given that a new store would inevitably have an impact on town centre businesses, we believe there would be a strong case for securing a contribution to the Stage 1 works in the heart of the town.

The Master Plan is predicated on the need to create a climate of confidence which will stimulate **private sector investment** in the town centre. That is the model that has been pursued in the towns described in Section 7. However, the proposal to create a stylish café at the west end of the Lawn provides an opportunity to identify a prospective operator to participate in the development.

This does not pretend to be a comprehensive picture, but it demonstrates that delivery of the master plan will require a **cocktail of funding**. The onus will be on the DTP partners to demonstrate that the Dawlish Town Centre Master Plan will **generate synergies and produce real, measurable economic and community benefits**. It will be vital to show funding bodies that this project will be truly **transformational**, and that it will deliver **much more than the sum of its parts**. Those responsible for project managing the master plan must build **a coalition of champions and supporters**.

13.5 Action plan 2008-09

Figure 13-1 sets out an indicative **action plan** for 2008-09. **By the end of March 2009, Stage 1 of the Heart of the Town project should be ready to go**, and the following conditions will be in place:

- **a multi-agency partnership** to oversee the process and

Figure 13-1: Action plan 2008-09

Date	Milestones
2008-09	
Q1	Establish Dawlish Tomorrow Partnership Agree priorities for action Public meeting Appoint part-time project manager (seconded) Secure development funding for year 1 Open discussions with funding bodies Launch competition/appoint consultants to develop detailed plans for the Heart of the Town
Q2	Develop DTP operating plan Review design proposals and cost programme, based on staged implementation Submit funding applications as required (including development funding)
Q3	Appoint DTP staff Negotiate transfer of responsibility and resources for cleaning, maintenance etc to Town Council, to be delivered by DTP team Finalise Heart of the Town scheme and agree implementation programme Finalise funding strategy for Stage 1, with in-principle commitments for Stages 2 & 3; conduct risk appraisal Submit funding applications as required
Q4	Confirm funding package for Stage 1 and secure planning consent Public launch for DTP, with 3 key elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • announce new town centre management regime • announce first round of business support and promotional initiatives • announce details of Stage 1, including programme and arrangements for management and communications. Agree contingency plans for 2009/2010 Carnivals

- to champion the vision of Dawlish Tomorrow
- **an executive team** responsible for (i) project management, (ii) town centre management and promotion
- DTP team responsible to the Town Council for **town centre maintenance and cleaning**
- a high quality **detailed design** for the Heart of the Town, with a **staged, costed delivery plan**
- **firm financial commitments** for Stage 1 of the project and in-principle support for Stages 2 and 3
- robust **project management** arrangements for the implementation phase.

Projects of this type are always subject to **risks and uncertainties**. A key task for the DTP will be to anticipate contingencies and manage through them. It is important to work on building and extending the partnership so that all the funding partners have a **shared sense of responsibility and mutual dependence**. This reduces the risk that partners will fail to deliver their contribution and – by emphasising the need for coordinated action – improves the prospects of securing funds sooner rather than later.

However, **a degree of uncertainty is inevitable** and it is important to guard against **optimism bias**. Opportunities may present themselves to take forward parts of the programme sooner than expected. Alternatively, partners

may need to delay implementation of parts of the plan or, in the worst case, drop some elements altogether. In these circumstances it is vital that the partners (i) are clear about what their **priorities** are, and (ii) ensure that the **quality** of the scheme – in terms of design, materials and workmanship – is not comprised.

13.6 2009 and beyond

A possible schedule of **key milestones** is set out in Figure 13-2. It is important to stress that these dates are illustrative only: elements of the programme will be delivered sooner or later than shown here: firming up the operating plan will be a key early task. However, the programme shown would **deliver the Heart of the Town public realm proposals in full by 2011, with the rest of the master plan by 2013**, and we believe that this should be the partners' objective.

13.7 Conclusion

This report has set out a **compelling vision and strategy** for Dawlish town centre, which are designed to act as the catalysts for change and regeneration. The strategy will build on the town's spirit of enterprise and community involvement, **transforming the town by**:

Figure 13-2: Key milestones: 2009-2011 and beyond

Date	Milestones
2009-10	
Q1	Put Stage 1 works out to tender and appoint contractors Negotiations with potential café operators Communications with town centre businesses and local residents to agree programme of works and communications arrangements Exploratory discussions on the Shaftesbury
Q2	Work starts on Stage 1 Review Stage 2 plans and finalise funding strategy; confirm in-principle commitments for Stage 3; conduct risk appraisal Negotiations with developers/funding partners on Dawlish Incubator, eco-centre and Shaftesbury projects Submit funding applications as required
Q3	Confirm funding package for Stage 2 and secure planning consent Develop detailed, costed plans for Stage 3
Q4	Meeting with traders to review progress on Stage 1 and plans for Stage 2 Public launch of Stage 2 proposals Put Stage 2 works out to tender
2010-11	
	Stage 1 works completed Stage 2 works start Funding packages agreed for other projects
2011 +	
	2011: Stage 2 works finished: Heart of the Town project completed Work starts on Stage 3 action plans (first phase) Work starts on Incubator and Shaftesbury 2012: Stage 3 action plans (first phase) completed Incubator and Shaftesbury open for business Work starts on Stage 3 (2 nd phase) and eco-centre 2013: Stage 3 (2 nd phase) action plans completed eco-centre opens



- increasing the **number** of people – locals, residents of the wider region and tourists – who choose to come to Dawlish
- encouraging visitors to **spend more** in shops, cafes, restaurants and on leisure activities
- creating a **diverse economy** with more skilled and well-paid jobs, and
- **stimulating investment** by traders, entrepreneurs and developers.

We have presented a **master plan** for the town centre which will:

- recapture the elegance and beauty of the **Regency town**
- restore the wonderful **public spaces** created in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, and
- create **new buildings and spaces** of the highest quality which will help the town to prosper in the 21st century.

It is an exciting and challenging prospect. Delivering the whole package described in Sections 10 and 11 will **cost between £6.5m and £10m**. That is a large sum but very much in line with the scale of investment that has gone into the regeneration of other market and coastal towns throughout the UK. Other places have turned themselves around in the past decade and there is no reason why Dawlish should not join them.

We believe that the **energy and creativity** that the community has put into the MCTI over the past few years – and the practical achievements - mean that **Dawlish is already one of the “stars” in the south west**. The success of the *Dawlish Tomorrow* event showed that **the people of Dawlish care passionately about their town**, and the achievements of the Carnival Committee, Dawlish Repertory Company and others show that they are prepared to make **a practical commitment to economic development and improving quality of life**.

Gearing up to implement a programme of this scale and ambition is **a big step up for any town**. The energy, enthusiasm and commitment of an active community are essential preconditions for success, but they need to be supplemented by **new skills and resources**. In this section of the report we have discussed some aspects of this **transition from planning to implementation**. The tasks described here will need to be fleshed out into a detailed work programme for 2008-09 and beyond, and a dedicated professional team will be required to deliver it.

Dawlish is an attractive and popular town, but it has been drifting for too long. The quality and appeal of the town centre has been deteriorating: shops, cafes and services do not measure up to the expectations of discerning customers, and much of the fabric of the town is tacky and shabby.

Even the Lawn – the riverside open space at the heart of the town – looks tired and undistinguished. The town centre has entered into **a spiral of decline** characterised by weak business performance and a poor urban environment.

The days when a small town could subsist on the custom of local residents are long gone. People are increasing mobile and the competition between places for retail, leisure and other services is fierce. We have argued that Dawlish needs a town centre offer that will **win back local customers**, but that it also needs to **attract visitors from the wider Exeter/Torbay sub-region**, a catchment area with a population of 400,000. If the offer is good enough people from this catchment can be persuaded to choose Dawlish as a distinctive place to shop, eat out, visit the beach and the parks, and for markets, events and cultural activities. If Dawlish becomes a busy, popular town once again, **tourism visits will follow**. Devon is an increasingly popular and fashionable short-break destination, and Dawlish must aim to increase its share of this lucrative market.

The potential of Dawlish is not in doubt, but unlocking that potential will require intervention to **restore the town centre environment and enhance the public realm**. Public sector investment is essential to break out of the cycle of decline and re-establish business and investor confidence. The vision of a **lively, stylish and prosperous town centre** needs

a catalyst which the master plan described in this report can supply. It is important to stress that implementing the master plan will be **a sound investment**. The money spent in the next 3-5 years will attract a further round of private sector investment in new and improved shops and services, and they in turn will stimulate a massive increase in business turnover and profitability.

yellow **book**
Janet Benton
MRC McLean Hazel
WMUD

April 2008