



New Romney Town Council – Press Release

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“New Romney Socio-Economic Plan A ‘Living’ Document”

A lot of misinformation has been circulating around the Town and the Romney Marsh via social media regarding, amongst other things, the recently drafted New Romney Socio-Economic Plan. This is to, objectively, clarify the facts.

- New Romney Town Council successfully secured a £10,000 Government Grant from the DCLG to form a Coastal Community Team who would oversee the creation of a Socio-Economic Plan (“the Plan”) for the Town.
- An additional grant from Magnox of £5000 has also been secured by New Romney Town Council and Shepway District Council working in partnership - to support the implementation of some early short term projects identified in the Plan. This, and part of the DCLG grant, have yet to be allocated for specific short term projects.
- A range of organisations that are linked to the economic prosperity of the Town were invited to take part in the development of the Plan.
- The same exercise has been, and is being undertaken – in the same manner – in Folkestone, Dymchurch and Hythe and in over 140 coastal towns around the Country.
- The Government guidance suggests that such a Plan should focus on public realm improvements, High Street Regeneration, Heritage promotion and if possible, enhancing opportunities for tourism
- The Team members include representation from Shepway District Council, Romney Marsh Partnership, The Varne Boat Club, RNLI, The Marsh Academy, Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway, Romney Resource Centre, Littlestone Golf Club, JAM, New Romney Town Traders, Magnox and of course, the Town Council
- The purpose of the grant itself was to form the Team and create a Plan. An Economic Regeneration Consultancy Firm – ‘Regeneris,’ who had already drafted the Dymchurch Plan, were engaged to co-ordinate Team meetings, interview and engage with Team

Members and undertake the baseline assessment of the area and draft the main body of the Plan.

- Meetings were held and information shared between the Team members and a SWOT analysis was undertaken. A SWOT Analysis looks at the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats facing the area. The Team also engaged with students from the Young Leadership Team at the Marsh Academy who undertook a separate and linked SWOT analysis exercise during one of the meetings. It is important to engage with the young people in the area since this was and is setting a potential direction for the future improvement of the Town and its economic prospects.
- A Public Awareness Event was held to encourage some comments and engagement from the public and to highlight the fact that the Plan was being created.
- Each organisation put forward a range of ideas for projects that it was felt would benefit the area.
- A list of priority projects was identified – including the development of the new Sports Pavilion and Community Hall – something the Council was already progressing following extensive consultation over recent years with local residents. Other potential projects include the creation of a Town Heritage Trail, a Bandstand on St Martins Field (again already consulted on), a new Community Cinema – Cinemarsh, improvements to the Coastal Strip at Littlestone on Sea and others. A longer list includes but is not limited to: public furniture enhancements across the Town and Coastal Wards, support for Arts organisations, and promotion of the Town's rich Cinque Ports Heritage.
- The 62 suggested projects were divided into four categories - Tourism & Heritage, Community & Service, Culture & Leisure, and Business & Enterprises then placed in an approximate timeline - 'Quick Visible Wins, short, medium, long term and longer term taking the Town forward over the next 20 years.
- **The Plan is a 'Living Document'** – it can and most likely will adapt and change over the years but it essentially provides a list of suggestions for how to improve the area. A possible path for regeneration.
- Each of the projects identifies a 'Lead' Partner – the key organisation who will be taking it forward – so, for example,

1. The Marsh Academy is progressing the development of a Community Cinema – ‘Cinemarsh’, and
 2. The Varne Boat Club is hoping to improve and develop their sporting facilities on the coast, and
 3. The Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway hope to enhance the Station in New Romney to accommodate a new Museum, as well as improve promotion and marketing opportunities for this key attraction, and
 4. New Romney Bowls Club are researching the possibility of installing an ‘all weather’ bowling green surface to enable all round year bowling for members and
 5. Shepway District Council have secured funding to look at the enhancement of Mountfield Road Industrial Estate – ie developing employment opportunities for local people
- All this is very exciting and positive for all residents and visitors, of all ages, to the area.
 - Larger projects on the ‘wish list’ identify the need for a possible trunk road to the South of the Town and the development of a new Health Centre. The Council has, for the past two years, been leading the Campaign for this much needed new facility and this is an important element of the Plan.
 - NO money has been spent by the Town Council on any project to date (other than the ongoing development of the Community Hall whereby the Council is working with architects and consultants to develop a design based on feedback from last year’s public consultation.)
 - The Coastal Community Team is, at this time, led by former Mayor and current Deputy Mayor – Councillor Patricia Rolfe. The Team membership is likely to expand over time.
 - The Team, which is independent of the Town Council is an ‘enabling’ forum (similar to the Romney Marsh Partnership but focussed very firmly on the Town and Coastal wards of New Romney – the Capital of the Marsh). It can, and will, support and monitor key projects, and oversee the implementation of a range of projects proposed but, at this time, it is not envisaged that it will ‘lead’. It can, however, provide possible access to a range of funds for the benefit of Partner organisations. This has yet to be researched but the Government’s ‘Coastal Community Fund’ is one key funding stream.

- **NO INDIVIDUAL** has the authority to spend public money, it is the organisations who, through their own defined procedures will do that. **IT IS UNTRUE** that any individual Councillor has personally spent or will spend the rumoured £20 million. It is not possible. Local authority rules on the expenditure of public money are strict and **all** of the Council's financial records and procedures are fully audited and comply with best practice guidelines. They are available for perusal at the Town Hall. The Council, and all of its members and officers operate in an open and transparent manner and in strict accordance with local authority legislative guidelines.
- The money has, for the most part – yet to be found via grants or other funding streams. This is the same for Coastal Community Teams across the UK. The Plan also identifies possible grants available at this time.
- The first 'Quick Visible Win' project has already been implemented This was the siting of a new heritage bench for the benefit of St Martin's Field Charity - funded partly by a personal donation from Cllr Rolfe and partly by charity fundraising, and overseen by the Council.
- **ALL major** projects that the Council will lead, will, of necessity, go out for public consultation and approval.

TO SUMMARISE:

THE PLAN WILL UNDERPIN AND ENCOURAGE INWARD INVESTMENT IN THE TOWN OF NEW ROMNEY. ORGANISATIONS CAN USE THE PLAN TO SUPPORT GRANT FUNDING APPLICATIONS FOR THE RANGE OF PROJECTS IDENTIFIED. FURTHER PROJECTS MAY BE ADDED (OR REMOVED) GOING FORWARD AS NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS CHANGE OVER TIME.

THE PLAN ESSENTIALLY BRINGS TOGETHER A RANGE OF POSITIVE PROJECTS AND IDEAS THAT HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED BY VARIOUS ORGANISATIONS OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS AND PRESENTS THEM IN A SINGLE, COHESIVE 58 PAGE DOCUMENT THAT CAN AND WILL HELP SUPPORT FUTURE GRANT FUNDING APPLICATIONS AND ENCOURAGE INWARD INVESTMENT.

THE TOWN COUNCIL IS COMMITTED TO SERVING THE LOCAL ELECTORATE AND TO IMPROVING THE AREA. THROUGH THIS PROJECT, NEW ROMNEY IS NOW PART OF A NATIONAL 'COASTAL COMMUNITY TEAM' NETWORK AND THE COASTAL COMMUNITY TEAM HAS JOINED THE RECENTLY LAUNCHED NATIONAL 'COASTAL CULTURE NETWORK'.

BOTH COUNCIL MEMBERS AND COASTAL COMMUNITY TEAM MEMBERS WANT TO PROMOTE ALL THAT IS GOOD IN OUR TOWN, CREATE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, AND, WHEREVER POSSIBLE ENCOURAGE SYMPATHETIC ENHANCEMENTS IN THE AREA.

NEW ROMNEY HAS A TOWN COUNCIL THAT IS SERVING THE LOCAL RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES WITHIN THE TOWN FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE COMMUNITY, AND FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE FUTURE WELLBEING OF THE TOWN'S RESIDENTS.

A COPY OF THE PLAN IS AVAILABLE ON THE TOWN COUNCIL'S WEBSITE

THE COUNCIL'S MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND HAVE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH LEGISLATIVE GUIDELINES, AN ALLOTTED TIME FOR PUBLIC QUESTIONS. RESIDENTS ARE, AND ALWAYS HAVE BEEN, ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND ANY AND ALL MEETINGS AND VOICE THEIR CONCERNS OR PUT FORWARD THEIR ASPIRATIONS FOR THE TOWN. BY WORKING TOGETHER WE CAN, AND WILL, IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR THE RESIDENTS OF NEW ROMNEY.

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