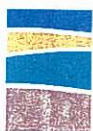




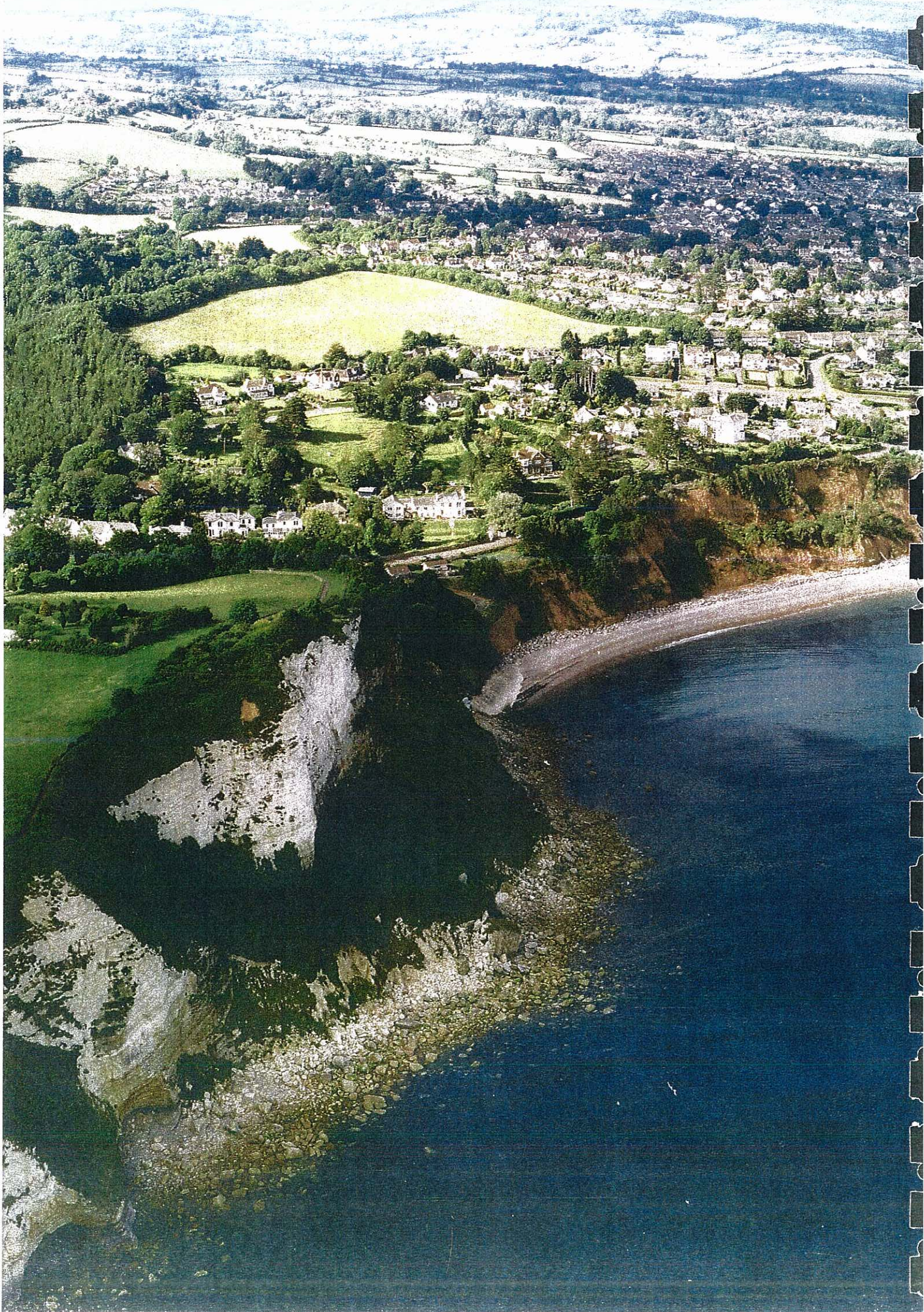
# SEATON'S TOWN STRATEGY 2003



The  
Countryside  
Agency

Seaton  
Town  
Council





# SEATON'S FUTURE

**From the Chairman of Seaton Town Council:**

*The Council is pleased to commend this document to the attention of individual residents, to local groups and to the Responsible Authorities, as a guide to the present and future needs of the town. Let us all work towards their realisation.*

September 2003

## **Seaton Town Council's Aims**

To ensure all residents and visitors have equal access to resources, facilities and services and are given the opportunity to improve their quality of life

Encourage the creation of jobs and businesses within the Seaton area

Create a society free from crime and disorder

Create a wide range of facilities for visitors and residents

Encourage the provision of adequate public transport

Work with others to conserve and improve the natural and built environment

Discourage inappropriate development

Provide effective, efficient and user-friendly services within our remit as a  
Town Council

To encourage the provision of medical, health care and healthy living facilities  
that meet the needs of all age groups

**A project undertaken by Seaton Town Council in 2002/3 in  
co-operation with the Countryside Agency under the Parish and  
Town Plans Grant Scheme**

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# THE PROJECT FRAMEWORK

## PURPOSES

Bearing in mind the steadily increasing population of Seaton and the considerable redevelopment of the town known to be imminent, the Town Council decided in 2001 that there was an urgent need to seek the views of residents and visitors concerning the future provision of housing, facilities and services. Accordingly, it was agreed that a project should be undertaken, with the following aims:

**To identify currently unsatisfied needs of residents and visitors**

**To identify needs likely to result from future changes in population (increases and alterations in age distribution, etc.)**

**To re-examine and augment priorities identified in the 1996 Seaton Regeneration Report**

**To positively influence planning decisions at District Council level**

**To contribute relevant information to assist Devon County decisions**

**To stimulate local initiatives**

**To maintain an overview of progress towards objectives**

## BACKGROUND

The town of Seaton is a single coastal parish in East Devon, reached via the A3052, and adjacent to the Axe estuary. It is bound by marsh, river, mixed farmland (mainly tenanted) and woods. Nearby towns are Axminster (7 miles), Sidmouth (9) and Honiton (10). The population is around 6700, and is continuing to increase; 41% are of retirement age.

Seaton has a community hospital, two medical practices, a modern primary school (with nearly 400 pupils) where a majority of pupils are at present taught in temporary classrooms, a small supermarket, many small shops, a Post Office, Town Hall, banks, fire station manned by retained firemen, a number of inns and cafes, a museum and a Tourist Information Centre. Several churches, sports clubs and many societies are active, and there are play areas for children including a skateboard park but there is a serious shortage of indoor sports/swimming and community facilities and of playing fields.

There is a pedestrian-friendly town centre and ample parking.

Affordable housing is virtually non-existent; wherever space exists, developers generally propose to build expensive houses and apartments. Most of the recent residential developments have been designed as retirement accommodation.

As a modest resort, Seaton possesses two small hotels, two caravan parks, a holiday village and Bed & Breakfast accommodation. Seaton has a mainly pebble beach approaching a mile in length, with safe bathing. There is also a popular tramway along the Axe Valley. Apart from all these services, local employment depends on a few small light industrial units, caring services and shops.

Recently, the excellent bird-watching and wildlife areas of the Axe Vale have been enhanced by the establishment of the Seaton Marshes Local Nature Reserve.

At the Honeyditches Open Space, a series of excavations over the years revealed an Iron Age farmstead and significant Roman buildings, although these have been reburied in the interests of their preservation.

Changes are coming. With the recent designation of the Dorset & East Devon World Heritage Coast and the future completion of the Wessex Cycle route ending at Seaton, many new demands will be placed on the town and its facilities will need considerable expansion and upgrading. Seaton's greatest strength lies in its superb natural environment and this is the main reason why visitors will continue to come – no doubt in even greater numbers as a result of the above developments.

## **INITIATION OF PROJECT**

In January 2002, two representatives attended a training session offered by the Countryside Agency. Funding was sought from the Agency towards the costs of the project and a grant of £5000 was obtained. The Town Council, for its part, allocated £2000.

A Town Council Town Plan Strategy Group of four councillors was established to steer the project. East Devon District Council and other relevant agencies were informed of the scheme. The local Press was informed and launch publicity achieved.

## **PUBLIC CONSULTATION PROCESS**

Two versions of a Questionnaire were designed, one for residents of Seaton and the second for local area residents and holiday visitors.

The questionnaires were distributed widely in the town via the Town Hall foyer, County Library, Primary School, Adult Education Centre, Health Centre and also many groups, clubs and societies.

In particular, an Information Vehicle loaned from Devon County Council and manned by volunteers was based for a week in May 2002 in the Co-operative Supermarket car park. An Exhibition was mounted, Questionnaires were distributed and issues discussed or explained to the public

The Questionnaires were designed to elicit respondents' views on a range of topics with the aim of identifying main concerns and priorities in these areas:

Shops, Housing, Built Environment  
Local services and Transport  
Leisure and Sports Facilities  
Education and Healthcare  
Natural Environment and Energy Conservation  
Other Issues Relevant to Seaton's Future

In August 2002, an Exhibition showing good, bad and contentious aspects of Seaton was mounted in a Town Centre Shop for two weeks, manned by volunteers. There was also a display of the early results from the questionnaires. Attendance from the public was excellent and much worthwhile discussion occurred. In addition, many more questionnaires were issued and completed. Further Press Publicity resulted.

A competition was devised for Seaton's primary age children, to identify their views of Seaton and indirectly to draw parents' attention to the Town Plan scheme. Nearly all the children took part and examples of the children's comments are included later in this report.

## **EVALUATION**

The analysis of responses by the Strategy Group revealed which issues are of greatest concern in Seaton, and these are discussed in the body of this Report. It was quickly apparent that the provision and retention of affordable housing for young families and workers in the town was a prime concern, and it was therefore decided that a speaker from The Housing Corporation be invited to address a public meeting when a further exhibition and display of consultation responses would also be mounted. This meeting took place at the Town Hall in October 2002. It was well attended, the Speaker gave an interesting and helpful talk and valuable discussions followed.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION

Well over 400 residents and visitors took the trouble to complete and return questionnaires, many of whom added additional comments which have been taken into account in the conclusions arrived at by the Steering Group and the priorities that have been identified. The Town Council thanks all those individuals and groups who have contributed to the project.

The remainder of this document examines the various needs indicated by the '**Seaton's Future**' exercise, and proposes ways forward for their achievement. Much hard work remains to be done!

# SEATON TOWN PLAN INITIAL STATEMENT

## **First Criterion**

Any new developments must not detract from the natural environment.

## **Second Criterion**

Any developments should be innovative in design.

## **Third Criterion**

Any development should incorporate as many 'green' features as possible, regarding building materials and design, water use, heating, etc.

## **Examples of the Town's Strengths**

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and of Great Landscape Value lie around the town, including the Axe Valley and Estuary

Seaton Marshes Local Nature Reserve

The Southwest Coastal Path

Seaton as a Gateway Town for the World Heritage Coast shoreline

The Wessex Cycle Route (under development)

The Roman site at Honeyditches

Seaton Tramway

## **The Vision**

New facilities designed to meet the needs of both residents and visitors and fulfill the three criteria, would be as centrally situated as possible, preferably on publicly-owned land, to provide the following:

Extension of the Tramway to The Esplanade

Swimming pool and Indoor Sports Centre

Shopmobility and Cycle Facilities (based at The Underfleet car park)

Exhibition Centre

## **Other Priorities:**

Enhancement of Seafront, including 'Fisherman's Gap'

Appropriate proposals for Harbour Road Redevelopment Area

Maintenance and provision of Green Spaces

Affordable Housing

The requirement for Affordable Housing is addressed later in the Report.

## ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

*There is evidence of human occupation in what is now the Parish of Seaton, through Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age times. The farming settlement at Honey Ditches continued to be developed in the Roman period, and there is little doubt that the Axe Estuary, with its proximity to the Fosse Way, provided important harbour facilities for Roman vessels.*

*After the Roman withdrawal, life continued quietly until 7<sup>th</sup> century, when Saxons crossed the Axe and pressed on westward, settling the land anew. By 1066 the parish of Fleote is recorded, and this area became known as Seaton by 1126.*

*The medieval settlement lay close to the Church of St Gregory. The town's importance as a fishing port declined steadily as a shingle bar increasingly obstructed access to the river mouth, but salt-working on the marshes continued intermittently until 18<sup>th</sup> century. The coming of the railway in 1868 put an end to significant harbour trade. However, also in 19<sup>th</sup> century, an emerging holiday industry enabled Seaton to expand, resulting in the Victorian appearance of much of today's town. Typical features of buildings in the Conservation Area include rendered walls and slated roofs. In 2005 Seaton will celebrate the Millennium of the granting of the Charter to Fleote, the forerunner of the town of Seaton.*

When pedestrianisation of the town centre was undertaken just a few years ago, the associated refurbishment of lamps, seats, bins and signs was intended to recreate a 'Victorian' atmosphere, as this was the majority preference of local residents. There are still some interesting old shop-fronts, but some more modern facades are out of character with the buildings themselves, and although planning controls exist, many multi-occupancy buildings have been subjected to piecemeal alterations. There are also sites with planning permission granted for development, which have stood derelict for months.

In considering the building developments which are coming to Seaton, we have to resolve a dilemma: Should the new be a pastiche of the past, or should we encourage uncompromisingly modern designs? Some of Seaton's least attractive buildings are thought by many to be the flat-roofed, flat-sided blocks of apartments or shops built in the 1960/70s, but at the time they were no doubt considered to be both modern and appropriate. Now, in 2003, we see the designers of new retirement blocks attempting to echo much earlier styles. Which is the way to go?

The Harbour Road development area forms a major entry route to the town centre. The future of this area, including the former RACAL and holiday camp sites, are at this time still the subject of consultation, as the Planning Authority tries to achieve a coherent scheme for the whole redevelopment zone.

The consensus of opinion of local organisations and individuals has been submitted for consideration. The sections of this report dealing with demands for a swimming pool, sports and leisure centre, heritage education centre, supermarket, and

particularly affordable housing for local people, should all be referred to in this connection. Development of the Harepath Road industrial site is a related issue, as some businesses may transfer there from Harbour Road premises.

### *Action/Comment*

- 1 In respect of proposed new Community facilities such as the swimming pool/sports complex, the Town Council will look for innovative and energy-efficient designs. New residential accommodation should be required to incorporate similarly high standards.
- 2 Within the Conservation Area, the existing regulations must be firmly enforced. There are also a number of buildings of architectural and historic interest in Seaton which could be considered for Listed status\*, and thus given greater protection.
- 3 Mentioned by respondents were overhead power lines in upper Fore Street. It has been announced that the power company will put these lines underground at its own expense, and is willing to consider similar work elsewhere in Seaton if financial support is made available. The Council will press for more power lines to be placed underground.
- 4 The need for continuous pavements on Harepath Road and Colyford Road and for the resolution of traffic problems at the Marlpit Lane/Beer Road junction, is already under consideration.

*\*There are relatively few Listed Buildings in Seaton, most of which are in Fore Street and date to the period before Seaton developed as a resort. These are the Manor House, the Pole Arms, Nos. 6, 72/74, 32 and 33 Fore Street. In Harepath Road there is an early Victorian Schoolroom and Master's House (No. 11). Also listed are thatched 18<sup>th</sup> century cottages at 27 and 31 Queen Street, including a Victorian shopfront. To the west are the former villas Cliff Castle, St Elmo and Belmont House. However, there are other properties worthy of special protection – the Town Hall, with its local stone frontage, the former Royal Clarence Hotel and the Neo-Gothic stone houses in Manor Road – all within the Conservation Area. Further out and also listed are the Parish Church of St Gregory, the 19<sup>th</sup> century Check House, Westcliffe Terrace in Old Beer Road, Ryall's Court and the buildings of Harepath Farm. There are several more interesting terraces in the town, including an Edwardian Arts & Crafts style terrace in Trevelyan Road, as well as various individual properties with features well worth retaining.*

(c.f. East Devon Conservation Appraisals: Seaton – EDDC, 1999)

## **THE TOWN HALL**

The Town Hall is the responsibility of East Devon District Council. The building was opened in 1904 but was extended in the 1930s. With its chert and Beer Stone frontage, it is a noteworthy feature in the town centre and is used by many groups and societies. Car parking is limited.

Ground floor: the large main hall is provided with a stage, stage lighting and bar. There is no provision for tiered seating. Ground floor access is level and toilets are provided (including facilities for the disabled). The hall is served by an adjacent kitchen. The Town Council Office is also on the ground floor; during office hours it offers an information service for residents and visitors.

First floor: access is by staircase only. There is a lounge with kitchen facilities and a meeting room, principally used for Town Council meetings. Toilets on this floor do not include provision for disabled persons. There is also a film projection room.

Second floor: a separate staircase at the northern end of the building serves this floor. This area is currently the base for Seaton Museum which is open to the public free of charge in late spring and summer.

### ***Action/Comment***

The Town Council will continue to press East Devon District Council to provide access for disabled people to the upper floors. Appropriate studies have been carried out but so far the essential funding has not been approved.

## **RETAIL FACILITIES – TOWN CENTRE AND HARBOUR ROAD**

Responses show that the pedestrian-friendly area in Fore Street and Queen Street is enjoyed by many but there are a number of reports of traffic entering it illegally, thus affecting the peaceful atmosphere. There are currently several shops vacant, detracting from the overall impression of a flourishing shopping area. Most local businesses are well used by residents, who have expressed their preference for the personal service that small shops are able to provide.

The Harbour Road retail area lies outside the Conservation Area and lacks cohesion in the design of its buildings. The current impression given is unsatisfactory, although these shops do provide employment and sell a variety of goods.

Many respondents to the questionnaire would like to see more shops and an alternative supermarket. These could be incorporated in the redevelopment of the Harbour Road area. It is hard to predict any effect that these changes would have on existing Town Centre shops. The pedestrian area and the small shops in Seaton were frequently mentioned with approval by visitors.

## *Action/Comment*

- 1 Continue discussions already taking place with Devon County Council on the possibility of installing special road barriers for the pedestrian area to block unauthorized access.
- 2 Discuss with East Devon District Council the advisability of reducing Business Rates for a 'start-up' period for new businesses.
- 3 Continue to ensure that planners are fully aware of Seaton's views on the future development of the Harbour Road area, and to firmly oppose proposals from developers if they are contrary to the best interests of the town.
- 4 Encourage shop owners to consider the need to offer easy access for the disabled.
- 5 Support the continuance of the diversity of small shops giving personal service.
- 6 Seek ways to transform the present pedestrian access routes from The Underfleet to the town centre into welcoming walkways.

## **THE SEAFRONT**

Questionnaire responses emphasise residents' and visitors' appreciation of the level seafront and sea views, but they indicate that improvements are wanted. Their suggestions are listed below, in no particular order, for consideration.

- "Create wide steps over the sea wall at intervals, to ease access*
- Create a new gateway through the sea wall east of the existing one..*
- Clean the sea wall by sand-blasting or pressure-spraying.*
- Raise the pavement level beside the sea wall to allow sea views.*
- Lay rubber matting on the beach to ease access for wheelchairs, pushchairs, and walkers. (It is understood that this matting can be acquired free from mining areas.)*
- Change the promenade lighting to wind-turbine power, provided that this first proves successful in the skate-park. All lighting should be focused downwards.*
- Permit a fish-stall at the seafront.*
- Provide flower containers on southern pavement edge, all the way along the Esplanade.*
- Place flower containers on the promenade in summer.*
- Add showers and baby-changing facilities to the toilet block on the promenade.*
- Allow beach huts to be painted in various colours.*
- Provide more seating and shelters.*
- Provide steps at intervals from the promenade down to the beach.*
- No dogs on beach at any time. No dogs on beach in summer.*
- 'No dogs on beach' rule extended to western end where swimming is indicated.*
- More or larger litter bins, with lids, on the promenade."*

### *Action/Comment*

- 1 The Town Council has signified that it wishes to have a jetty, in common with other East Devon Coast towns, to link in with a boat service along the Heritage Coast.
- 2 Provision of toilets along the East Walk from Fisherman's Gap to the Trevelyan Road end of the town is widely requested and pressure for action must be continued. The location of the zebra crossing on The Esplanade must be reconsidered.
- 3 Devon County Council proposals made some time ago for the enhancement of the seafront roundabout area should be brought forward again. These should include the extension of a tramway terminus and could lead to the creation of an attractive pedestrian plaza and a repositioned, smaller, roundabout - eliminating both the existing tarmac 'desert' and the frequent obstructive car parking.

## **A HEALTHIER ENVIRONMENT**

The cleanliness of streets, paths and beach was rated as of high importance by respondents. Although Seaton has a reliable cleaning service from East Devon District Council, it appears that the hours allocated are insufficient to maintain a consistently high standard. A procedure to clean chewing gum off pavements will continue to be needed.

Although many dog owners are scrupulous in cleaning up after their dogs, dog-fouling is still a problem in many areas. Some additional dog-bins (e.g. for both exits to Traceys Field and Honeyditches) would help, but particularly mentioned were the beach, promenade and areas close to the primary school – all places where it is clearly a serious health issue for young children.

### *Action/Comment*

- 1 The Town Council will continue discussions with EDDC concerning cleaning provision, particularly regarding those areas of Seaton where cleaning hours are not sufficient at present.
- 2 The Town Council will reconsider its view concerning the current regulations in respect of dogs on the beach, will seek more dog-bins where needed in the town and request relevant health promotion publicity.

- 3 The strength of opinion expressed in questionnaire responses should be used to press for the introduction of wheelie-bins to prevent gulls and other wildlife from spreading refuse, and thus improve hygiene as well as the appearance of the town.

## HOUSING

Five main facts affecting Seaton in respect of housing are:

- 1 The gradually increasing population of the town
- 2 The modern trend for an increasing proportion of single-occupancy households
- 3 The high proportion of retired residents
- 4 The desirability of Seaton as a place to live
- 5 The high cost of available property in Seaton

There is a great need for affordable homes to be provided (possibly by Housing Associations), on a rental or subsidised basis. Some form of permanent protection for the properties' status will be essential. Amongst responses to the Questionnaire, the requirement for Affordable Housing was placed first.

The use of flats, including those over shops, can be encouraged as first homes but these are rarely suitable for young families.

Much of Seaton's potential for additional housing will be determined by decisions still to be made in respect of the Harbour Road redevelopment zone (which mainly comprises part of the former Haven Holiday Camp and the Racal site). It is important that informal discussions between East Devon District Council, Seaton Town Council and developers should continue, with the aim of agreeing an appropriate and co-ordinated scheme for the whole area without undue delay. A mixed development, including housing, is anticipated.

*See also 'The Built Environment' section in this Report.*

### ***Action/Comment***

- 1 Quantify the current local need for affordable housing and the types of accommodation required.
- 2 The Town Council will seek further discussions with the other agencies involved, concerning the redevelopment zone.

## EMPLOYMENT

Although there appears to be a low level of unemployment in Seaton, the lack of variety in job opportunities has resulted in some employees taking work which does not fully use their capabilities, whilst many others need to travel well out of town every day. The latter is clearly both unhelpful to family life and environmentally undesirable.

Much local employment is in the field of caring, with attendant unsocial hours, also often part-time and/or low-paid. Many people work in local shops, small businesses or in tourism-related activities, often seasonal work. As a consequence, many families need two wage-earners in order to manage.

It now appears likely that the designated light industrial site off Harepath Road will begin to provide some new employment opportunities.

### *Action/Comment*

- 1 New employment opportunities will be sought to provide a better balance of job opportunities within Seaton.

## HEALTHCARE, POLICING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

The present provision of two medical practices, a dental practice, two pharmacies, an optician and various complementary services, serves the community well but an increasing population will clearly require a further expansion of facilities. This will be true whether the tendency for more retired people to settle in Seaton continues as expected or if more families with young children are able to find employment and homes here. Planning should be in hand now to ensure that the services will be able to respond effectively as the demand increases. In particular, the seasonal pressure on health services brought by visitors is likely to increase and to extend over a greater part of the year.

Seaton's modern hospital provides medical beds and Out-patient Clinics for Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and other medical services, thus saving residents from long journeys to other centres. It is also the base for Community Nursing Services. The hospital has an active League of Friends which provides additional contributions to the welfare of patients and staff.

In Devon, there is a significant shortfall in services for people with mental health problems and learning disabilities. (The services currently offered are now being managed by Devon Partnership.)

31 respondents mention Policing and express a need for better coverage, particularly to deal with late-night rowdyism and damage.

The Citizens' Advice Bureau based at the St Clare's Centre, provides valuable and confidential help and can also guide people with problems to the agencies responsible. *(See also the Adult Education section in this Report.)*

### ***Action/Comment***

- 1 Bring to the attention of the East Devon Primary Care Trust our concerns about future Health Care needs in Seaton.
- 2 Propose to the Primary Care Trust the advantages of providing a Minor Accident/Walk-In Centre at Seaton Hospital during the summer months (perhaps using Practitioner Nurses), to lessen the pressure on local General Practices.
- 3 Further consultation with the Devon Partnership is needed regarding provision for mental health and learning disabilities.
- 4 Bring residents' specific concerns before the Police Authority.
- 5 To seek visits of Mobile Health Units (eg breast screening) to the town.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The public responses to the questionnaire vary greatly. Some people indicate that they are pleased with levels of service whilst others, perhaps those travelling more frequently or to different destinations, are dissatisfied. Bus services to some local destinations are infrequent, or might involve travel via another town.

Connections with train services at Exeter or Taunton may involve a change of bus in the towns concerned. Many of the people using public transport in this way are elderly and many are travelling alone, so the extra change adds both time and difficulty to these longer journeys.

A small number of respondents referred to the proposal that the Tramway should be extended along the seafront. A majority of them were in favour.

### *Action/Comment*

- 1 Pressure should be brought on Devon County Council to achieve a scheme linking bus services from Seaton directly to Exeter and Taunton railway stations.
- 2 Improved bus services to adjacent towns are also sought to permit attendance at evening functions and later returns from daytime visits to friends, relatives and hospital appointments. Sunday services are found to be particularly unsatisfactory.
- 3 As the numbers of visitors to the World Heritage Coast increase, an approach can be made to Devon County Council for the provision of a year-round, seven-day, coastal transport service, well-advertised so that walkers (and cyclists) are not restricted to circular trails. (Seaton Tramway already provides this facility seasonally between Seaton and Colyton for both walkers and cyclists.)
- 4 Space needs to be created on local buses for the easier accommodation of shopping trolleys, wheelchairs, pushchairs and, where practicable, cycles.
- 5 Environmentally-friendly and wheelchair-accessible vehicles should be introduced wherever possible.
- 6 An additional tramway stop at the existing depot (close to the river) would be welcomed.
- 7 We shall continue to support Dial-a-Ride and 'TRIP' schemes.

# ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

## THE GREEN ENVIRONMENT

Seaton is largely surrounded by the **East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** together with land designated as a **Devon County Council Area of Great Landscape Value**. Devon's **Coastal Preservation Area** is now augmented by the new status of the East Devon and Dorset shoreline as **World Heritage Coast**. Seaton is fortunate to be surrounded by a remarkable variety of natural habitats: the red Triassic marl, the chalk cliffs, the shoreline and the marshes of the Axe Valley.

Seaton now has the benefit of Seaton Marshes Local Nature Reserve status for much of the land in the parish adjacent to the River Axe.

## THE WIDER SETTING

Before considering the future of the green spaces within the urban zone of Seaton, it is appropriate to view Seaton's location in the Axe Valley.

'The ... water meadow landscape (of the Otter and Axe estuaries) is very unusual in Devon and can give an almost timeless quality to the scene. The unadulterated water meadow landscape quality of the lower valleys has been lost as a result of drainage improvements and the enclosure of fields. However, at times the element of water remains the dominant theme, and even at other times the essential water-based character of the landscape has been retained.'

'(The) Landscape integrity of both valleys is delicate. Maintenance or restoration of the open nature of the lower valleys is important to retain or recreate the water meadow character...'

'Seaton, situated next to the Axe Estuary, has ... an impact on the landscape. **Vertical outlines, uncharacteristic of the generally horizontal trend of the estuary character, impinge somewhat on the view down the estuary and, indeed, some of the seafront buildings do impact on views from the cliffs to east and west.**

*(Extracts from 'The Devon Landscape' published in 2002 for Devon County Council.)*

### *Action/Comment*

Visual effects of the redevelopment of the former Haven Holiday Camp and Racal sites, together with associated areas of Harbour Road, will be relevant, therefore, to more than the immediate neighbourhood. If developers are permitted to build three or four-storey blocks where the Axe Valley is low and wide, the effect is likely to be detrimental to the appearance of this beautiful estuary. The existence of buildings already detracting from the scene is no argument for permitting more. Indeed, in the longer term, it will

be desirable to find ways of redesigning those seafront blocks which currently rise awkwardly above the preferred line of view.  
(c.f. 'The Devon Landscape', DCC 2002)

## **WITHIN SEATON**

Seaton has lost several more of its green spaces to residential development over the past few years, although a valuable part of the Traceys Field area has been preserved as an Open Space. Access to Honeyditches Roman site is also established and a central area of Ryalls Court is to remain free of buildings.

The Town Council has given its strong backing to efforts to protect Court Lane Field from development and to register it as a Town Green, thus to guarantee its future accessibility for residents. This area is currently designated by East Devon District Council as land of Local Amenity Value, as it has been used informally by local people over very many years.

Cliff Field Gardens belong to East Devon District Council and are currently leased to the Town Council. The gardens are a valuable asset but the upkeep of this relatively large area has to be met from the local precept.

Windsor, Seafield and Jubilee Gardens, etc., are maintained by the District Council and various other small floral areas are the responsibility of the Town Council. There is a limited number of small 'green spaces' within residential areas of Seaton. There is also a valuable picnic site at the top of Seaton Down Hill, with fine views over the Axe Valley and close to footpaths. Trees planted adjacent to The Underfleet are surviving satisfactorily but efforts to establish trees along Harbour Road have been continually thwarted by late night vandalism.

### ***Action/Comment***

- 1 The Council will strive to preserve the existing green areas in Seaton for the benefit of residents and visitors.
- 2 Redevelopment in the Harbour Road area should include public access to the riverside at the former Racal site and the provision of some new and attractive green areas or gardens along the route. Enhanced access to the Marsh Reserve may also be practicable.
- 3 The Council will support efforts to improve the floral displays throughout the year. It will continue to investigate future sources of funding for the enhancement of Cliff Field Gardens.
- 4 Directional signing to and from Cliff Field should be improved.

## GREEN SCHEMES - RECYCLING

Recycling facilities at The Underfleet car park include receptacles for glass, paper, cans, fabrics and shoes but not for plastics of any kind. The supermarket also has a receptacle for clothes, etc.

Green boxes provided by East Devon District Council serve most of Seaton. They are emptied fortnightly and accept glass, paper (including 'Yellow Pages'), metal foil, cans and textiles.

Seaton is fortunate to have a Devon County Council Recycling Facility with separate skips for garden waste and all other household waste, although some of the latter presumably goes to landfill. From April 2003 this facility will be open on Saturdays throughout the year.

Collection of bulky items from homes can be arranged for a small fee. There are also local shops and charities which re-sell goods or allocate furniture, etc., to those in need of help. The Recycling In Ottery voluntary facility based in Ottery St Mary accepts re-usable household items.

The establishment of a composting scheme for garden waste in Seaton has been discussed but no suitable site has been located so far, and volunteers would be needed to operate such a scheme.

### *Action/Comment*

- 1 Achieve total coverage for Seaton of the 'Green Box' scheme.
- 2 Consult with Beer Environment Group and Beer Parish Council concerning the possibility of a joint garden-composting site at a convenient location for both parishes. Seek volunteers to operate such a scheme.
- 3 Achieve a recycling facility for plastics and cardboard and other recyclable materials.

## TOURISM

Improvements which would enhance tourism are largely those which have been identified and dealt with in the other sections of this Report; they are also given priority by residents. The natural environment surrounding Seaton is seen as its major asset and the reason why most visitors come.

Tourism plays an important part in providing employment but at present this tends to be seasonal. Seaton's location as a Gateway Town for the newly established Dorset and East Devon World Heritage Coast, the attraction for bird-watchers of the Seaton Marshes Local Nature Reserve and the forthcoming Wessex Cycle Route ending at Seaton, will all help to extend the season and short breaks are becoming more popular. Off-season visitors will expect to find convenient accommodation and appropriate indoor leisure facilities. Questionnaire responses from visitors place the need for publicly funded indoor sports/ swimming facilities at the top of their list. There are existing privately funded facilities in the town.

The Tourist Information Centre plays a vital role in the life of the town, providing information for visitors and residents alike. It is currently managed and funded by the Town Council with grant aid from East Devon District Council. There is strong support for a Visitor Centre equipped with facilities to aid appreciation of the environmental and historical features of Seaton and its setting.

Seaton is responding to the changing pattern of tourism being brought about by World Heritage status for the coastline. Special interest groups, students, cyclists and visitors with a particular appreciation of the natural environment, will require an appropriate range of accommodation and services, preferably including a Youth Hostel. Retailers, caterers and accommodation providers should be encouraged to participate in training schemes designed to promote high standards of service.

### *Action/Comment*

- 1 Any new developments in the town and seafront areas need to be designed with sensitivity, to fit discreetly into Seaton's wide low valley.
- 2 Year-round tourism should be encouraged by the provision of publicly funded indoor sports/swimming facilities in the town.
- 3 Cyclists' shower facilities and lockers are needed as soon as possible.
- 4 Self-catering, hostel and hotel accommodation will need to be able to meet a changing pattern of requirements. New provision should be incorporated into the redevelopment of the Harbour Road area and this is also a possible location for a Heritage Education Centre - close to marshes, estuary and sea.

# RECREATION

## INDOORS

Smaller halls around the town can provide space for table tennis and short mat bowls, etc, but these activities generally require prior membership of an organisation. There are limited local facilities for court games but residents need to travel as far afield as Exmouth for some sports facilities such as winter indoor tennis. High on the list of needs identified by our survey is the provision of public indoor sports facilities.

Swimming is a health-promoting and enjoyable activity, ideal for families and excellent for the elderly to help them keep fit and well or to aid recovery. Learning to swim is obviously important for safety in a maritime environment. There are existing privately funded swimming and indoor sports facilities in the town.

With the prospect of an extended visitor season in the future resulting from increasing 'short breaks', Cycle Route use and Heritage Coast interest, Seaton needs to offer worthwhile indoor activities, particularly, perhaps, for cold or rainy days!

The need for a cinema/theatre figured in 110 responses. Some use is already made of the Town Hall for entertainment. There are several other halls, including the one at St Clare's Education Centre, which can be hired for musical and dramatic productions.

### *Action/Comment*

- 1 Top of the list of needs identified by residents and visitors is a public swimming pool for Seaton
- 2 Responses from residents and from visitors placed public indoor sports facilities as a high priority need in Seaton
- 3 Co-operation with Devon County Council Education Service and East Devon District Council might lead to a joint programme to develop these resources on a site adjacent to the primary school
- 4 Further consideration should be given to the inclusion of entertainment facilities in a future Community Centre development.

## OUTDOORS

Seaton has good club facilities for tennis, cricket and bowls. EDDC has two tennis courts for hire at Seaford Gardens, together with a small putting green. Football is popular with adults and children. Seaton Football Club runs three senior and six junior teams, but the available pitches are inadequate to meet demand, comprising one adults' pitch, and the use of two junior pitches. New sports facilities are currently under construction at Colyton Grammar School. Facilities for fishing, boating and golf are available in the area. Seaton Town Council own land at Barnards Hill Lane offering allotments facilities.

The Axe Valley Runners club is based in Seaton and organises the world-famous annual 'Grizzly' race which starts and finishes in Seaton.

There are four equipped play areas for children. The one at Seaford Road was redesigned two years ago, and another at The Underfleet is being upgraded. The third is off Harepath Road, the fourth is in Meadway. The Underfleet skateboard park is extremely popular with older children. Open free-play space is currently available at The Underfleet, off Harepath Road, off Colyford Road and in an area adjacent to Cliff Field Gardens.

### *Action/Comment*

- 1 Assist the Football Club in finding a permanent location for extra pitches and press for future provision of indoor training facilities in Seaton for various outdoor sports.
- 2 Press for play spaces within the development area of Harbour Road. A play area should be provided by developers in Scalwell Lane.
- 3 Continue negotiations for installation of wind-turbine powered lighting in the skateboard park.

## EDUCATION

### ADULT

Seaton is fortunate to have a highly successful base for adult education at St. Clare's Adult Education and Community Centre, provided by the Axe Valley Adult & Community Learning Service (DCC). St. Clare's activities are principally funded by the Learning & Skills Council, with a proportion of the costs being met by fees. The annual enrolment of around 2,000 students represents a high level of participation by residents of the area served. About 40 % of students are over 60, closely reflecting the population balance in Seaton.

Various projects to upgrade facilities have recently been completed; others are in hand or are programmed. The car park has been resurfaced, the Hall furnishings upgraded, etc. Toilets and fire doors are due for replacement shortly. Hearing loops, ramp access and a lift to the first floor teaching rooms are scheduled for installation by early 2004, together with central heating for the Trevelyan building.

Mainstream curriculum is well supported with reduced fees for pensioners and free tuition where appropriate. Many courses offer credits as precursors to higher level study. The Learndirect (on-line) programme is currently being revised and a wide range of computing courses is also offered. NVQ Care vocational training and related short course in First Aid and Hygiene are provided. Family Drop-in Workshops and co-operation with Age Concern, etc., are examples of the social responses made by St. Clare's.

The letting of the hall and of smaller rooms is also much valued by local organisations.

### *Action/Comment*

- 1 The Town Council will strongly support improvements to teaching environments and particularly the improvement of access for disabled students.
- 2 The construction of new community facilities in Seaton should enable the Adult & Community Learning Service to expand its provision for health, fitness and leisure activities.
- 3 The Learning Service invites residents to propose ideas for new courses to meet anticipated local needs for professional training and personal development.

## SCHOOLS

Seaton has many pre-school and mother and toddler groups as well as a Learning Difficulty Group which meets in the town. There are valuable links with Health Service support.

Seaton Primary School has nearly 400 pupils and most of the town's younger children attend, although parents may alternatively be able to choose one of the small village schools in the area. An extensive building programme has now been approved for Seaton School, and facilities are to improve considerably. *(See also the section on 'Recreation')*

Seaton itself has no secondary school and pupils of secondary age may attend a comprehensive school in Axminster, Sidmouth or Lyme Regis. There is also a grammar school in Colyford.

Any significant increase in Seaton's child population would have to be met with appropriate educational provision for the extra pupils.

## YOUTH SERVICES

Seaton is fortunate in having active groups providing services for the younger generation. There are many uniformed organisations including Cubs, Beavers, Brownies (7 – 10 yrs), Guides (10 – 14 yrs), Rainbows (5 – 7 yrs), Scouts, Seniors (14 – 25 yrs). There are also very active youth sections in all the sporting activities in the town.

The Seaton Youth Centre caters for a wide age range of varied interests such as computer and internet access, music, food, a fun atmosphere and workers who will listen to, work with and support young people.

In addition, it is planned that two street-based youth workers (Devon Youth Service) will be available during the year.

A list of contacts for all the above groups is available from the Seaton Library.

### *Action/Comment*

- Continue preparations to create a Youth Council.
- Review the Community Café idea.



## QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE ANALYSIS (RESIDENTS)

**(A) 100 or more responses:**

Affordable homes	135
Swimming pool	132
More variety of shops	125
and those specifying supermarket	66
Sports/Leisure Centre	109
Cinema/theatre	101

**(B) 50 or more responses:**

Cleaner streets	99*
More local employment	83
Various beach improvements	71*
Green issues	70*
Access path to riverside	69
Youth services improvements	60
Public transport improvement	58
Pavements and pedestrian areas	50*

**(C) Up to 49 responses:**

Promenade/Fisherman's Gap improvements	49
Heritage Centre	48
Harbour Road improvements	47
Education (primary 21 adult 14)	35
Policing extended	31
Hotel needed	29
Health provision	26
Community/Advice Centres	25
Toilets needed toward eastern end of seafront	23
Tramway comments (various)	21
Marina improvements	9
Harbour improvements	6

*Clean streets: Litter/wheelies	73
Dog mess	15
Gulls	11

*Beach: Access	24
Total dog ban	21
Cleaner	21
Jetty	5

*Green issues: Green spaces	31
Energy conservation	22
Play areas	7
Misc.	10

*Paths etc: Pavements	15 (Maintenance)
Car Park/Town access	13 (Improve route)
Pedestrian areas	9 (Traffic out/extend areas)
Miscellaneous	13 (Disabled access 5)

## QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE ANALYSIS (NON-RESIDENTS)

### 5 or more responses:

Sports and leisure/community centre	18
Swimming pool	17
More variety of shops	11
Various beach improvements	10
Supermarket	9
Cinema/theatre	9
Affordable homes	9
Toilets needed toward eastern end of seafront	7
Harbour Road improvements	6
Public transport improvements	5
More local employment	5

## OVERALL QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS

In addition to 356 residents' questionnaires, 71 were received from non-residents of Seaton, making a total of **427 responses**.

The effect of adding non-residents' responses is to emphasise the priorities already identified in the main questionnaire analysis, except that Swimming Pool now heads the list.

Swimming pool	149
Affordable homes	144
More variety of shops and Supermarket	136 75
Sports Centre	127
Cinema/theatre	110

## QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS

**Residents:** Why did you choose to live in Seaton? What is good about Seaton? Remarks made by residents:

### (more than 10 responses)

The beach and seafront	173
It is a friendly town	142
The pedestrian area and small shops	67
Its unhurried pace of life	58
Its natural environment	57
It is a conveniently compact town	47
It is peaceful	46
It is clean	36
I appreciate the park and gardens	36
I like the tramway	21
I value the Health Centres and Hospital	19
I value the educational provision (primary/adult)	17
It is a good area for walking	17
The public transport links are good	15

I enjoy the local activities	14
I value the play areas and skateboard park	13

**Non-residents of Seaton:** Why do you choose to come to Seaton?

**(more than 5 responses)**

The pedestrian area and small shops	33
The seafront	26
It is peaceful and unspoilt	18
Its natural environment	14
It is a conveniently compact town	7
It is a friendly town	6
It is a good area for walking	6

Other responses included:

- Ease of parking
- Convenience for public houses and restaurants
- Cleanliness
- Local societies and clubs
- Medical services
- Supermarket
- Tramway

## **EXTRACTS OF CHILDREN'S VIEWS OF SEATON**

Nearly all the children in Seaton Primary School entered the competitions set in Autumn 2002 by the Town Council's Town Plan Strategy Group. The youngest children drew pictures of the beach and the rest wrote on the subject 'Why I like Seaton.' The winners in each age group were awarded book token prizes but the judges were very impressed by interesting and well-presented work from all of the children.

*'I love Seaton because I like the beach. When I lived in London there wasn't a beach for miles around....'*

*'In the summer there is always a haunted house bouncy castle, and when you are all hot and bothered you can buy a freezing ice cream and watch the sun sink into the sea. Seaton is a really lovely place and there isn't a town anywhere quite like it!  
(Beckie, year 3)*

*'It is a fabulous view from when you are going on the beach and you see the huge cliffs from Seaton to Beer with caravans at the top of the hills....'*

*'The best thing I like about Seaton is the boulders at the other side of the beach and the caves between the rocks with water dripping from the top to the bottom of it.'  
(Samuel, year 3)*

*'...but my favourite thing is going to the beach in the evening because the sea looks brilliant with loads of different colours from the sky....'*

*'I really like the Jubilee Gardens because there are very beautiful flowers and there is a very good play-park for little children to play in.'* (Jack, year 4)

*'I like the beach, the way the tide moves in and out, the foam covering the stones like a white wet blanket. Seaton ice-creams are relaxing in the sun, you're just lying there forgetting all your worries.'* (Beth, year 4)

*'I also like the trams, at Christmas they decorate a tram with fairy lights, tinsel, and there is a Father Christmas who gives presents and sweets to the children.'* (Emily, year 4)

*'Trams, marshes and the bird hide make Seaton an unusual town to others. There is also Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee Memorial with the date 1887. The library is new and wonderful. There are even computers there! There is a museum and Victorian houses to remind you of the past, and the play parks are wonderful. There is a beautiful waterfall which sitting by gives a lovely view.'*

(Suzanna, Year 5)

*'I love all the brilliant things to do in Seaton. I like playing on the beach in the summer. The bird hide I like the most but you have to be quiet... Finally I think we are all very lucky to live in Seaton rather than a city.'*

(Harvey, year 5)

*'I like Seaton because it is a quiet little town and I feel safe when I'm outside playing and when I'm down the town. Some of my favourite places are the skateboard park and the football club. I enjoy going to the skateboard park because some of the ramps are a challenge, as they're very high and scary.'* (Josh, year 6)

*'Seaton is a town with more than reasonable facilities, there is so much we can't live without such as the primary school which most of Seaton children go to. The skateboard park is something to keep all the teens and juniors occupied and save them getting into mischief!'*

*'The feeling of living here is extraordinary, nice and quiet with great views...'*

(Joseph, year 6)

*'I love the gardens because it's big and colourful. At the bottom it's got a wishing well. Up the top there's a pond with goldfish in. I especially like the marshes (play park) because it's got a seesaw, swings, baby swings, obstacle course, climbing frame and monkey bars.'* (Ben, year 6)

*The Seaton Rap, (by Anna, year 6)*

*'Seaton's got the fields and the countryside,  
It's got the sea and the harbour where we watch the tide,  
It's got the fire-station and Seaton Primary School,  
It's got the parks, beach, and the Haven swimming pool.  
There are lovely walks and the tramway too,  
(You'd better look quick or you'll miss the view)  
There are play parks and the tennis club,  
Have a drink and some crisps in the local pubs,  
And once you've had a swim in the sea,  
You'll realise SEATON is the place to be.'*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**Finally we thank all those people and organisations who contributed to the production of this Report.**