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Swanage Pier Restoration & Regeneration

The RTPI South West Awards for Planning Excellence 2019

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Being shortlisted or winning is a clear demonstration of the high quality of your work and professionalism. All shortlisted and winning entrants will be provided with a RTPI South West Awards for Planning Excellence logo, which can be used on your own website, email, social media and promotional materials. We wish you the best of luck!

Project Summary

This £2.2m project involved the urgent repair of the Pier, replacing 41 Greenheart piles and refurbishment of the Grade II listed Marine Villas, creating education, interpretation, catering and retail experiences with contemporary programmes, based on the Pier's heritage and the Jurassic Coast. A Learning Officer supports educational groups visiting in 'shoulder periods', extending the season and benefitting local accommodation. The marine environment and exposing the original salt-water baths are new offers in this visitor centre. High-quality catering facilities have been developed, providing 5 new jobs with 2 extra planned and up to 20 part time posts in summer, including trainees, all adding a new high quality visitor experience to Swanage.

110 words

Background

Please outline the background to the project:

- context
- timeline

Swanage is a coastal town in the south east of Dorset, in South West England. It is situated at the eastern end of the 'Isle of Purbeck', to the south of Poole and east of Dorchester. In the 2011 Census, the civil parish had a population of 9,601. The town, originally a small port and fishing village, flourished in the Victorian era, when it became a significant quarrying port and later a seaside resort for the rich of the day.

Today the town is still a popular tourist resort, with tourism being the town's primary industry and many thousands of visitors coming to the town during the peak summer season, drawn by the bay's sandy beaches and other attractions. These include the Swanage Steam Railway, the Swanage Museum and Heritage Centre, Durlston Castle and Country Park as well as of course, Swanage Pier. Swanage Pier Trust is very much embedded in Swanage as a local community organisation. It was established in 1984 specifically to preserve and maintain the Pier and has undertaken significant preservation works to date. The Trust managed the repair process when a major section of the Pier collapsed in 2012 following storm damage. It has 12 Trustees who represent the interest of local organisations including; the Town Council, District Council, anglers, local sub aqua club, the neighbouring Swanage Sailing Club and the Friends of Swanage Pier.

Swanage Pier is an important heritage and tourist attraction for Dorset, which brings over 125,000 visitors each year and the Pier is a major dive and angling centre, attracting over 10,000 people for these sporting activities each year. A number of watersports and leisure business are based on, and are reliant on the Pier for their success and jobs. Boat trips also bring visitors from Bournemouth to land at the Pier. There are a large number of commemorative brass plaques on the Pier decking, that are valued by local people and visitors from across the world.

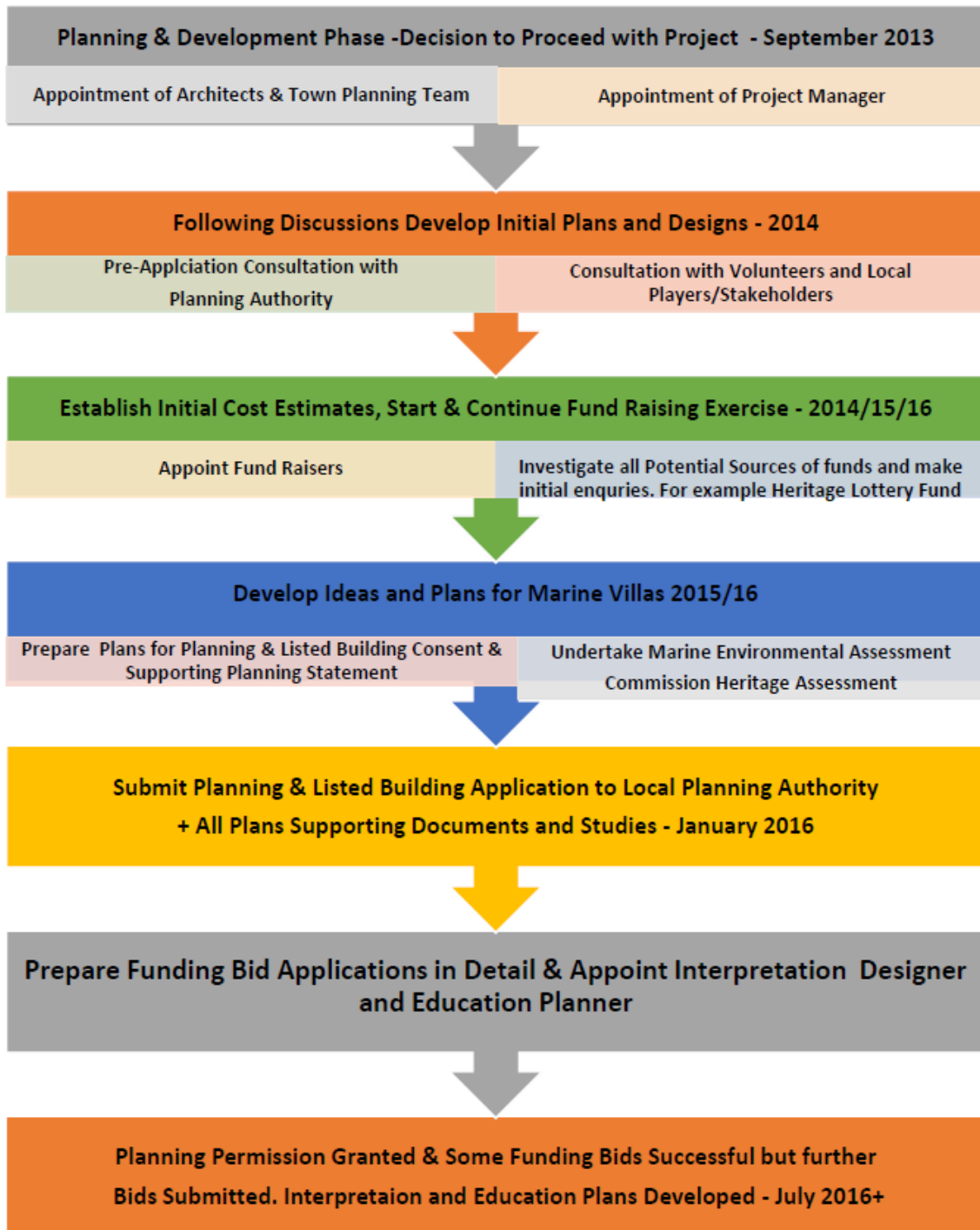
Without the planned investment in the Pier structure and to improve Marine Villas, the Pier would have reached a point where lack of maintenance and investment would have meant that the Pier would have to close, for safety reasons. This would not only affect the Trust and its ability to survive, but would result in the Pier being in danger of becoming derelict, which would have a severe adverse impact on the character and reputation of Swanage as a small, but important holiday destination and present the town in a very negative manner.

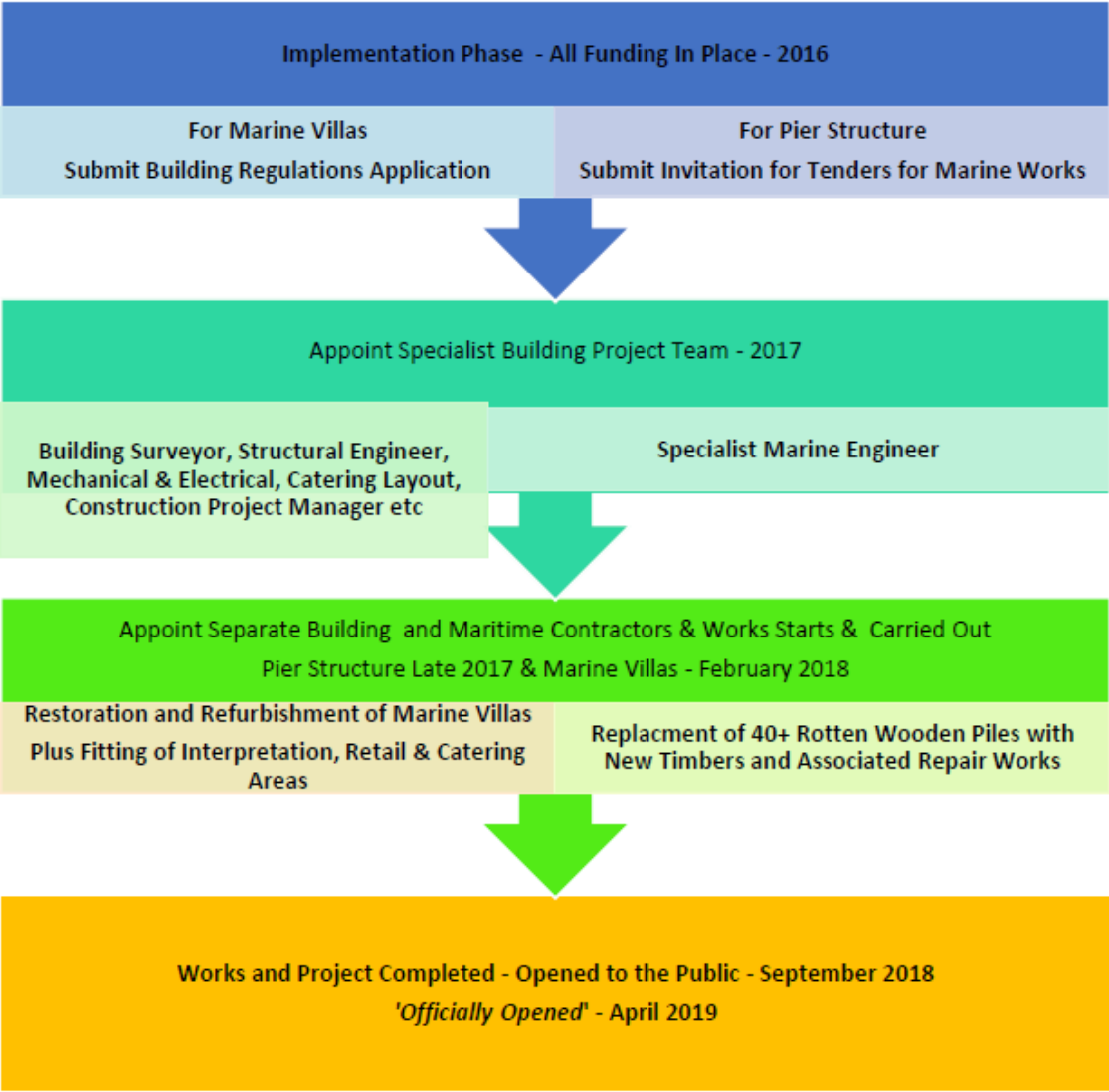
The timeline for this successful restoration and regeneration project extended from 2013, when the initial ideas were discussed and developed as concepts through to October 2018 when it re-opened to the public and finally to April 2019 when the 'official opening' was held.

This is illustrated in the coloured charts below:

467 words

Swanage Pier Restoration - The Planning, Development & Implementation Process





Outcomes

Please outline what positive impacts the project has provided for:

- the local community
- the economy
- the environment

Swanage Pier is extremely well supported by the local community, businesses and organisations. The Pier has over 650 'Friends' and a committed team of over 60 volunteers who support the Trust daily. Local organisations are represented on the Trust and have been actively involved in developing a consensus on its restoration through stakeholder workshops.

Swanage Pier Restoration provides significant additional benefits for the **Community**:

- Supporting social objectives through volunteers and making the Pier an improved location that local people can use and be proud of and that visitors will enjoy.
- This Pier volunteer 'community' now has a greater sense of ownership of Pier operations and has been enthused by the improvements made. This has been achieved and extended through recognition of their valuable contribution, as well as improved training, to enhance their skills in delivering services to the visiting public.
- The Pier has now and will in future become a greater attraction with a wider offer of cultural, educational, marine, leisure and tourism activities. This is being achieved through introducing new events, linking with partners, other local tourism venues, initiatives and educational providers, with the aim of attracting significantly more visitors each year, from 2019.
- The new exhibition, interpretation materials and learning resources, now maximise the available spaces and provide new activities and facilities for the local and visiting communities throughout the year.
- The project itself has been written up as an Environmental Education resource for GCSE and A Level Geography Teachers & Students and to attract visits in the edge of season periods: See the case study **appended** and at: <https://www.swanagepiertrust.com/learning>

- Supporting the local **Economy** both directly through the recent construction work, as well as longer term jobs and indirectly through purchasing.
- The new retail and catering facilities, use locally produced food and drink as a priority to emphasise the local distinctiveness of the project, as well as supporting local businesses in the wider area, within these sectors.
- New year round and seasonal jobs, training, apprenticeship, work placement and volunteering opportunities have and will be created, helping to develop and utilise local skills, including the young people and older age groups in the community.
- Within new full-time posts and apprenticeships have been created and it is planned that the volunteer base will expand to over 90 roles.
- Within the Trust itself, the project has already created new training, employment and apprenticeship opportunities, including core posts of a Learning & Engagement Officer, and a part-time Event & Marketing Assistant.
- All of this work has been undertaken in a manner that fully respects the listed building status of both the Pier itself and Marine Villas and has been accommodated within the heritage capacity of the site, with all necessary statutory consents being secured, both in respect of the listed buildings, as well as having regard to the marine environment of Swanage Bay which is a protected site. This therefore demonstrates that the **Environmental** objective or strand of sustainability has been met, by maximising the use of existing historic built resources and giving them a new lease of life for the future and employing energy saving and other initiatives, to ensure the building minimises its environmental and carbon footprint. [See also **Sustainable Development** below]

542 words

Planning contribution

Please outline how the project has benefitted from the involvement of a planner or planners:

- providing strong and effective leadership and vision
- working in partnership with others
- managing implementation and delivery

Planning support for the **Swanage Pier Restoration** project started in 2013 at the inception stage, which was extremely beneficial, as a sound and trusted relationship developed with the Pier Chief Executive. Pre-application discussions were initiated in 2014 with the Planning Authority, to ensure that the objectives of the project were likely to be supported. This was undertaken prior to Stage 1 Heritage Lottery bid being submitted, which involved a strong input from the Planning Consultant, as bidding for funding is an integral part of the regeneration service provided.

Whilst some conservation issues were raised at pre-application stage about the internal alterations proposed and their justification, overall and subject to addressing points raised, the scheme was supported. The Council's concluded that:

"These proposals are acceptable in principle subject to satisfactorily justifying the resulting impact on the listed building and addressing the other issues listed below".

Following submissions and negotiations with the Planning Authority, as Marine Villas had been used as a rudimentary visitor centre with basic facilities for some years, it was agreed that an application for 'change of use' was not required.

Following approval of the HLF stage 1 bid, detailed plans were prepared by Studio Partington, Architects, in close consultation and with robust advice on planning issues, to ensure that the integrity of the listed building was retained, whilst ensuring that the objective of providing a new visitor centre at Marine Villas that met current standards and operational requirements was achieved.

This was informed by a Conservation/Heritage Assessment undertaken by a specialist which concluded that given its chequered history and multiplicity of previous uses and changes over 200 years; salt water baths dwellings, offices, etc., that ***'the interior of Marine Villas has a 'High Capacity for Change'.***

Following submission of the applications, site meetings were held with the Planning and Conservation officers in 2015, after submission of the planning application; there were various iterations of the plans. This had its challenges, as the project involved a modern glazed extension, that now sits comfortably against the listed building and provides bistro seating. It also involved removal of walls and fireplaces and replacing two Georgian windows on the front elevation with new entrance doors, to provide an easy route through the building, for operational and safety reasons. This was not to the liking of the Conservation Officer and careful negotiating and explaining why these changes were needed, by the planning consultant and architects was required, to secure final approval by the Planning Authority.

Planning and listed building consents for the Marine Villas were granted in July 2016 for: ***'Refurbishment, extension and internal alterations to Marine Villas to improve information, exhibition, interpretation, shop, cafe and education facilities'***

The stage 2 HLF funding was secured as well as funding from Coastal Communities, LEP, local authorities, private, charitable and other sources, generating the £2.2m required for the project. Work on the Pier structure and Marine Villas started in 2017 and was completed by autumn 2018, with the official opening by actor, Timothy West in April 2019.

Following the completion of the project, the planning consultant wrote up the project as an Environmental Education study demonstrating how planning and regeneration projects can be used as educational resources, which also includes a presentation of 'Before & After' photographs, See: <https://www.swanagepiertrust.com/learning>

[544 words]

Sustainable development

Please outline how the project has supported:

- positive short, medium and long term public benefit
- a balance of economic, social and environmental objectives
- the UN's Sustainable Development Goals

Ultimately the improvement to Swanage Pier had three key public & community, environmental and economic objectives and proposed benefits:

- To restore and regenerate a rundown pier and important national heritage asset, that was in danger of collapse and closure and to safeguard its associated building and provide new and improved public uses.
- To deliver a new visitor attraction that the community of Swanage was engaged with through volunteering and use on regular basis and that day and staying visitors to the town, whether coming to the Pier by land or sea, would experience and enjoy, helping to extend the season, increase dwell time and repeat visits.
- To maximise the potential of the Pier to generate economic benefits for both the Trust itself and to put it on a sound financial basis for the future, as well as supporting local businesses and people, through economic benefits and direct job creation in the new bistro.

From an historic environmental perspective the changes to Marine Villas represent an evolution and another layer in the development and history of change for the building, and which has altered so much since its construction and has now adapted for its new role, in the same way that has occurred over the past 200 years. The design approach had full regard to National and Local Planning Policies, as well as the Conservation Statement and the challenge of protecting the heritage asset, whilst also ensuring that it has a robust future has been successfully met, with the minimum of change both externally and internally. The restoration of the Pier piles themselves are not visible to the general visitor, being beneath the Pier surface structure.

If a planning application had been required for the piles, there could have been an accompanying environmental statement. However as a responsible Harbour Authority, the Trust commissioned a marine environmental assessment by Dorset Wildlife Trust as Swanage Bay is within a Habitats Directive Special Area of Conservation. This concluded that as there was *Zostera* [Eel Grass] beneath the Pier itself, it could provide a summer breeding area for seahorses. It recommended that no piling took place in the summer months. Despite taking longer and being more difficult for the contractors, this advice was heeded, so that potential damage to seahorses did not occur and the marine environment protected.

Dorset County Council undertook an Economic Impact Assessment of the Pier, which stated that ***“Should the full potential of this project) be achieved, it would lead to an...overall total of £3.6 million demand for output would be generated in the Dorset economy.” The report also stated that the loss or closure of Swanage Pier would result in a direct loss of 37 FTEs in all with a direct loss in GVA of £1.3 million.***

It would be unrealistic to expect a project such as this to meet all 17 **UN Sustainability Goals** but it is considered that it does help meet the following **6 Goals**:

- 4 Quality Education
- 8 Decent Work & Economic Growth
- 9 Industry Innovation and Infrastructure
- 10 Reduced Inequalities
- 11 Sustainable Cities & Communities
- 14 Life Below Water

[515 words]

Community benefit

Please outline how the project has provided:

- positive and constructive engagement and dialogue with local people and businesses
- a better quality of life for people, especially for disadvantaged communities
- tangible benefits for communities such as facilities, infrastructure, jobs, training etc.

Swanage Pier Trust is very much embedded in Swanage as a local community organisation. It was established in 1984 specifically to preserve and maintain the Pier and has undertaken significant preservation works to date. The Trust managed the repair process when a major section collapsed in 2012 following storm damage. It has 12 Trustees who represent the interest of local organisations including; the Town Council, District Council, anglers, local sub aqua club, the neighbouring Swanage Sailing Club and the Friends of Swanage Pier.

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The restoration and regeneration project at the historic asset has now unlocked the economic, heritage, tourism and community potential of the Pier, enabling the Trust to build a more robust and sustainable financial future for itself and businesses based on the Pier.

Moving the current entrance/charging point, new facilities, educational and events programmes has and will improve access to the Pier and year-round tourism. A complementary project to provide a new Community Radio Station for Swanage at first floor in Marine Villas, is nearing completion.

Swanage Pier Trust with the support of the Planning Consultant and other project managers, undertook extensive research and consultation to inform the development of the project, including:

- Repeat Visitor and Non-Visitor Surveys;
- Targeted partner consultation;
- Two stakeholder engagement workshops;
- Schools and study centres, to assess demand for using the pier as an educational and fieldwork resource
- Consultation with the community, volunteers, 'Friends' and Trustees through workshops in 2014 and 2016;
- Audience and market research;
- Analysis of comparative heritage sites and statistical evidence.

As part of the project management role, the Planning Consultant and others also engaged with a wide range of partners, gaining significant financial and general support from organisations including: Heritage Lottery Fund, Dorset County Council, Purbeck District Council, Swanage Town Council, the National Pier's Society, Natural England, Environment Agency, Dorset Wildlife Trust, World Heritage Jurassic Coast Team, Dorset Coast Forum, Dorset AONB, and Wessex Water. Visits to other Piers and heritage sites were arranged to learn from their experience, as well as appointing specialists to develop educational and interpretation plans.

Marine Villas now hosts a high quality café/bistro that already provides 5 FTE jobs for local people, both those with expertise within the catering sector, as well as young trainees, with up to 20 part time staff planned for the summer. *"We love what we do and the fantastic and prominent position we are in here at the Pier" [Café 1859].*

There are also plans to work with Bournemouth and Poole College for student placements at the pier to provide support for their tourism studies and providing practical on site experience of a real life regeneration project and tourism initiative.

[510 words]

Leading practice

Please outline how the project:

- is creative and innovative
- is an exemplar that is transferable across the UK
- promotes equality and diversity

The restoration works to the pier itself involved replacing 41 wooden greenheart piles [from sustainable sources] and associated works.

When the project was first discussed, the Trust and indeed the Planning Authority assumed that Planning and Listed Building consent would be required for the works to the Pier structure as well as for Marine Villas.

However, as a result of the experience of the Planning Consultant in dealing with Coastal Management and Planning issues and projects at the interface of land and sea, it was proposed to and finally agreed by the LPA, that neither consent was required, for the following reasons:

The structural works to the Pier itself involved replacing and adding new piles that were located below low water mark and so would not require planning consent, as the land based planning jurisdiction does not apply below this level.

The repair and replacement of the wooden piles was to be on a *'like for like'* basis for the piles on the outer edges of the Pier structure, together with some new piles in the centre of the Pier structure, supplementing the existing piles, which remained in situ. As these works were all repairs using the same materials, they did not require listed building consent from the local planning authority.

The works to the Pier were being undertaken by the Trust, who are also the statutory Harbour Authority for the water space beneath the pier. As a result, the Marine Management Organisation confirmed that a licence from the MMO was not required, as the works involve 'repair and maintenance' of a harbour structure, which is the equivalent of 'Permitted Development' that can be undertaken by the harbour authority.

As the seabed below the Pier is owned by the Pier Trust, the usual consent from the Crown Estate which owns most of the seabed around the UK was also not required, although an environmental appraisal was still commissioned and the habitat for seahorses was protected, by phasing works to avoid their breeding season.

This all meant that the pier repair aspect of the project could be planned without the time and cost of submitting various applications and licences that might otherwise have been required.

The close cooperation and positive, professional approach from the Planners at Purbeck DC, as well of course architects, Studio Partington, is fully recognised and without their active support, the project could not have come to fruition in the way it has.

This project therefore provides a good illustration of how the consenting process in the Coastal Zone differs from the usual processes and procedures on land, with lessons applicable elsewhere. When a scheme crosses the boundary between land and sea, and involves different statutory bodies, different considerations and statutes apply.

This regeneration scheme is therefore a useful case study in raising awareness of these issues, for similar schemes as well as for planners, architects and engineers operating in coastal locations.

It is worth noting that none of the other professional team of engineers and surveyors involved in the project were aware of these consenting subtleties and were surprised that various consents were not required; indeed some saw it as.....'an interesting quirk'!

[525 words]