



Wells Coastal Communities Team

Member of the Coastal Communities Alliance



Developing a Common Vision for Wells

Background: The challenges facing coastal communities today in maintaining their identities, their communities and their economies have been recognised at the highest level and Government has put in place funding and appointed a Minister to oversee a process of community-led regeneration.

At the heart of this national process is the belief that each coastal community should build a team that has a deep understanding of what makes the place tick and, in February 2015, the Government announced a programme of Coastal Community Teams. Wells Coastal Communities Team (Wells CCT) was formed in October 2015 by a group of local residents and business owners, following an approach to the Wells Business Forum by NNDC. Each team is tasked with developing a common vision and plans for their area. There are already 118 Coastal Community Teams around the coast of the UK including Wells, Hunstanton, Sheringham, Blakeney and Cromer.

The Coastal Communities Fund (CCF) supports the economic transformation of UK coastal communities by giving funding to create sustainable economic growth and jobs. Since 2012, the Government's CCF has awarded grants to 295 projects across the UK, totalling over £174 million and 500 new businesses have been created supporting 5,500+ plus jobs. Jake Berry, Coastal Communities Minister, recently announced the next £40 million round of funding to transform the UK's coastal communities through investment in jobs, skills and local businesses. This new round of the Coastal Communities Fund opened for bids on the 26th February 2018.

In its first 2 years, Wells CCT have:

- Attracted start-up funding of £10k from the CCF
- Set up its corporate identity as a Community Interest Company (a necessary step to qualify for funding from the CCF)
- Provided help to set up the Blue Skies Campsite
- Assisted Wells Maltings to access £310k funding from the CCF
- Supported the Wells-based Coastal Exploration Company
- Commissioned a consultant, Helen Mitchell, to kick start the preparation of our community-led plan

Next Steps: We are now in the process of expanding our membership to set up the working parties that will be required to make sure that we are able to include thoughts and ideas from the whole community in developing a common vision for Wells. This will identify the

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unique assets of the town; agree what are the good bits that we need to protect; what are the threats; what are the opportunities. It will seek to understand the needs of all our residents and businesses and endeavour to create opportunities for each and every one. It will recognise that we need the income and the employment that tourism brings and will devise ways to bring together into a single vision the provision for residents, businesses and visitors alike. A utopian vision would be for the whole community to feel the same joy at the arrival of tourists as we do for the first flight of incoming geese.

This will be a living document, we don't have to write it all at once and we should be prepared to update and amend it as we move forward. If the town of Wells were a single business we would have the ability to implement change using our own workforce and our own resources, but it's not that simple. At the core of the project lies the need to communicate well with all of our strategic partners, including national and local Government, and this is a two-way process. The essential starting place is a single voice for Wells – this is one of the main tasks that Wells CCT sets out to achieve and the voice is to be expressed in our common vision.

Where do we start? Wells CCT commissioned a consultant, Helen Mitchell, to prepare research for a Destination Management Plan, which is the official name for a community-led plan. She has delivered an extraordinary document, full of observations and ideas, packed with research, organised with insight into the ways to implement it and offering great hope. The report can sound a bit abrupt in places, but this is the essential nature of an objective report.

It has become clear to us, as we have moved forward with this project, that, in order for the plan to work, it needs to be something that the whole community is happy with. We need you all to take ownership of it and we are going to need everyone's help. We will ask for assistance as we need it and keep you informed of progress through the Quay magazine, the library and our website.

Pauline is WTC's representative on Wells CCT and she will keep this council informed of our progress. Any other councillor who wishes to attend our meetings, or communicate directly with us as a member of the public, is welcome to do so.

If this council wishes to be informed about funding opportunities or wishes to promote a project for funding from the CCF, please let us know and we will do what we can to help.

Peter Rainsford
Board Member, Wells Coastal Communities Team
5th March 2018