

First meeting of Port Royal Scoping Study Group to take place next week

Group includes representatives from Sidmouth town organisations

The first meeting of a group of Sidmouth town organisations, Sidmouth Town Council East Devon District Council and Devon County Council representatives will be held next week (Thursday Oct 20) to discuss the initial steps in determining whether any renewal of Port Royal is viable and what the potential development could include.

The new group, called the Scoping Study Reference Group, will come together to talk about the future of the area which is at the eastern end of Sidmouth seafront. Sidmouth organisations and stakeholders who make up the group include representatives of the Sid Valley Neighbourhood Plan Group, the Sid Vale Association, Sidmouth Vision Group and the Sidmouth Chamber of Commerce.

Sidmouth Town and East Devon District Councils, who are both landowners of Port Royal, agreed in the summer to jointly commission a Scoping Study. This study represents the very first step which will provide expert opinion on what kind of redevelopment would be potentially viable. The Study will also identify the boundaries and ownership and the needs of existing occupants. Devon County Council is a key stakeholder as it owns the highway.

Consultation, communication and engagement with the local community will be a primary feature for every stage of this project and the consultants who are selected to carry out this study will be asked specifically about how they will consult the community during this first stage which is expected to take around four months starting in around November/December.

Sidmouth Town Council is taking the lead in the process while East Devon District Council is providing professional support.

Councillor Jeff Turner, Chairman of Sidmouth Town Council, who will be chairing the Reference Group, said: "We are at the very start of this process and the Reference Group, with town organisations fully represented, will be able to bring their views and opinions to the table in a collaborative approach so that we can understand what the viable options might be.

"We have no preconceived ideas about the renewal of Port Royal which is why we are carrying out the study in order for us to consider a list of options for the area. It is important that everyone understands that this first step does not involve any decisions being taken but just a look at what might be viable."

Ends

Notes for Editors

- Port Royal is the area to the east of the town of Sidmouth, extending from the seafront backwards, bordered on the east by the River Sid. It has long been recognised locally as an area that does not meet the high visual and amenity quality of other parts of Sidmouth and is an opportunity for investment, development and renewal.
- There is a shared desire to see a mix of high quality uses, architecture and public realm. The challenge will be to deliver a combination of uses that encompass economic, social and cultural facilities that are also viable in commercial and environmental terms. It is likely that this will require a mix of market investment and public funding.
- The location has the advantage that both the town and district councils are also the main landowners.