

## **Port Royal Reference Group discusses consultation findings**

### **Scoping Study report to go before Reference Group next month**

Sidmouth Town Council and East Devon District Council have recently commissioned, as a first step, a scoping study to understand the key opportunities and constraints for possible improvements of Port Royal. An integral part of this process is, of course, meaningful consultation.

Almost 250 responses were received from individuals and organisations during a five-week consultation held during the summer. Additionally, a Sid Valley Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group survey which included questions about Port Royal was completed by more than 1,800 households and these responses are being included in the overall consultation.

The Port Royal Reference Group met on Thursday (September 21, 2017) to discuss the responses from both consultations. The Reference Group is made up of representatives of Sidmouth town organisations including the Sid Valley Neighbourhood Plan Group, the Sid Vale Association, Sidmouth Vision Group and the Sidmouth Chamber of Commerce along with Sidmouth Town, East Devon District and Devon County Councils.

The consultation brings into sharp focus the strength of feeling about the need to develop sympathetically and people who responded to the consultation said that among other issues, the height of buildings and how they relate to the surroundings of the area, was a concern as would be a loss of car parking spaces.

It is clear through both consultations that people see that Port Royal has a special identity around fishing, water activities and maritime heritage. It is clear too that, in the main, the people of Sidmouth would like to see bars and restaurants as a feature of any proposed development and that the Lifeboat Station is integral to future plans. A new multi-function facility which could host water activity and The Sailing Club, and an increase in pedestrianised areas were also supported.

Cllr David Barratt, a Sidmouth town and district councillor, who chaired Thursday's meeting of the Reference Group, said: "On behalf of both councils, I would like to say how grateful we are to all those who took part in the consultation and gave us their views. We are listening to what people say and hear you loud and clear. We also understand how significant Port Royal is to the town and how important it is that we get this right. We look forward to receiving the scoping study report."

The next stage is for the full findings of the independent Port Royal Scoping Study to go before the Reference Group in October. A report and the scoping study findings will then be considered by both councils in November so that councillors from both authorities can determine how to proceed. To view the results of the Sidmouth Port

Royal Consultation visit <http://eastdevon.gov.uk/regeneration-projects/regeneration-projects-in-sidmouth/port-royal-consultation/>

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