

CHIDEOCK SOCIETY PROJECT UPDATE JANUARY 2016.

CALLING ALL RESIDENTS! WE NEED YOUR IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS.

If you have walked, driven, ridden, pushed a wheelchair or pram down to Seatown recently, you will have noticed the beachfront, river bank, car park, cliffs have all suffered serious erosion and damage during the last two years of winter storms. It is becoming increasingly evident that if Nature is allowed to follow its own agenda, Seatown, and all it means to so many people, will be lost.

The concerns have grown over the years. A Seatown Management Committee (SMC) consisting of landowners, businesses, Parish, District and County Councillors, DCC Highways, WDDC Engineers and concerned residents was set up in January 2014 by the then District Cllr Gill Summers to try and find some solutions to the problems affecting everyone who cares about the future of Seatown.

Suggestions and ideas were put forward at the meetings, including a revival of some ideas based on land which would be donated by the Wraxall Family, first presented at a public meeting in Chideock Village Hall in 2003. Although it met with approval by all present at the time, the plan was dropped through lack of Local Authority finance. Disappointment all round.

The Seatown Management Committee regrouped in 2015, chaired by our District Cllr Simon Christopher and began to examine the latest problems and how to find solutions and funding.

Then, Lo and Behold! Late last August, The Chideock Society heard about a new funding stream launched by the central government Department for Communities and Local Government - "**The Coastal Revival Fund**" which small communities were allowed to bid for. The Chideock Society had just over two weeks to meet the criteria for the bid, and, with the support of our Parish, District and County Councillors and our MP, our bid was successful in securing a grant of £11,000 to carry out a Feasibility Study to see if anything can be done to Save Seatown for the Future and to improve safety and provide a more comfortable experience for everyone who goes there – residents, tourists, walkers, people with disabilities etc..

The time scale is very tight - the announcement of the grant was only made on 10 December and the Study has to be completed by Mid March, so time is pressing.

Some of the possibilities talked about are:

- improving a rundown area and creating a new turning point on the concrete beach apron, with access for emergency vehicles
- creating wheelchair and pedestrian ramps from the road for safe access onto the beach
- making the current turning circle a safe vehicle-free viewing point
- providing parking close to the beach apron for people with disabilities, to improve their visitor experience.
- a Transport Management Plan to address traffic congestion issues, which lead to conflict between pedestrians and vehicles.
- a Park and Ride Scheme, using greener, sustainable forms of transport such as electric buggies, pony and trap, cycle hire, thereby creating new employment potential

This project will produce a Feasibility report only, not make any physical changes at Seatown. If the study is approved, further funding is available from the Department for Communities and Local Government and a “bid” will be made for money to implement some or all of the options identified in the feasibility report. Funding would also be sought from other bodies e.g. Lottery Fund.

A consultant has been engaged to produce the feasibility report, a steering group has been formed and an initial meeting of landowners and stakeholders has been held, attended by the beach owner; representatives from the National Trust, Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Jurassic Coast Team, Dorset County Council Highways, West Dorset Engineers Department and the Parish Council; Professor Brunsdon with his extensive knowledge of the geology of the coast, and Seatown residents who are members of the Seatown Management Committee. Representatives from Palmers Brewery and West Dorset Leisure Holidays were unable to attend but both are keen to be involved in the project.

We want to gather constructive and achievable ideas from the Chideock and Seatown community – **SO NOW, OVER TO YOU.**

WHAT DO YOU THINK COULD BE DONE TO SAVE SEATOWN FOR THE FUTURE?

The Seatown Project Flyer has details of how to let us know your ideas and suggestions, and different ways to tell us. You may have already thought about this so, **DON'T MISS YOUR CHANCE TO HAVE YOUR SAY!**

There will be a public event in early March to allow comment on the draft report.