



Cowes Waterfront - The home of Ellen's sailing team

Foreword – Ellen MacArthur

“Sailing at competition level is all about excellence – pushing the boundaries of design and technology to coax every last second of speed from the boat. Every member of the team plays a vital role in getting the best performance, not only the boat crew but the shore team, the technical team, the designers and builders and the promotion team – all working towards a common goal.

Cowes Waterfront is a project built on the pursuit of excellence – it aims to capitalise on the name of Cowes as a centre for sailing, racing and technology, building on these strengths to bring new opportunities and facilities for local people and visitors alike.

This project is a team effort bringing together the private and public sectors to improve the whole of the Medina Valley, to bring benefits for business, for infrastructure, for people and for the environment. It is so important that all the elements of the team work together – that is why I am supporting the Cowes Waterfront project – to help put something back into the Island that has become such a vital part of my team.

As a resident of the Island, I am very excited about the future and the opportunities Cowes Waterfront will bring to the Isle of Wight.”

Ellen MacArthur



“It is essential for the growth of Ellen MacArthur's Offshore Challenges business, and to the long term commitment to Cowes as her main global base, that Cowes Waterfront succeeds. Improved infrastructure and better marketing, of what could be in the future a fantastic location for business, are essential to ensure Cowes really does exist on the global map of the marine industry. Hopefully this will bring new dynamic people to the Island as well as benefit those who are already here to appreciate the great environment it can provide for work and pleasure.”

Mark Turner, Managing Director
Offshore Challenges

Introduction

“Cowes Waterfront”... a holistic regeneration project for the Medina Valley that will create jobs, attract investment and bring new facilities to the communities of Cowes, East Cowes and Newport Harbour, helping to ensure the Isle of Wight is a vibrant place to work, live and play.

The project was inspired by a vision to make the Solent the global centre for yacht racing technology, promoting the area as “the home of world yachting”. Cowes is already home to some of the world's most prestigious sailing teams, including GBR Challenge and Offshore Challenges and host to events such as Skandia Cowes Week.



The main aim of the Cowes Waterfront project is to strengthen the Island's position as a centre of excellence for the composites and specialist marine sectors. It will build on the wealth of technical expertise and skills and provide the resources and infrastructure that businesses need – to build on their successes, facilitate expansion and create new job opportunities. This ambitious project takes into account the entire Medina Valley and is proposing to use existing sites and premises to support the future development of the Isle of Wight economy.

Cowes Waterfront will seek to attract modern leisure and recreational facilities, including hotels, restaurants and cafés. Bringing new life and new visitors to town centres will help support existing businesses and retailers and secure better and sustainable facilities for local communities. It will establish Cowes Waterfront as “the place to be”.

The Isle of Wight Economic Partnership, the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) and the Isle of Wight Council are promoting the Cowes Waterfront initiative. The project also has the support of many stakeholders, businesses, local community groups and residents.



“£10 million has been pledged by SEEDA to the Cowes Waterfront project and it is expected this will leverage a further £40 million private investment.”

Jim Brathwaite, Chairman (left)
SEEDA

“Cowes Waterfront is an excellent opportunity for the Isle of Wight. The project is gaining momentum all the time and now has the commitment and financial support from a number of public and private sector organisations.”

Danny Fisher, Chairman (right)
Isle of Wight Economic Partnership

The Cowes Waterfront project has four elements:

- Business** – providing resources and infrastructure for businesses to grow and expand
- Communities** – creating job opportunities and enhancing community living with improved amenities
- Environment** – maintaining and enhancing the unique environmental resources of the Medina Valley
- Infrastructure** – bringing under used and derelict sites and premises back into productive use

The 5 Zones

A Strategic Development Framework vision has been agreed by the partners based on a comprehensive review of the area with extensive input from local residents and businesses. The Framework recommends making the best use of the available land to give the greatest, most beneficial impact to the economy and the environment. Proposals presented to the public follow on from the initial consultation that took place in 2002.

It is expected that the Council will adopt the proposals as Supplementary Planning Guidance* to the Isle of Wight Council's Unitary Development Plan.

The Framework proposes 5 themed zones for the Medina Valley encompassing around c.50ha of land along the river, some of which is under used, vacant or derelict. Each zone focuses on a particular aspect of the economic mix.



Zone 4 – Environmental Priority

Takes in the most environmentally sensitive areas of the Medina Valley. This area will not be subject to significant development but opportunities exist to enhance the environmental value and bio-diversity of the river valley and estuary. Existing sites will be improved and enhanced by the:

- Provision of new employment workspace at West Medina Mills, particularly for uses requiring waterfront access
- Continued development of the successful St Cross Business Park for offices, high tech manufacturing and employment
- A low cost / low intensity facility for boat maintenance, repair and storage at the SARO site
- Improved access to the sites via a new river bus
- Enhancements to environmentally sensitive areas

Zone 1 – Town Centres, Leisure and Events

The Cowes Waterfront forms an arc around the mouth of the river encompassing the town centres of Cowes and East Cowes. This zone is the key location for yachting events and support facilities – the Framework recommends an improvement to facilities for local people and visitors, including:

- New mixed use developments including hotels, shops, homes, cafes and restaurants
- Relocation and expansion of Red Funnel terminal and marshalling areas
- New waterfront access
- New development and strengthening of East Cowes town centre
- New marina facilities

Zone 5 – Newport Harbour

The furthest navigable point on the Medina is Newport Harbour. A comprehensive study of the area has been undertaken previously by the Isle of Wight Council. The Strategic Development Framework will incorporate this study and help to provide:

- New mixed use 'quarter' with residential, cultural and employment uses, and evening uses in an attractive high quality environment
- Additional berthage
- Improved access to the harbour via a new river bus service

Zone 2 – Marine Industries

An area upstream of Cowes Harbour and the floating bridge. The majority of this area is used by marine industries with access to water frontage. The Framework sets out ideas to improve facilities as follows:

- New waterfront employment uses and marine facilities including a specialised marine business park
- Improved public access to the waterfront
- Restoration of the listed dry dock
- Improved cross-Medina links via a new river bus



Zone 3 – Commercial Shipping

The site of two wharves, shipping grain, aggregates and fuel oil. The Framework suggests maximising efficiency of existing wharf and dock facilities, as follows:

- Retain existing aggregates and grain storage facilities
- Rationalise aggregates facilities elsewhere to free up other potential development opportunities
- Additional employment uses
- Provide land for boat storage

* What is Supplementary Planning Guidance?

The Isle of Wight Council will be asked to adopt the Cowes Waterfront Strategic Development Framework as Supplementary Planning Guidance. Any development proposal will be assessed in line with the recommendations of the Framework, in order to maintain control of the types and quality of development in the area, rather than allow uncoordinated development. The Framework has been developed to coincide with the designated uses already laid out by the Isle of Wight Council in its existing Unitary Development Plan. The Framework adds more detail and forms a comprehensive plan to revitalise the economy of the area.

For more information, please visit the Isle of Wight Council's website www.iwight.com

Business

The main objective of the Cowes Waterfront project is to drive forward the economy of the Isle of Wight. The Island is home to a number of world leading companies specialising in aerospace, radar, wind energy, communications and composite technologies. In addition, the Island has built a reputation for quality and innovation in the marine sector.



SEEDA has funded the development of a marine cluster on the Island and awarded a grant to develop this network of marine industry to benefit business and economic growth.

Successful Island businesses will create new job opportunities, leading to greater success for a whole range of businesses, from direct suppliers to service industries – including shops, hotels and leisure facilities.



The initiative will help to optimise the use of waterfront sites for employment purposes. The Medina Valley already has a flourishing marine industry and by building on existing skills, harnessing the latest technology and providing new infrastructure, the industry can become even more successful.

An Enterprise Hub is established on the Island at the Innovation Centre, St Cross Business Park, Newport to provide support for local entrepreneurs. This innovation provides new and established firms with better access to knowledge, investment and flexible workspace.



Cowes Waterfront will provide the infrastructure and facilities for businesses to maximise their potential, helping to construct new buildings, providing access to equipment and a skilled workforce.

In addition SEEDA is working in partnership with other organisations to assist the installation of Broadband throughout the Medina Valley.

For NEG Micon Rotors, makers of wind turbine blades, water frontage is an essential aspect of establishing manufacturing. The blades measure over 40m in length and need direct access to ships for global export. Development of the Cowes Waterfront, preserving the prime industrial sites whilst making Cowes an attractive place to work and relax, is key to NEG Micon's further development on the Island.

Julian Brown, Managing Director
NEG Micon

Today the Composite Industry on the Isle of Wight is thriving and has generated over one thousand jobs dependent on the use of composites in the wind industry. Our continued success in this industry is dependent on our ability to attract skilled professional staff, the recruitment of which is made easier by the obvious attraction of living in a vibrant community. The Cowes Waterfront initiative is a very exciting project that will have far reaching and beneficial effects for the whole Isle of Wight community.

Paul Rudling, Managing Director
SP Systems

Communities

A key objective of Cowes Waterfront is to improve the quality of life for Island people and visitors. New job opportunities will be created by encouraging new businesses and by supporting the growth of Island firms. The Cowes Waterfront project will extend opportunities for Island people through access to training, specific to the needs of local business. People will be better able to secure skilled, well paid and sustainable employment.

The regeneration of the town centres will provide improved amenities and facilities for local people and visitors and will enhance the physical environment.

The built environment has a huge impact on the quality of life and lifestyle of local people and visitors. The sympathetic development of town centres is essential. Guidelines for design and types of development will be progressed to ensure that proposals enhance the character of the local area.

Cowes Waterfront will help to provide better public access to the waterfront by opening up areas and providing waterside walks where appropriate.



This is the first time the Medina Valley has been considered as a whole. This project looks specifically at the Island's strengths and identifies further opportunities to support and develop them. The focus is on job creation and regeneration, however, this must be balanced with retaining the unrivalled quality of Island life and the benefits of our outstanding natural environment.

Mike King, Enterprise and Investment Director
Isle of Wight Economic Partnership

Environment

Half the Isle of Wight is recognised as an “Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty” with a unique and high quality environment. The Medina Valley is also an important environmental and nature conservation area – providing valuable estuarine habitats that support a range of species. The estuary is particularly important for migrating and wading birds, and is recognised by international, European, national and local designations.

Some of the proposed development sites adjoin the environmentally sensitive areas and will be the subject of Environmental Impact Assessments as part of the planning process. The strategy also promotes proposals to enhance the existing environmental assets and to improve understanding and interpretation. The benefits of the strategy are to be able to assess the ‘in combination’ environmental impacts of proposals and ensure mitigation for these.

Increased public access to the waterfront has emerged as a consistent theme in public consultation. Areas of the waterfront in East Cowes and Cowes will be made more accessible.

New cycleways and footpaths along the river from East Cowes into Newport will complete a circular route around the river valley. This will provide an environmentally friendly transport link between the three towns and link to the network of routes across the rest of the Island.



“The Medina estuary is an area designated for its International nature conservation value. Development proposals will need to mitigate any individual or collective adverse impacts. However, the wider opportunity offered by the Cowes Waterfront project is to seek and provide enhancements to the features and habitats of importance to ensure that they flourish in the long term as part of the project’s holistic approach.”

Dave Moore, Senior Planning Officer
Isle of Wight Council

Infrastructure



“SEEDA is committed to providing substantial capital investment and resources to enable the Cowes Waterfront initiative to happen. This exciting project is integral to the plan to raise the profile of the Island as an excellent business location. The Medina Valley has great potential for business – offering a range of waterfront sites and a skilled workforce.”

Peter Cusdin, Development Projects Director
SEEDA



The Medina Valley is the powerhouse of the Island economy, home to many successful and innovative businesses, such as NEG Micon and SP Systems.

The Isle of Wight Economic Partnership’s Innovation Centre at St Cross Business Park in Newport supports the development of young, high tech, high growth businesses.



A key objective of Cowes Waterfront is to support the growth of successful businesses by providing the essential physical infrastructure, sites and premises.

New job opportunities will be created by encouraging businesses to move to the Isle of Wight and by supporting the growth of existing Island firms.

Cowes Waterfront will help to bring under used and vacant brownfield sites and premises back into productive use. Some existing vacant buildings will be refurbished. Derelict sites will be reclaimed, serviced and marketed to private sector developers and occupiers.

Access to the water is essential for the marine industry and it is proposed to develop a specialist business park with shared facilities to support

the marine cluster. The partners will also work with Red Funnel to improve the ferry infrastructure.



“Red Funnel views the Cowes Waterfront initiative as an important springboard for future redevelopment on the Isle of Wight, which will help to reinforce the Island’s reputation as a premier short break and day trip destination, offering a quality experience.”

“The project will complement Cowes excellent links with the mainland through the Southampton Gateway.”

Alistair Whyte, Managing Director
Red Funnel Ferries Ltd

The story so far

Cowes Waterfront began life in May 2002 as "Project Cowes" – an ambitious idea to regenerate the Medina Valley, home to a large percentage of the Island's population and businesses. The idea was developed by the Isle of Wight Economic Partnership with support from the Isle of Wight Council and SEEDA.

- September 2002**
 Consultation process – A study was conducted by an international firm of development consultants, undertaking a review of potential sites and talking to numerous landowners, businesses and organisations.
- December 2002**
 1st Public Consultation – Exhibitions in East Cowes and Cowes, news articles, surveys, poster campaigns, public meetings and presentations over a six week period. The positive response from the public and business community gave the project team the confidence to take the initiative to the next stage.

- January 2003**
 Project office opened at the Yacht Haven, Cowes.
- March 2003**
 Strategic Development Framework produced – this document outlined recommendations for the types and potential areas for development to gain the maximum benefit for the Isle of Wight.
- April / May 2003**
 2nd Public Consultation – The Strategic Development Framework was presented for public consultation as part of the process for the Framework being adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Isle of Wight Council's Unitary Development Plan.
- July 2003**
 SEEDA awards a grant from its recently launched cluster fund, to develop a marine industry network to benefit business development and economic growth on the Island.



What's next?

- Summer 2003**
 Results of 2nd Public Consultation to be published and presented to the Isle of Wight Council and subject to approval, the adoption of Strategic Development Framework as Supplementary Planning Guidance.
- Autumn 2003**
 Key sites identified and acquired. Development briefs for key sites prepared and planning applications submitted in line with Strategic Development Framework.
- Spring 2004**
 Launch of Cowes Waterfront plan and development strategy at MIPIM, an international property exhibition being held in Cannes, France to raise awareness of the development and investment opportunities.
- Summer 2003**
 Cowes Waterfront Exhibition on The Parade during Skandia Cowes Week.
- Summer 2003**
 Global Partnership between SEEDA and Ellen MacArthur's Offshore Challenges Sailing Team to promote Cowes Waterfront and support its projects.



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