

URBAN RENEWAL IN DEVON TOWNS

# Seaton Regeneration Strategy

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January 2023





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## Document control

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# 1 Introduction

1.1 Devon County Council, working with the District and Town Councils and Hardisty Jones Associates (HJA) are delivering an Urban Renewal Programme for Devon's towns, including Seaton.

1.2 Previous work on market and coastal towns in Devon comprised an initial review of the challenges and opportunities towns face, identified the highest priority towns for support, and set out proposals for their regeneration and structural change in response to both long-standing issues and the more recent challenges caused by issues such as the global pandemic and Brexit.

## Background

1.3 Devon County Council has established an Urban Renewal programme to support economic growth and regeneration in eight coastal and market towns in Devon, including Seaton.

1.4 For each town, the approach to the urban renewal programme includes:

- Establishing a strategic regeneration board (Seaton Project Group)
- Preparing a regeneration strategy
- Preparing a business case for a priority project
- Implementing quick win projects

## Seaton Project Group

1.5 The Project Group has an advisory, not statutory role. It will shape and guide the future regeneration of the town, setting out the objectives and direction for the future of the town, with a view to increasing inward investment. It will advise the District and County Council and other investors and funders of the town's challenges and opportunities, which will assist in informing the principal authorities' local activity and investment.

1.6 The Project Group represents the town, including its residents, Town Council, businesses, and local institutions. It also includes the stakeholders who will help deliver support for future economic growth (e.g. the District and County Councils).

## **Funding opportunities**

1.7 The primary role of the Project Group is to identify the needs and potential projects for strategic regeneration in Seaton. However, the Project Group should maintain an overview of funding opportunities and should continue to liaise with East Devon District Council and Devon County Council on potential sources of funding for projects.

## **Regeneration strategy**

1.8 This document is the regeneration strategy for Seaton.

1.9 This strategy is a 'live' document, meaning that challenges, opportunities, and projects can be updated in the future as new issues arise and progress is made.

1.10 The regeneration strategy sets out the objectives for the future growth of Seaton. Projects have been identified by the Project Group that align with these strategic objectives. Quick win projects will be earmarked, and a business case prepared for a more significant project

1.11 Analysis of the socio-economic and policy evidence base which identifies the strengths, opportunities, challenges, and barriers for transformational change in Seaton is included in Appendix 1.



## 2 Objectives

2.1 Drawing on the socio-economic baseline, policy context, and challenges and opportunities identified by the Project Group, the objectives for Seaton are to:

- Create a high quality of employment with a thriving and diverse local economy including training and education options, particularly for young people
- Improve the quality of the seafront and town centre public realm
- Improve accessibility, transport, and parking, with a variety of eco travel options including for electric vehicles and bicycles.

## 3 Challenges and Barriers

3.1 The following barriers and challenges have been identified through the baseline data review, policy review, and consultations with local stakeholders including the Seaton Project Group, which includes representatives of both the Town and District Councils.

### Opportunities for young people

3.2 Educational facilities for young people in Seaton are limited. The closest secondary school, at Colyton, is selective and further education facilities are difficult to access. The nearest non-selective secondary schools are 7-8 miles away in Axminster and Lyme Regis. This results in young people searching elsewhere for apprenticeships and work-related training.

3.3 There are limited leisure activities for young people in Seaton and more generally, the town is not geared towards this demographic. As a result, Seaton struggles to retain younger people and attract young families to the area<sup>1</sup>.

### Seafront and Public Realm

3.4 There is a strong ambition to improve the public realm in Seaton, particularly around the seafront. Busses and cars have access to the Esplanade in front of the beach and there have been discussions around relocating the bus stops to enhance the visual aesthetic of the seafront. There is a disconnect between the high street and the seafront, and as the seafront is not visible from the main road through the town it is sometimes missed by new visitors.

### Employment opportunities

3.5 As a seaside resort, Seaton has a high proportion of seasonal and low-skilled jobs and as a result, there is a desire for greater diversity in the local economy and more jobs with career progression opportunities.

3.6 There has been a loss of some retail businesses in recent years and retail is now concentrated into a relatively small area of the town. This may impact the overall vitality of the town centre.

### Under-utilised assets

3.7 Seaton Jurassic Visitors Centre, owned by East Devon District Council, is currently closed after Devon Wildlife Trust vacated the building in September 2021. The tourist attraction and visitor centre which also contained a gift shop, meeting rooms, a café, an office and exhibition rooms, closed due to viability issues in September 2021. Following the closure, East Devon District Council invited tenders for the future operation of the centre and selected Seaton Tramway as the new operator in October 2022.

3.8 Other assets in Seaton with potential for greater utilisation and contribution to economic growth include the Marshlands Centre, which currently houses Seaton Town Council, the Moridunum, other public spaces, and the Gateway Theatre.

### Housing

3.9 There is a limited mix of residential accommodation available in Seaton and housing mainly serves an older population. Although older people comprise a significant proportion of the

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1 Context - A1.3 for details of population changes and old age dependency ratio details.

population and there should be sufficient housing for this group, it is equally important to provide affordable housing to other sections of the population which are key to the future economic prosperity of the town, such as young people and families.

3.10 Housing affordability is also an issue in Seaton as prices across Devon have spiked in recent years. Anecdotal evidence suggests that coastal areas in the South West in particular have suffered from worsening housing affordability due to the rise in second home purchases in recent years.

## Identity

3.11 Seaton lacks a clear identity and could benefit from developing a strong vision for its future. As part of the IRF funded 'Coast meets Country' project, five towns in East Devon have recently created an online forum for local tourism and hospitality businesses. This process involved establishing a vision for Seaton, which centred on the town's friendliness, tranquillity, sense of community, and natural capital.

## Climate change

3.12 Concerns have been raised about the impact of climate change on Seaton and its tourism sector. Both Devon County Council and East Devon District Council have declared a climate emergency, with East Devon District Council preparing a Climate Change Strategy which considers the risks of flooding and erosion in coastal areas. The climate impact and resilience of all activities promoted under the Regeneration Strategy should be considered. The contribution of each project towards achieving Net Zero is outlined for each project below.

## Key issues

3.13 The socio-economic baseline shows that Seaton has an ageing population, driven by an increase in residents aged 65+ and a falling working-age population (which is contrary to regional and national growth in the working-age population). Seaton has a particularly low level of employment in the town<sup>2</sup>, has not experienced growth in recent years (contrary to regional and national comparators), and has net out-commuting. Combined with the other factors listed in this chapter, such as housing affordability, this raises concerns about the future economic prosperity of the town.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1: Context – A1.6 for details of economic activity in Seaton.



## 4 Strengths and Opportunities

4.1 The following strengths and opportunities have been identified through the baseline data review, policy review, and consultations with local stakeholders including Seaton Project Group, which includes representatives of both the Town and District Councils.

### Natural Heritage, Environment, Tourism, and Culture

4.2 Seaton's outstanding natural beauty and environment is a significant asset for attracting tourism to the town, and more could be made of this. Located within the East Devon AONB, Seaton is seen as the 'Gateway to the Jurassic Coast' and offers year round outdoor activities including the South West Coast Path, the Wetlands, and the seafront.

4.3 The Gateway Theatre is already the centre of a growing arts and music scene in Seaton, and it could be developed into a Jurassic Coast hub for culture.

4.4 Growth in active nature and arts tourism is an ambition shared by East Devon District Council, as set out in its recent Tourism Strategy<sup>3</sup>. It is anticipated that supporting these areas of tourism will help develop a year-round tourism offer and grow the numbers of visitors in low season. The tourism strategy's vision is for:

*East Devon to be the leading, year-round tourism destination in Devon, whose diverse ecosystem of outstanding natural environments, distinctive, high-quality businesses, towns and villages, all thrive and grow through a commitment to Net Zero, accessibility and collaboration.*

4.5 Four themes are set out in the strategy: natural diversity; food and drink; active nature; and visual arts and festivals, working with the cultural strategy for East Devon. Seaton has potential to benefit from activity under these themes. The Tourism Strategy does not include an action plan, and some of the actions set out in this strategy, in the following chapters, will contribute towards delivering it.

### Public Realm

4.6 Pedestrianisation of the esplanade to improve accessibility and help promote active lifestyles amongst residents is a significant desire for Seaton. A Levelling Up Fund bid for the Axe Valley was submitted in July 2022 for a Seafront enhancement scheme, which included phased public realm and pedestrian access improvements to the esplanade.

4.7 There is potential for a larger town square through enhancements to the roundabout at Fisherman's Gap. This would provide public space for the community and could be utilised for events.

4.8 Improving connectivity around the town is crucial to improving the public realm in Seaton. This involves increased accessibility between key locations such as the seafront, the high street, and residential areas.

4.9 A town map is produced annually which helps promote tourism and accessibility.

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 1 Context for a summary of the EDDC Tourism Strategy

## Employment

4.10 Tourism provides many jobs for local residents and is vital to the survival of many local businesses. Tourism is critical to the Seaton economy, and the town would benefit from increasing the value of tourism and the volume of visitors in the low season. Attractions such as Seaton Tramway, the Wetlands, and the South West Coast Path draw visitors all year round and support a number of jobs in the town. It is important to build on and promote economic activity and employment opportunities which are less reliant on summer months. A potential focus could be on food, arts, and culture.

4.11 Other sectors such as Wholesale & Retail Trade and Health & Social Work Activities<sup>4</sup> also provide many jobs for Seaton residents, and their importance to the local economy should not be overlooked.

4.12 Encouraging the diversified use of empty retail units could help to improve the vitality of the town centre and provide employment opportunities.

4.13 Improving infrastructure could help Seaton respond to home working changes following Covid-19, such as internet cafes and suitable networking environments with reliable Wi-Fi and suitable desks.

4.14 Business estates and more employment land are needed to facilitate employment growth. Engagement and coordination is needed with EDDC, which owns two industrial sites in Seaton Colyford Road and Harepath Road.

## Education and opportunities for young people

4.15 Improved public transport links with nearby towns would help improve access to post 16 education facilities such as the Woodroffe School in Lyme Regis and Sidmouth College. It is also important to provide more vocational skills training in Seaton to allow more young people to access local training, which may help prevent the out-migration of young people.

4.16 There is a need for a community space for young people to socialise and network and form roots in Seaton. Seaton could benefit from better connectivity to places which offer vocational and further education courses.

4.17 Improving the evening economy in Seaton could help to attract a younger demographic, and people of a working age.

## Residential

4.18 Affordable housing for young people could help to avoid out-migration.

4.19 It is important to recognise that Seaton is an attractive retirement destination, so appropriate housing needs to be provided for the elderly. This may free-up housing for other age groups.

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 1 Context for employment data in Seaton.

## 5 Potential Projects for Urban Renewal

5.1 This chapter sets out the criteria for project selection as part of the Urban Renewal programme in Seaton. The Project Group has used these criteria, as well as the identified objectives to identify potential projects.

### Criteria for Selecting Projects

- A clear and comprehensive description of the project should be written.
- The project should help achieve the agreed objectives for Seaton.
- A lead stakeholder should be identified to develop and deliver the project. They should have the resources, skills, experience, and ability needed to do this.
- The potential benefits of the project should be clearly identified, but do not need to be quantified at this selection stage.
- Potential sources of capital or revenue funding should be identified (both private and public funds).
- The approximate financial scale of the project should be identified, but detailed costs are not needed at the selection stage.
- The approximate timescale for delivering the project should be identified, but a detailed timetable is not needed at the selection stage.
- How the project contributes to net zero ambitions (where applicable) should be considered.

### Types of projects

5.2 Projects are defined as either strategic economic projects or locally significant.

5.3 **Strategic economic projects** are those which directly contribute to meeting the objectives of the Urban Renewal programme. These should lead directly to economic outcomes including new and safeguarded jobs, higher skilled jobs, and higher paid jobs. Strategic economic projects mostly tackle common issues faced by many towns across Devon, and so there may be a common response delivered across more than one town. The District and County Council are well-placed to lead these projects. In a few circumstances the County Council may support projects that are specific to a town, but which directly deliver strategic economic change in that town.

5.4 **Locally significant projects** are unique and important to the town and its vitality but are not strategically important across a wider area. Local stakeholders are better placed to lead on these projects.

## 6 Economy and Employment

Create a high quality of employment with a thriving and diverse local economy with training and education options, including for young people.

### Strategic economic projects

Project Description	Lead stakeholder	Contributes to Net Zero ambitions	Potential benefits	Potential sources of funding	Approximate timescale <sup>5</sup>
6.1 Identify skills gaps in local area and support young people through training in these areas. Initial suggestions have been made for hospitality, care, or tech training for the elderly. Need to identify the level of local demand for this.	Seaton Chamber of Commerce. EDDC	Reduced need to travel for work	Businesses can hire the right skills locally Residents can access local work opportunities	DCC	Short term
6.2 Sustainable use of Seaton Jurassic Visitor Centre Building. The Council has now concluded the marketing of the site and Seaton Tramway has been selected as the preferred operator. Negotiations are now	EDDC, but preferred operator now Seaton Tramway	Reduces need for new sites	Use of vacant strategic building for tourism purposes, drawing in more visitors and increased spend in Seaton	-	Short term

<sup>5</sup> Short term projects generally have funding secured and/or can be delivered within one year. Medium term projects have potential funding sources identified (but not yet secured) and may take between one and three years to deliver. Long term projects have no funding source identified and could take three years or more to deliver.

	Project Description	Lead stakeholder	Contributes to Net Zero ambitions	Potential benefits	Potential sources of funding	Approximate timescale <sup>5</sup>
	taking place regarding the lease of the centre.					
6.3	<p>Delivery of business premises and employment land, particularly smaller light industrial units and grow-on space which are in high demand in the area.</p> <p>After the removal of a restrictive covenant on the Marshlands Centre, STC is open to part of the Centre being used to accommodate employment. There is potential to redevelop the currently unused top floor into office space which will be occupied on a permanent basis by a number a small businesses.</p> <p>There is also potential to develop a space to deliver vocational skills training to local residents.</p>	<p>EDDC Local Plan process. Delivery of sites and premises at Colyford Road and Harepath Road (EDDC owned sites) through LUF bid (if successful). STC will need to take the lead on conversion of Marshlands and future operation.</p>	<p>Reduced need to travel for work</p>	<p>Supports small business establishment and growth. Creates diverse employment opportunities</p>	<p>Potential for DCC Quick Win funding if an economic case can be made</p>	<p>Medium term</p>



## Locally significant projects

Project ID	Project Description	Lead stakeholder	Contributes to Net Zero ambitions	Potential benefits	Potential sources of funding	Approximate of timescale
6.4	<p>A tourism Forum for Seaton, Sidmouth, Budleigh Salterton, Ottery St Mary and Honiton is currently being developed by Sidmouth Town Council and Seaton Town Council, as part of the IRF funded Coast to Coast Project.</p> <p>This is intended to improve online reach and recognition of the partner towns, provide a platform through which local tourism and hospitality businesses can market and sell their services, and nurture and grow responsible tourism in the five towns and across East Devon.</p> <p>East Devon District Council has prepared a Tourism Strategy for the District, aiming to promote year-round tourism activity which supports growth and net zero objectives.</p>	<p>STC pushing forward on this, in partnership with the three other towns.</p> <p>EDDC delivering tourism strategy</p>	-	<p>Increased tourism in East Devon.</p> <p>Improved promotion and increased awareness of Seaton.</p>	<p>Innovation Resilience Funding</p> <p>East Devon strategy lists UKSPF, innovation funds, Arts Council England funds, and the County Deal</p>	Already underway
6.5	<p>Identify a suitable site for a year-round indoor market to support economic activity outside of peak summer months, for example, for independent market stalls, food, and boutique shops. Potential to combine local events with Axminster i.e. rotate market stalls between towns. Project</p>	<p>Chamber of Commerce – business led.</p> <p>EDDC could enable through licencing arrangements where required</p>	<p>Reduced need to travel for shopping</p>	<p>Supports local micro businesses</p> <p>More year-round jobs</p> <p>Contributes to town centre vitality</p>	<p>Potential for DCC Quick Win funding if an economic case can be made</p>	Short term

Project Description		Lead stakeholder	Contributes to Net Zero ambitions	Potential benefits	Potential sources of funding	Approximate timescale
	needs more consideration and detail in terms of what the market should offer, how often it should operate, can we learn from previous attempts etc.					
6.6	Support small businesses to offer apprenticeships by raising awareness of providers, particularly of those offering digital training.	Identify lead stakeholder – potential for Seaton and Axminster Chambers of Commerce to work together (when Seaton Chamber up to speed)	Reduced need to travel for work	Training opportunities for young people More skilled labour for local businesses	DCC can support skills/training initiatives if demand can be shown	Short term
6.7	Create a hub for business administration support. Potential to work in cooperation with the Business Information Point enterprise agency. Offer workshops in Seaton for local businesses, bringing together resources currently available into one place and publicise to businesses. Potential for business support to be offered to Axminster and Seaton jointly.	Seaton Chamber of Commerce with potential cooperation from Business Information Point if possible	-	Many small/young businesses in East Devon which could benefit from administrative support	-	Short term
6.8	Provision of flexible workshop space in a vacant unit. Need to understand local requirement and desire for this. More market research required	Need to identify a lead stakeholder	Reduced need to travel for work	Supports small local businesses. Use of vacant unit	-	Short term
6.9	Formation of a Business Improvement District (BID). Need to understand local demand for this. Crowdfunding may be preferable to increased business rates.	Seaton Chamber of Commerce to consider, once established	-	Better quality environment could bring vitality and footfall to the town, leading to more	-	Short term



Project Description		Lead stakeholder	Contributes to Net Zero ambitions	Potential benefits	Potential sources of funding	Approximate of timescale
				employment in the town		
6.10	Potential for development of the Gateway Theatre. Proposal includes provision of studio workplaces for education, recording studios, and technical studios. The development of the theatre would require relocating the Museum to a different location (suggestion for the Marshlands Centre).	Seaton Gateway Theatre A 30 year lease has been granted to the theatre, to enable it to bid for funds. EDDC's Cultural Strategy provides a context for this	Reduced need to travel for cultural activities.	Provision of cultural and leisure facilities. Provision of activities for young people. Supports local jobs	EDDC to provide bid writing support, subject to securing UKSPF funding.  DCC to provide support to identify funding	Medium to long term
6.11	New Business and Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC) hub at Seaton Library. This will support local business owners and entrepreneurs to start or grow their small business and boost the local economy.	Libraries Unlimited	-	Supports small local businesses	BIPC and Libraries Unlimited	Short term



## 7 Seafront and Town Centre Public Realm

Improve the quality of seafront and town centre public realm

### Strategic economic projects

Project ID	Project Description	Lead stakeholder	Contributes to Net Zero ambitions	Potential benefits	Potential sources of funding	Approximate timescale
7.1	Reapply for planning consent for seafront enhancement. Contingent on the outcome of the LUF bid.	EDDC leading on LUF bid. EDDC considering preparatory works for this project	-	Increased attractiveness draws in more visitors, spend, and investment. Ultimately increases economic vitality and employment	LUF bid	Short term
7.2	Deliver seafront enhancements (either via LUF or alternative route). Proposals include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of Moridunum site including public realm improvements above.</li> <li>• Pedestrianisation of Esplanade to offer an accessible safe space for leisure and events.</li> <li>• Improve accessibility at the seafront by dropping kerbs and moving bus stops.</li> <li>• Resize the roundabout at Fisherman's Gap to create a larger</li> </ul>	EDDC leading on LUF bid If unsuccessful then consider alternatives, building on preparatory work that may be undertaken. Potential to start with Moridunum	-	Increased attractiveness draws in more visitors, spend, and investment. Ultimately increases economic vitality and employment	Alternatives to be considered after LUF bid decision. Potential for community led project, with support from Town Council and community led fundraiser	Short to medium term



Project Description		Lead stakeholder	Contributes to Net Zero ambitions	Potential benefits	Potential sources of funding	Approximate timescale
	town square to improve connectivity and public realm.					
7.3	Shop front improvement scheme to improve public realm in the town centre. In the longer term there is an aim to constantly refresh/upkeep shop fronts to maintain their attractiveness. Need to identify a suitable local property to begin this scheme.	Need to identify a lead stakeholder. Possibly Seaton Chamber of Commerce once up to speed	Improved town centre reduced need to travel elsewhere	Improved shopfronts should bring vitality and footfall to the town, leading to more employment in the town	Potential for DCC Quick Win funding if an economic case can be made	Short term

## Locally significant projects

Project Description		Lead stakeholder	Contributes to Net Zero ambitions	Potential benefits	Potential sources of funding	Approximate of timescale
7.4	Short term Seafront enhancements, such as Festoon lighting along the Esplanade and Flagpoles.	Need to identify a lead stakeholder	-	Improved public realm increases tourism	-	Short term
7.5	Improved leisure and culture offer for young people in Seaton – support the provision of more activities including sports clubs, water sports, indoor activities such as a soft play facility, and arts, theatre and music clubs.	Need to identify a lead stakeholder	-	Increased tourism offer More leisure activities for young people in the town	-	Short term

## 8 Transport and Accessibility

Improved accessibility, transport, and parking, with a variety of eco travel options including for EV's and bikes

### Strategic economic projects

	Project Description	Lead stakeholder	Contributes to Net Zero ambitions	Potential benefits	Potential sources of funding	Approximate timescale
8.1	<p>Improve public transport options between nearby towns including Honiton, Sidmouth and Lyme Regis. Transport options should operate in the evenings to encourage day visitors to stay longer and allow visitors in nearby areas to travel into Seaton in the evenings.</p> <p>There is a need for more data on bus routes to understand gaps in transport provision. There is Potential to coordinate with Axminster to increase transport options.</p>	<p>DCC is responsible for this, so discussions should take place with the Council's transport team</p>	<p>Reduces congestion and pollution</p>	<p>Increased connectivity. Potential for more local tourism. Increased leisure options for residents</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>Short term</p>
8.2	<p>Active travel options to improve access to and from Seaton e.g. E-bikes, car sharing options.– potential for this to be successful if car sharing encouraged by employers. E-bike stations should be located near or on the Stop Line Way cycle path.</p>	<p>DCC to consider further</p>	<p>Active travel reduces congestion and pollution</p>	<p>Increased connectivity for residents and for visitors</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>Short term</p>
8.3	<p>Supporting the delivery of the Stop Line Way for improved links from Seaton to Axminster.</p> <p>DCC has committed funding to deliver the Seaton to Colyford element of the Stop Line Way next year, meaning that the Kilmington to Axminster section remains missing. There is potential for some of this to be delivered temporarily along quiet lanes.</p> <p>Note: The ultimate ambition is to deliver the entire length of the Stop Line Way along offroad cycle paths. This requires cross county cooperation between Devon and Somerset County Councils.</p>	<p>DCC. South Western Railway is supportive of the Seaton-Axminster and Axminster-Chard routes</p>	<p>Active travel reduces congestion and air pollution</p>	<p>As well as improving local accessibility this will draw more visitors to the town, which generates more spending and</p>	<p>Business Case to support bids for future funding being developed by HJA. DCC funding committed for part of Stop Line Way</p>	<p>Medium term</p>



Project Description	Lead stakeholder	Contributes to Net Zero ambitions	Potential benefits	Potential sources of funding	Approximate timescale
			supports employment		

### Locally significant projects

Project Description	Lead stakeholder	Contributes to Net Zero ambitions	Potential benefits	Potential sources of funding	Approximate timescale
8.4 Improved signage to raise awareness of walking and cycling routes and highlight points of interest in town.	Need to identify a lead stakeholder	Active travel reduces congestion and pollution	Improved population health. Supports walking tourism	-	Short term
8.5 Capitalise on the popularity of the Lyme Regis to Seaton section of the South West Coast Path- to transform Seaton as a popular place to stay overnight. Support accommodation providers and encourage restaurants to stay open in the evening.	Need to identify a lead stakeholder	-	Increased spending in Seaton	-	Short term

## Appendix 1. Context

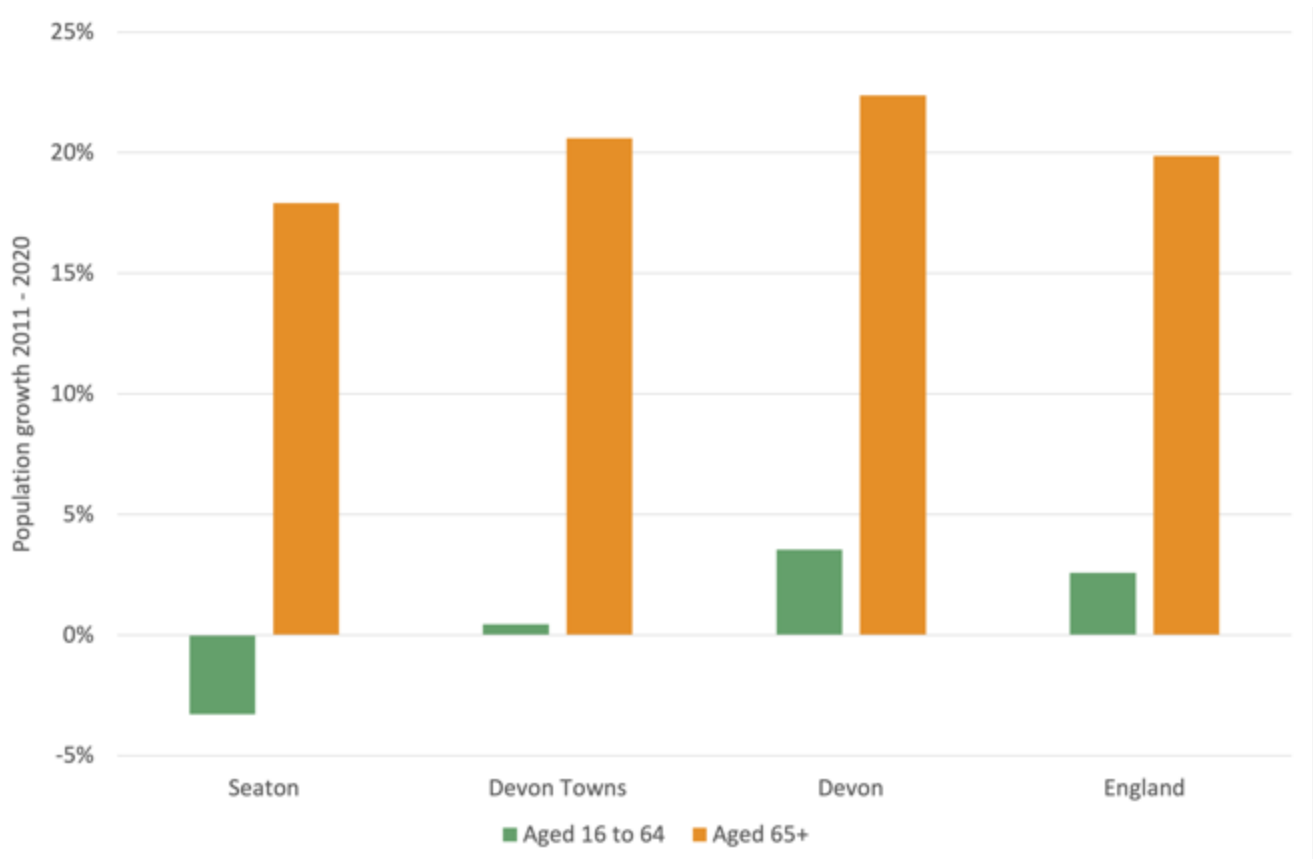
A1.1 This appendix sets out the most up-to-date socio-economic data and policy available for Seaton. It will help to build an understanding of the potential drivers of future economic growth in the area as well as identify challenges to the local economy.

### Labour Market

A1.2 In 2020, Seaton had an estimated population of 9,400, an increase of 6% from 2011<sup>6</sup>. This growth rate is in line with the average seen across the 25 Devon towns<sup>7</sup> and the England average, although slightly below the average growth of 7% in the South West.

A1.3 Seaton has a population which is split almost equally between those aged 16-64 and those aged 65+, with an old age dependency ratio of 937, meaning that for every 1,000 people of working age there are 937 people aged 65+. This is the second highest ratio of the 25 Devon towns. The working age population has declined by 3% since 2011 whilst the older population has increased by 18%, meaning that the old age dependency ratio has increased over this period.

**Figure A:1 Population growth in Seaton and comparators, 2011 - 2020**



Source: ONS Population Estimates, 2021

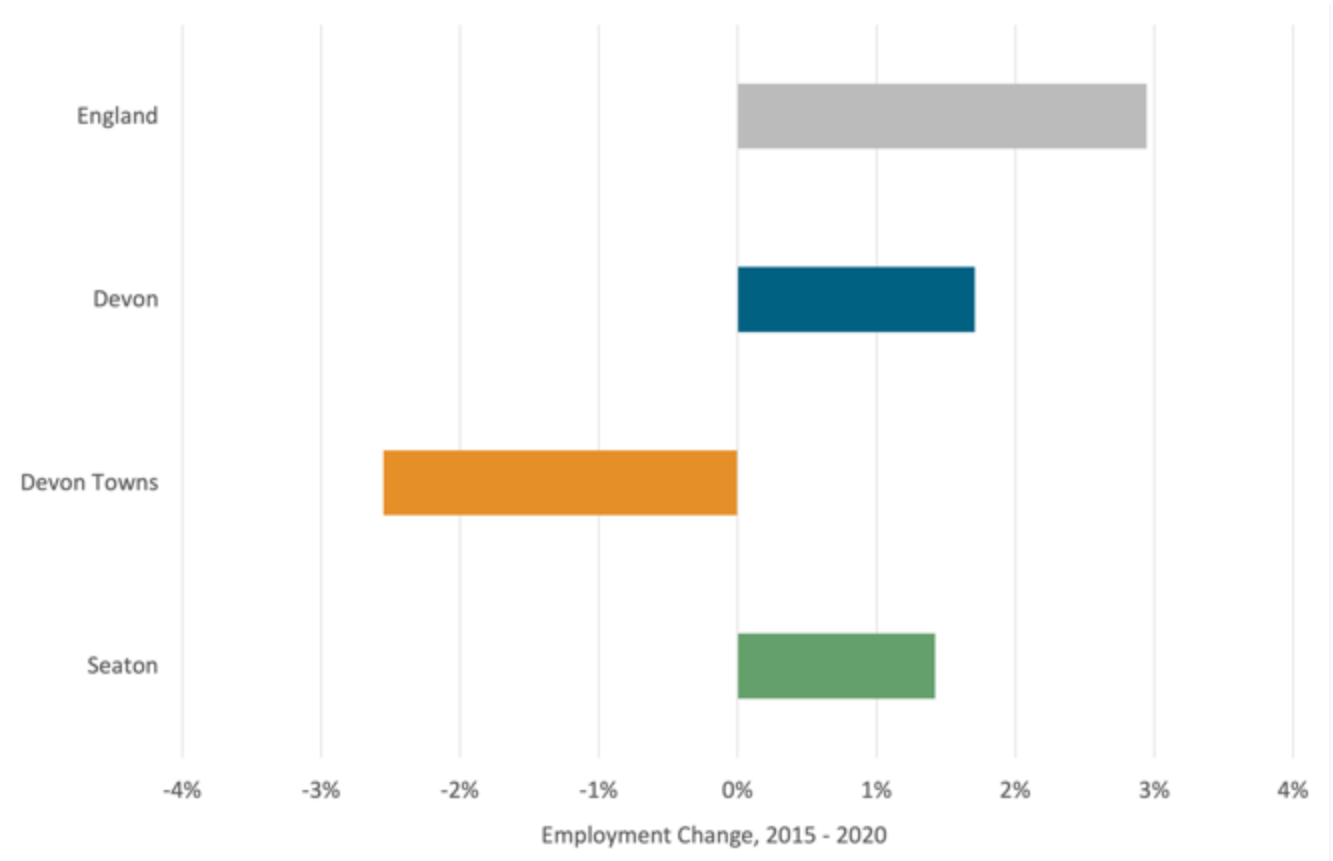
A1.4 Recent anecdotal evidence suggests that as a result of Covid-19 and changing working patterns, Seaton has seen increases in its population since 2020, particularly of younger people and working families.

<sup>6</sup> Source: ONS Population Estimates

<sup>7</sup> These are all towns in Devon with an estimated population greater than 5,000 in 2020. Cranbrook has been excluded as a comparator area as a new town will see significant growth above what will be seen in established towns.

A1.5 In 2020, there were 2,500 people in employment in Seaton, which is a 1% increase on 2015 employment<sup>8</sup>. Employment reached almost 3,000 people in 2019 but, likely as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, fell back to just under 2,500 in 2020. This 16% decline was the largest of all the towns in Devon between 2019 and 2020 and was much greater than the regional and national averages which saw declines of 2%.

**Figure A:2 Employment change, 2015 - 2020**



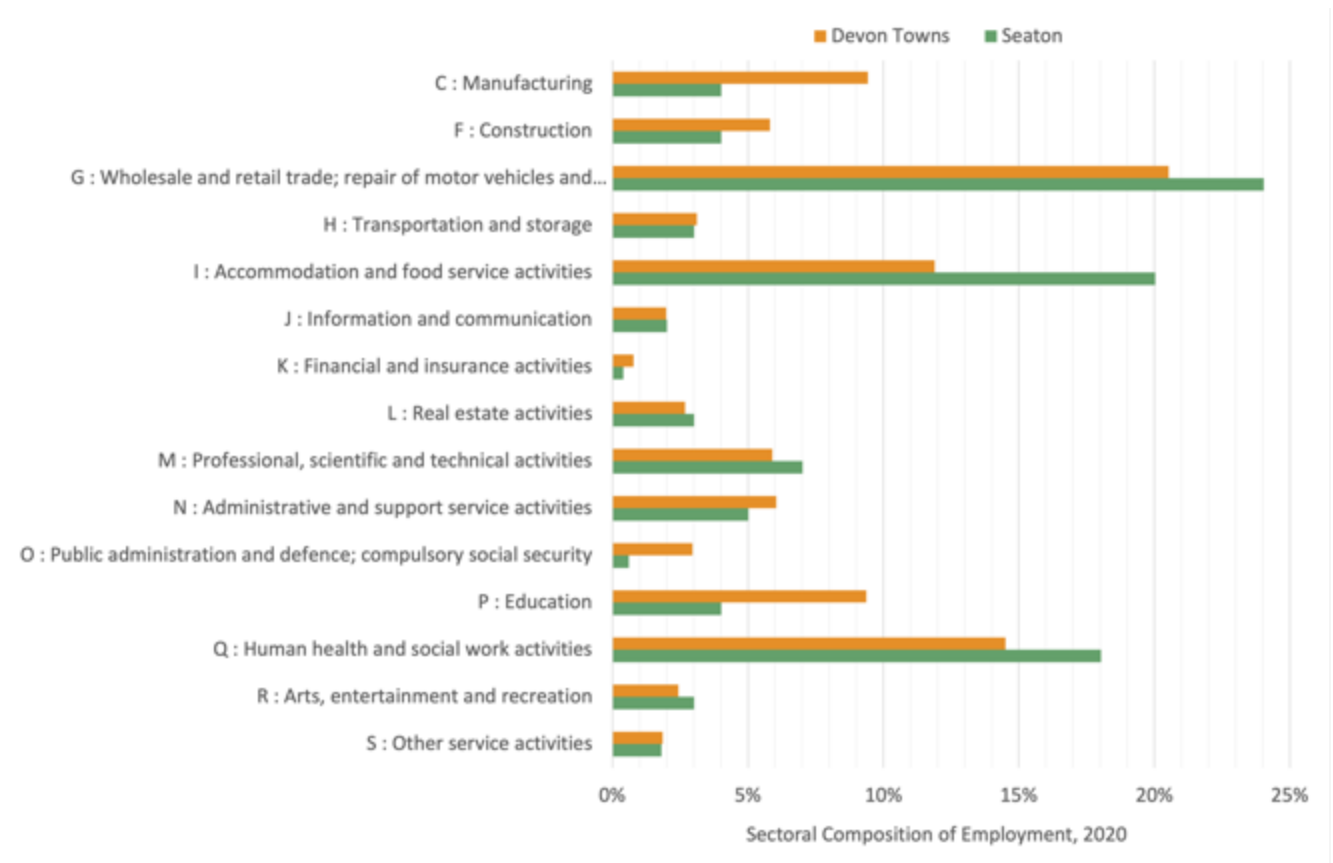
Source: ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, 2021

### Economic activity

A1.6 Sectors with a high proportion of employment compared with the Devon towns average include Wholesale & Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles & Motorcycles, Accommodation & Food Services and Human Health & Social Work. These sectors have not experienced growth in the period 2015 to 2020, rather, Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities and Arts, Entertainment & Recreation have seen the highest growth in Seaton. Sectors with a particularly low proportion of employment include Manufacturing, Construction and Education.

<sup>8</sup> Source: ONS Business Register and Employment Survey. Note that these figures do not include those working in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing sector as this data is unreliable at a town level.

Figure A:3 Composition of employment, 2020



Source: ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, 2021

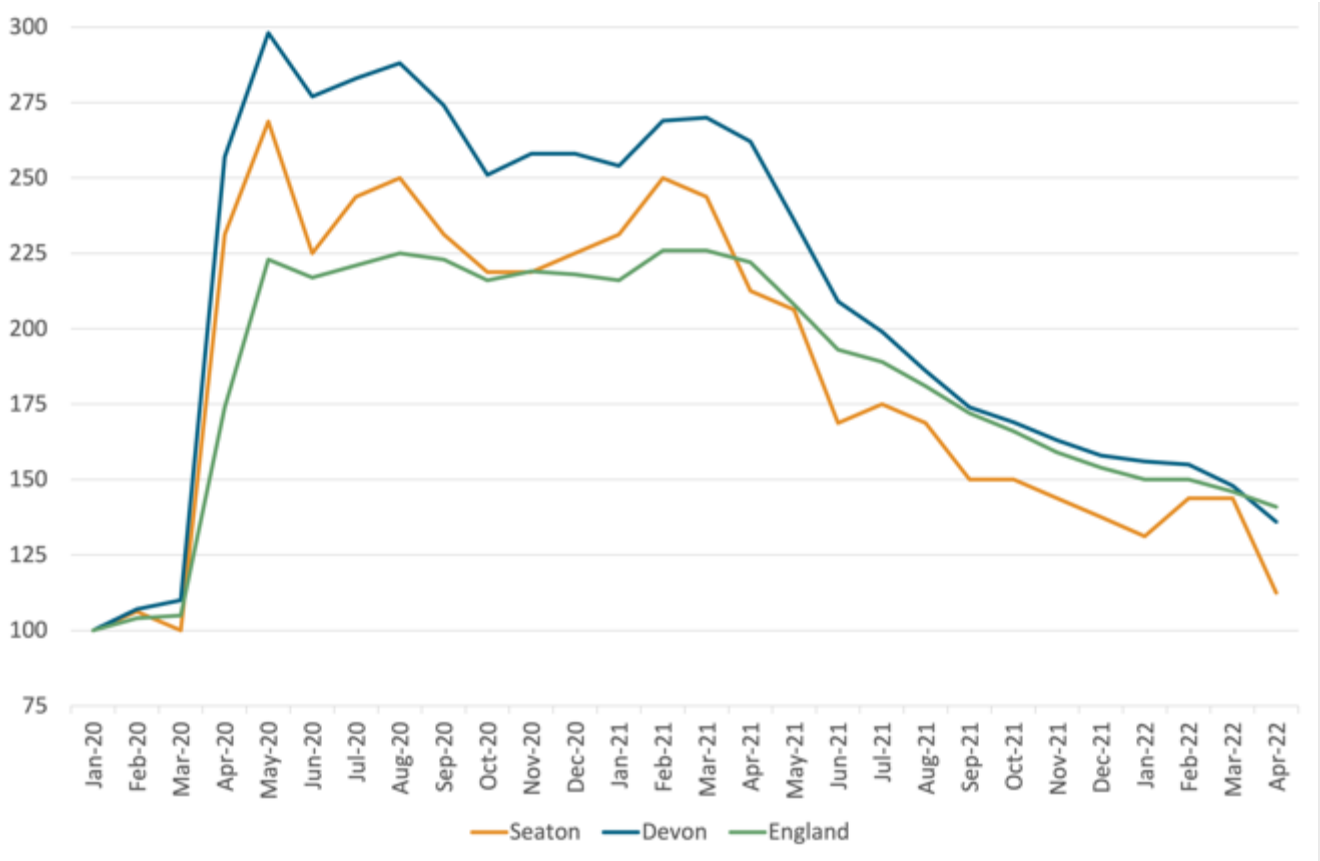
A1.7 Seaton had an employment ratio (of workers to residents) of 0.27 in 2020, which compared with the Devon towns average is particularly low. Commuting data for the Built Up Area of Seaton (mapped to Lower Super Output Areas or LSOAs), from 2011, reveals that with 3,100 people commuting out and 2,100 travelling into Seaton to work, meaning the town has a net outflow of 1,000 workers<sup>9</sup>.

A1.8 The average claimant count in 2019 in Seaton was approximately 70<sup>10</sup>. Figure A:4 shows that the number of people claiming benefits principally for the reason of being unemployed in Seaton was 13% higher in April 2022 than pre pandemic January 2020. However, Seaton is closer to making a full claimant count recovery than Devon and England, which in April 2022 had claimant counts 36% and 41% higher than in January 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Source: Census 2011. Location of usual residence and place of work (OA level)

<sup>10</sup> Claimant Count by Sex and Age

Figure A:4 Indexed Claimant Count, Jan 2020 - April 2022



Source: ONS Claimant Count by Sex and Age, 2022

A1.9 The closest comprehensive school is The Woodroffe School in Lyme Regis which achieved ‘1 - outstanding’ in its latest inspection (2011). There is a grammar school in nearby Colyton that provides post 16 education. This was also ranked “1-outstanding” in the most recent Ofsted inspection (2020).

A1.10 Retail vacancy rates in Seaton in October 2021 were 7.7%, which compares well with the GB average of 14.5% in the same month<sup>11</sup>.

### Deprivation and vulnerability to future decline

A1.11 Seaton performed well in the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019, ranking as one of the least deprived towns in Devon.

A1.12 Three measures of the vulnerability of towns to future decline have been constructed for this study:

- Seaton is ranked fifteenth of 25 Devon towns for vulnerability to the impacts of Covid-19 (based on employment in sectors vulnerable to Covid-19 impacts, and changes to the claimant count in 2020 and 2021)

<sup>11</sup> Source: Local data Company



- It is ranked twelfth of 25 for structural vulnerability (based on the population age structure, Index of Multiple Deprivation, income data in the IMD, and the claimant count as a proportion of the working age population)
- It ranks twelfth of 25 for combined vulnerability (i.e. vulnerability to Covid-19 and structural vulnerability)

A1.13 The highest ranked ward in Seaton in the separate Devon County Council vulnerability index (May 2021) is ranked at thirty-fourth in Devon (out of a total of 457). This is the 'Seaton (Seafront)' ward.

## East Devon Local Plan 2013 - 2031

A1.14 The East Devon Local Plan recognises Seaton as a residential base, popular with retired people and commuters, and as a traditional seaside resort. The level of commercial services are adequate to discourage travel to other towns, but educational, health and community facilities are seen as insufficient to serve the local population. There are opportunities for developing marine based employment in fishing, marine transport, boat building and marine engineering. There are mixed use employment and recreation sites allocated to the North of Seaton. However EDDC believes these are unlikely to be delivered due to a lack of commercial viability.

A1.15 The ambition for Seaton involves securing regeneration area development with additional employment provision. Promoting the town as a destination for green and water sports tourism is a key objective for the town as well as enhancing social and community facilities. This includes extending the network of green links from Seaton to surrounding settlements and countryside, for example through promoting the Sustrans' Cycle Route. The Axe Wetlands, Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site (Jurassic Coast), and surrounding coastline are assets which are central to the future success and regeneration of Seaton.

A1.16 Seaton has been designated as a neighbourhood area, but the process of creating a neighbourhood plan has not begun.

## Draft Local Plan 2020 – 2040

A1.17 The Draft East Devon Local Plan deems Seaton as an appropriate place to locate a relatively large amount of housing and employment development, although recognises that Seaton is constrained by its natural landscape and the lack of strategic facilities such as a train station and a secondary school. The Plan proposes land allocations for 217 new homes and 2.2 ha of employment land, predominantly identified around the north of the town.

## East Devon Cultural Strategy 2022 – 2031

A1.18 This East Devon District Council Strategy<sup>12</sup> sets out the vision, mission and actions to support the cultural offer across East Devon.

A1.19 It outlines a theme of Cultural Tourism, with an objective to establish new cultural products, partnerships, and promotional activity to mutually benefit and grow the creative and visitor economies. A medium term action is to support and promote festivals and events which bring significant visitor spend and profile to East Devon, building on current strengths. Within this, a potential work programme could be to work with independent promoters and local Destination Marketing Organisations, as well as the in-house events team, to maximise impact from notable

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<sup>12</sup> East Devon District Council (2022). East Devon District Council Cultural Strategy. <https://eastdevon.gov.uk/media/3724566/culture-strategy-2022-2031.pdf>

events and festivals, with particular focus on those that take place in June/early July and September/October (i.e. beyond the peak tourism season).

A1.20 The strategy also highlights the need for more community spaces in East Devon, setting out an action to invest in co-working, workshop and mixed-use spaces to strengthen community infrastructure, especially in new developments, and take advantage of the shift away from commuting and towards local working.

## East Devon District Council Tourism Strategy<sup>13</sup>

A1.21 The East Devon District Council Tourism Strategy outlines a 5 year vision for East Devon to:

*“...become the leading, year-round tourism destination in Devon, whose diverse ecosystem of outstanding natural environments, distinctive, high- quality businesses, set within towns and villages, all thrive and grow through a commitment to Net Zero, accessibility and collaboration.”*

A1.22 Six objectives for achieving this vision are listed below:

- A modest increase in the volume of visitors coming to East Devon
- Increase the value of those visitors coming to East Devon
- Curate and develop four product themes of Natural Diversity, Food and Drink, Active Nature and Visual Arts and Festivals. Together these themes are aimed at developing a year-round tourism offer and growing the numbers of visitors in low season.
- Actively support tourism businesses to reduce carbon usage and improve accessibility.
- Build a sustainable, collaborative, private sector network.
- Embed the tourism strategy into the wider local policy context

A1.23 Seaton Cycle Link is identified as an area of opportunity to drive visitor expenditure and numbers.

## Current and planned actions

A1.24 A Levelling Up Fund bid has been submitted for the Axe Valley. The bid includes an enhancement scheme for the Seafront, public realm improvements to the seafront, and the development of two employment sites for mixed office and light industrial units.

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<sup>13</sup> East Devon District Council (2022). East Devon District Council Tourism Strategy. <https://eastdevon.gov.uk/papers/cabinet/070922bpcabinet%20tourism%20strategy%20for%20east%20devon%20appendix%20a.pdf>



**HARDISTY JONES  
ASSOCIATES**



## Contact

### BRISTOL OFFICE

3rd Floor, The Sion, Crown Glass  
Place, Nailsea, Bristol, BS48 1RB

0117 2355 075

[contact@hardistyjones.com](mailto:contact@hardistyjones.com)

### CARDIFF OFFICE

Fielding House, Thornbury  
Close, Cardiff, CF14 1UT

02921 508 950

