

THE
CIVIC SOCIETY
OF
GREAT YARMOUTH



REGENERATION REPORT
2021



Regeneration Of Great Yarmouth

A Report By
The Civic Society Of Great Yarmouth

Executive Summary

Great Yarmouth has a fantastic potential with great advantages in terms of heritage, current attractions and future opportunities. This brief report seeks to kick start a process to engage the local community, businesses and societies working with the Council in developing a Regeneration Plan which sets out a vision of the town's future. We offer strategic thoughts on a wide range of important elements of a Plan – including: Improving People's Health and Wellbeing, Improving the town's appearance, Becoming a leading example of a Green Town, Attracting Businesses and Entrepreneurs, Developing Tourism and Encouraging a Community Spirit.

For each of these sections a few illustrative, main action points are suggested - the appendix contains a list of potential actions that have been generated to date by the Working Group.

A. Great Yarmouth - Facing The Future

In publishing this short document, the Civic Society of Great Yarmouth* is hoping to stimulate the whole community to participate in and help to create a vision of the Future Town of Great Yarmouth. Following a period of consultation amongst its members, the Civic Society proposes that:-

By building on its historical and architectural heritage together with its seaside location and strategic role in the development of renewable offshore energy, Great Yarmouth will develop into a forward-looking, uplifting, caring, healthy, happy and prosperous town. A town with revived civic pride, with fast-improving education and good opportunities for sustainable year-round employment. A town which becomes an example for other towns to follow of community regeneration and resilience which is well able to face the challenges of climate change, the Fourth Industrial Revolution and huge changes in work, the ageing UK population and increasing disparity between the haves and have-nots.

Much work has already been carried out, mainly at Local Authority level, to bid for Government money for regeneration of the town. Many of these bids have been successful and several large building schemes are already under way and many others are in the pipeline. The Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust has also received funding and is carrying out work on many interesting old buildings to bring them back to use. Several arts groups are working hard to make their mark.

However, the Civic Society feels that it is essential that the local population should be actively involved in the plans for the future and these should include not only buildings and places but also the health and wellbeing of the community. This will radically improve the actual lives of people who currently live in the town and lead on to bringing new hope, new blood and new employment to Great Yarmouth.



** The Civic Society of Great Yarmouth was formed in 2017 to make Great Yarmouth a better place in which to live by protecting, preserving and promoting the town's cultural heritage with pride. It wishes to "Clean up, Green up and Light up" the town. Details are on our website: www.civicsocietygy.co.uk*

B. The Current Situation

Over the years, like many of the UK's "left-behind" coastal towns, Great Yarmouth has become degraded. In the old centre it suffers the common tragic issues of poverty, low life-expectancy, poor educational achievement, substance abuse, deprivation, poor housing, poor health, homelessness and lack of good employment for all those who need it. The fabric of the buildings, although once handsome, has fallen into vacancy and dis-repair. In the worst parts there is a tangible sense of fear; distrust of those in authority and severe deprivation amongst the residents. Successive periods of inward migration have left a patchwork of different communities which have found it hard to become assimilated with many being temporary workers. Over many years there has been middle-class flight from the historic centre of Yarmouth resulting in the weakening of permanent civic life and responsibility. The situation has worsened recently with the loss of so much retail and now Covid-19 is likely to have a lasting effect on the local economy.

C. Our Vision

A town with a new positive spirit which builds on its considerable heritage to become a Healthy, Happy, Prosperous and Delightful place in which to grow up, to make a good living, to find a comfortable home and which is proud to welcome visitors and encourage entrepreneurs.

D. The Way Forward

I. Involve the whole community.

The first and most important thing to learn is that the community has to be drawn in from the very start. Without the engagement and belief in a better future among local people, any attempt to bring change by imposing ideas from the top down will end in failure. The local people have to know that any Vision for the future of Great Yarmouth has had their input, that they have been properly consulted, listened to and encouraged to participate in the journey. This is hard work, it is time-consuming and it takes the energy of people with a real love of the town to get things going. Experience has shown that small interventions and projects work the best.

2. Prioritise - examples of priorities would be:

a. General

- i. Put sustainability at the heart of every initiative.
- ii. Think radically about the future and not look back
- iii. Build on what is already here. Small improvements can make a huge difference.
- iv. Happiness, beauty and fun to be a main goal
- v. Encourage residents/employers/schools and colleges and GYBC to talk to one-another
- vi. Learn what works from other successful places both in the UK and abroad
- vii. Make a big fuss about Great Yarmouth's current successes and invest in them

b. Specific

- i. Decent living conditions for all residents
- ii. A campaign of healthy living/exercise/fitness/eating habits (and keep the momentum going)
- iii. Encourage Community Spirit and Civic Pride.
- iv. Education and serious skills training for all
- v. Jobs and employment to be central to all projects

- vi. Developing Tourism
- vii. Create opportunities, publicity and a policy for welcoming inward investment
- viii. Improve the presentation of the whole town to attract better tourism and create civic pride and encourage greening/tree-planting and gardening
- ix. Encourage people to live in town centre
- x. Develop a sustainable, green traffic policy for the town and borough.
- xi. Aim to be the leading example of a Green Town
- xii. Start a marketing campaign to draw new young people to come and live in Great Yarmouth
- xiii. Consider some innovative schemes
- xiv. Publicity

3. Set ambitious but achievable targets

Setting well-publicised and monitored achievable targets is very important. Small steps of achievement will lead on to greater belief that things are improving. People need to know about successes and feel proud about them. All the targets should be agreed by the Community, Great Yarmouth Borough Council (GYBC), and all other stakeholders in the town. Examples of targets would be based on the above list of priorities.

4. Accountability

All stakeholders need to know which organisation or individual is ultimately responsible for the success or failure of each initiative. Accountability is vital if true belief in a vision for the future is to be sustained. Teamwork, trust and good humour between all parties in this vision will be key to making it a reality.

E. Specific Priorities

i. Decent Living Conditions For All Residents.

Poor housing leads to ill health, difficulty in relationships, studying and may lead to depression. The Council has introduced licensing of all rental properties and needs to enforce its powers. Homes of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) are particularly bad and few properties have gardens.

ii. A Campaign For Healthy Living/Exercise/Fitness/Eating Habits

There is a high incidence of obesity in the town (8% compared with 6% nationally. Ref 1) with its associated problems of diabetes, high blood pressure, heart attacks and strokes. In the least deprived ward (Fleggburgh), life expectancy for men is 82.2 years, and, for the most deprived ward (Nelson), it is 71.6 years (Ref. 1). Much of this is caused by poor diets and buying junk foods which, ironically, is more expensive than buying fresh food and cooking it at home. These problems need tackling urgently and the momentum needs to be maintained.

iii. Encourage Community Spirit And Civic Pride.

Any plan for the regeneration of the town requires the support, enthusiasm and participation of the community. Communities must be involved in the development of these plans and participate in their implementation.

There is a general lack of community spirit with no sense of fun, delight or happiness. Although there are some community associations, many of them have very low / no membership. There are community workers to help with various projects but many of them are on short term contracts so that by the time they have learnt the job their contract has ended.

People working together can achieve great things and everyone benefits. Community projects help not only the community but also the individuals in so many ways.



iv. Education And Serious Skills Training For All.

Education standards attained by pupils in Norfolk are lower than many other areas in the country. It is suggested that this is due to lack of aspiration of pupils and their parents and the fact that many of the best teachers decide to teach in cities and big towns rather than in the rural communities. In recent years Ofsted's reports on local schools have been good but a first rate education is essential for all children and ways of trying to improve it are essential.

v. Jobs And Employment To Be Central To All Projects.

Great Yarmouth is fortunate in having many thriving businesses operating from the industrial parks and in the South Denes area of the town. However, it is apparent that many of the residents of the central part of Yarmouth are not able to take advantage of the full-time work opportunities on their doorstep. Instead, these people mainly rely on the busy tourist holiday periods (amounting to about three months of the year) or they take up insecure day work in agricultural businesses outside the town. As many of these residents come from other parts of Europe and from poor backgrounds they often send what money they earn back to their native country and survive in Yarmouth by sharing inadequate housing and spending very little in the town. Fewer new businesses start up in Great Yarmouth than in the rest of Norfolk and after 5 years only 41.3% are still functioning.

vi. Developing Tourism.

Since the mid 19th century Great Yarmouth has depended upon its tourist industry but, since the popularity of cheap air flights and package holidays in warmer areas in the 1960s, there has been a decline in the number of visitors. However, the Covid Pandemic will encourage more people to have their holidays in this country and we must take advantage of this. We need to do this by making the the town look more attractive, promoting our great history and heritage sites, improving the night time economy and providing facilities for the whole 12 months of the year and not just the summer months.

vii. Create Opportunities, Publicity And A Policy For Welcoming Inward Investment.

Great Yarmouth is the leading centre in the country for the building and servicing of offshore wind farms and needs to encourage the allied businesses. It is hoping to be the leading place for circus in the country and with that goes the opportunity of attracting associated businesses in the entertainment industry. Entrepreneurs could be attracted by providing start-up units, reduced business rates and the provision of grants.

For a town with so much potential, it is disappointing that there is very little sign of small enterprises setting up in the historic commercial centre. There is also the pattern of the brightest children leaving Yarmouth to go to university and then not returning to work and/or set up a business. Such places as The Needlemakers in Lewes <https://needlemakers.co.uk/> have proven to be a very good way for young people to learn about setting up in retail/crafts/catering and have also become tourist attractions in their own right as well as feeding entrepreneurs out into larger high street shops. Redundant industrial or larger retail units can be cleverly sub-divided to create exciting workspaces. <https://www.busworks.co.uk/> Such enterprise centres can even develop into special neighbourhoods <https://www.marstonproperties.co.uk/commercial/property/tideway-yard>

The Historic Rows of Market Row and Broad Row should be curated and managed imaginatively to become a larger version of The Needlemakers with the possibility of creating a new, green, tree-lined - space in what is now a car park at the bottom of Broad Row.

The development of cafes, galleries and specialist shops would not only be a joy to visit but would help to inspire new residents to move into the centre of town.

viii. Improve The Presentation Of The Whole Town To Attract Better Tourism And Create Civic Pride.

A town centre is where people meet, socialise, shop, eat and drink and are entertained. But with few people living in the town there are not enough people to support the shops, cafes, public houses etc. Consequently it becomes less attractive to visitors. To reverse this trend it is essential that every effort is made to encourage people to live here by improving the amenities, its general appearances and showcasing our great heritage.

ix. Encourage People To Live In Town Centre.

During and after the war many of the inhabitants of the town moved out to Gorleston and surrounding villages and did not return. More recently there has been an influx of people from Portugal and middle Europe. Few people living in the town has a negative influence on retail and makes it look like a ghost town, particularly at night. To encourage people to live in the the town it is necessary to have decent accommodation with facilities to enjoy living there such as bars, cafes, restaurants, entertainment etc. The beneficial effect of having more trees and planting schemes cannot be over-estimated.

x. Develop A Green Traffic Policy For The Town And Borough

Queues leading into the town discourages visitors as do high parking fees. Out of town parking and reliable public transport linking the various parts of the town would be beneficial. The first impressions of the town are the roads leading to it and the roundabouts and both need great improvement.

xi. Aim To Be The Leading Example Of A Green Town.

The need to protect the planet is becoming increasingly obvious and it is important that GYBC takes every opportunity to lead the way in these matters. Let us set a target of being carbon neutral by 2040.

xii. Start A Marketing Campaign To Draw New Young People To Come And Live In Great Yarmouth

People are essential to the vitality of a town and it is important to attract young people to the town by providing good accommodation at a reasonable price, with good prospects for jobs, entertainment and an exciting and pleasant environment.

xiii. Consider Some Innovative Schemes.

People need a reason for visiting Great Yarmouth. There are many but this does not prevent providing more which could attract large numbers of people and be of use to those who live here e.g. building a large outdoor performance area on the beach, create a national energy museum, develop a robotic transport system run on electricity or hydrogen, develop a hydrogen production plant near the harbour mouth.



xiv. Publicity.

It is essential that the people living in and around the town feel that they are an extremely important factor in the regeneration of the town and that they should make constructive suggestions for its improvements. We also need to make sure that the country and people living abroad realise that Great Yarmouth has a wonderful heritage and history and is a great place in which to live, to work and to visit. We need to show that we are tackling the town's various problems, that it has enormous potential and has a really bright future if we all work together.

ACTION POINTS

i. Decent Living Condition For All Residents.

- Build new homes in town centre on brownfield sites of high quality with green credentials e.g on North Quay and The Conge
- Enforce improvements in privately rented homes and Homes of Multiple Occupancy using Council's recently introduced licensing of these properties
- Encourage the establishment of community gardens for flats run by the residents
- Encourage the greening up of the town to make up for the paucity of gardens in many homes e.g. banks of shrubbery, grasses and trees in car parks, provision of planters and hanging baskets.

ii. A Campaign For Healthy Living/Exercise/Fitness/Eating Habits

- Education in schools and the community about:
 - importance of a good diet and learning how to cook
 - regular exercise and setting up community facilities for this
 - the dangers of smoking, drugs, excessive alcohol and gambling
- GYBC to work with Clinical Commissioning Group to find ways of improving lifestyles
- Appoint a person to coordinate these activities

iii. Encourage Community Spirit And Civic Pride.

- Community workers to have longer term contracts
- Housing associations and blocks of flats to develop community gardens planned (with professional assistance) and maintained by the residents
- All schools to develop gardens which are looked after by the pupils
- Encourage development of community projects
- Encourage forming clubs for gardening, exercise, singing, drama, woodwork, cooking, knitting, scouts etc.
- Develop the old Priory into a regenerated community hub
- Encourage street watch committees
- Provide competitions to stimulate communities
- Promote civic pride
- Regular, good communication with communities
- Provide a regular community news sheet

iv. Education And Serious Skills Training For All.

- Children given the opportunity to take on projects outside school with businesses and local societies
- Encourage participation in outdoor activities, eg Duke of Edinburgh Scheme, Scouting, gardening etc.
- Find ways of trying to raise the aspirations of children's parents
- Development of the planned educational and training centre in the Market Place
- Arrange a forum for teachers and educationalists to meet to discuss how aspirations and educational levels can be improved
- Work with the James Paget University Hospital to use their world recognised on line teaching systems

v. Jobs And Employment To Be Central To All Projects.

- Improve education and enable pupils to witness and participate in businesses during their time at school
- Encourage youngsters to undergo training after they leave school
- Encourage older people to re-train for new jobs
- Provide mentors to encourage those having difficulty in seeking jobs
- Work with social workers, employers and voluntary groups to encourage unemployed to take up voluntary work and training
- Make tourism an all year round business

vi. Developing Tourism

General

- Activities for tourists need to be available all the year round
- Night time economy needs to be improved
- Illuminate heritage buildings, the Town Wall, the Rows and the bridges leading into the town along with lighting up of certain trees and shrubs
- Develop holiday short breaks (2-3days) in association with hotels, guest houses, theatres, museums, festivals, heritage walks, coach companies, British Rail, Broads Authority etc.
- Increase number and variety of Festivals e.g. literary, food and drink, ornithology etc.
- Develop a mixed holiday destination combining Norfolk Broads and seaside town
- Use the construction of the new river crossing and similar projects to promote the town's regeneration
- Make a statement of 'style', 'taste', 'quality', and 'imagination' by creating the right visual impression for visitors on entering the town's gateways.
- Erect 'The Herring of the East' on the Vauxhall Roundabout
- Put up flags and welcoming banners
- Link up with Hanseatic towns in Holland and Baltic areas and twin with a Dutch town
- Develop greater links with Norwich
- Improve/install good facilities for visiting yachts and sailors
- Reconsider the building of a yacht marina
- Develop creative/innovation area in South Denes for new Fourth Industrial Revolution companies
- Upgrade holiday offer from cheap chalets
- Encourage retired people to visit the town
- Provide maps showing points of interest. These would be in paper form and downloadable from websites



Seafront.

- Provide large arena on beach for regular outdoor concerts
- Opening of new Marina on seafront
- Regeneration of Winter Gardens. Re-use as a beacon of the future and not as a relic
- Promote Waterways, new Marina, Pleasure Beach, Hippodrome etc.
- Create a really stunning Promenade
- Green up the seafront with more flower beds and planting more trees
- Provide sports opportunities on the beach
- Provide in-line roller skating along the Promenade as in Miami
- Provide running tracks on the Promenade with distance markers, fitness equipment etc.

Heritage

- Promote our great heritage and museums
- Develop a heritage trail of statues around the town
- Develop a "Stars Walkway" remembering famous people associated with the town e.g. from Britannia Pier to Waterways
- Install a "herring trail" of herring images on the pavement to guide people around the heritage areas
- Develop the cultural scene

Culture

- Increase the number and variety of Festivals
- Promote the town as the national centre for circus
- Encourage free outdoor entertainment
- Apply to be the City of Culture 2025

Food and Retail.

- Promote a food-led renaissance and attract chefs
- Develop new food offers: fresh fish/crab, vegetables, life style goods, decent coffee etc.
- Encourage the opening of boutique hotels to widen the range of visitors

vii. Create Opportunities, Publicity And A Policy For Welcoming Inward Investment.

- Increase grants to help attract new businesses
- Reduce business rates, particularly in the early years of a business
- Increase advice and support to attract and keep new businesses
- Encourage several start up small businesses to come together in an empty shop e.g. in Victoria Arcade
- Use Market and Broad Rows as models to provide starter units for small businesses, cafes, specialist shops
- Use old buildings on river side of North Quay for small businesses
- Continue to develop and provide facilities so that Great Yarmouth becomes the national centre for circus
- Use the construction of the Third River Crossing and other developments, such as the new Marina, the Waterways etc. to promote the town's regeneration

viii. Improve The Presentation Of The Whole Town To Attract Better Tourism And Create Civic Pride.

Greening up

- Plant green corridors throughout the town to link sites of interest
- Plant more trees
- Create more green areas
- Develop river walks along North and South Quay
- Provide raised planting along South Quay on the river side as contamination of the soil will kill any trees planted on that site
- Develop nature reserve in cemetery and near Breydon Water
- Employ one or more gardeners/landscape designers to help communities in flats and council properties to work together to produce gardens which will be looked after by the community
- Develop a nursery/ies run by volunteers on unused land (e.g. the land vacated by MIND near the third river crossing) to produce plants for greening up the town.

General appearances

- Encourage people to be responsible for the the appearance of the fronts of their properties, including local communities to work together to be responsible for the appearance of their neighbourhood
- Continue to provide grants for the improvement of shop fronts and businesses in town centre
- Improve the Rows
- Draw up a set of minimal standards for all buildings in the conservation areas

Heritage.

- Opening up east side of Market Place to the Town Wall by demolishing 1960's buildings. This will provide an area for a new park and performance area and will highlight the Town Wall
- Rebuild one or more Town Wall gates. This will increase interest in the Town and produce good publicity
- Carry out an archaeological dig on the remnants of the Town Wall in the Minster's cemetery
- Provide a new sculpture linked to town's heritage in Market Place
- Continue the great work of the Preservation Trust in refurbishing many old buildings and finding new purposes for them
- Develop the heritage and information centre at the junction of King Street and Regent Road
- Use digital technology to highlight heritage sites and points of interest

Market Place

- Replace old covered market with a new building
- Encourage cafes and restaurants into the Market Place
- Totem pole in Market place carrying small blue plaques with QR symbols where people can obtain tourist information via their mobile phones
- Encourage small independent shops



- Continue grants to shops and businesses to improve their frontages
- Plant flowering trees and flower beds in Market Place
- Improve the connection between Market Place and the Minster
- Provide regular outdoor entertainment in Market Place and on St. George's Plaza

Seafront

- Remove several really hideous buildings which obstruct better ones on the seafront e.g. amusement arcade in front of Hippodrome
- Greening up the seafront with trees and flower beds
- Find ways of re-opening closed large hotels on seafront
- Develop new uses for empty Edwardian Theatres on seafront. e.g. The new Tate of Great Yarmouth
- Refurbishment of Winter Gardens

General

- Pavements. Make sure they are maintained properly and that utility companies that dig them up are responsible for returning them to their prior condition.
- Aim to be the cleanest seaside town in the country
- Light up heritage buildings, the Rows, the town wall, bridges leading into the town, trees and shrubs
- Civic Society to expand the the types of annual awards it gives

ix. Encourage People To Live In Town Centre.

- Provision of new housing built to high energy conserving standards
- Provision of more housing for young families
- Encourage young professionals to live in the town by developing North Quay which has easy access to the railway station, the town centre and has magnificent views over Breydon Water
- Convert empty first and second floors above shops and businesses into flats and apartments
- Create better houses/flats in places like Camperdown
- Earmark "squares" or small neighbourhoods for future improvement. Concentrating efforts on one or two areas would encourage other developments
- Encourage small independent shops
- Rejuvenate Market and Broad Rows
- Victoria Arcade. Some shops to house several starter shops.
- Encourage specialist shops, food outlets, gaming and IT
- Find other uses for empty shops such as homes, small businesses, cafes etc.
- Provide regular outdoor entertainment in town centre

x. Develop A Green Traffic Policy For The Town And Borough

- Tidy up the roads leading into the town: - rubbish, hoardings and verges
- Consider planting wild flowers on the roadside verges along with trees
- Make roundabouts stand out with innovative plant design and/or sculptures
- Encourage Greater Anglia to improve the Railway Station
- Consider relocating the Bus station from its present dingy situation

- Link buses/taxis/ bicycles between the railway station and Market Place
- Re-examine the whole traffic and parking policy
- Consider reducing the speed limit in the town to 20 mph
- Build new pedestrian crossing across North Quay
- Develop robotic, electric/hydrogen powered vehicles to link different parts of the town
- Consider out of town parking
- Consider transport link between Gapton Hall Shopping Centre and Town Centre

xi. Aim To Be The Leading Example Of A Green Town.

- Set a target of becoming carbon neutral by 2040
- All new buildings to have the highest standards for preventing heat loss
- Encourage heating by non carbon fuel methods
- Encourage bicycles and electric and hydrogen powered vehicles by providing charging points
- Work with East of England Energy Group to produce hydrogen near the port using spare electricity from solar and wind farms to power electrolysis to produce hydrogen from water

xii. Start A Marketing Campaign To Draw New Young People To Come And Live In Great Yarmouth

- Promote the exciting developments which are taking place at present
- Bring together businesses, hospital, entertainment venues, Broads Authority, Tourist Authority, Local Enterprise Partnership, housing associations in a unified marketing campaign
- Encourage sections of the community to speak positively with pride about what is happening in the town

xiii. Consider Some Innovative Schemes.

- Build an outdoor performance area on the beach for regular concerts, shows, competitions etc.
- Create an Energy Museum to cover how energy is produced, its uses, its consequences, global warming etc. It would raise the aspirations of our youngsters and would be a great tourist attraction
- Build a hydrogen production plant using spare electricity from the offshore wind farms and the solar farms to produce the electrolysis which converts water into hydrogen and oxygen
- Provide a robotic transport system run on electricity or hydrogen to connect the areas of the town
- Consider generating hydroelectric power from the rapid flow of water in the river.

xiv. Publicity

- Obtain the support of the community by publicising this report and asking for positive comments
- Arrange meetings where the issues can be discussed
- Invite societies to discuss different aspects of the report and respond
- Produce a regular newsletter giving details about the town development and comments from the community
- Develop a masterplan to promote the town

References I. Great Yarmouth Borough Profile

In conclusion what does Great Yarmouth have to Offer?

Great Yarmouth is presently experiencing a massive refurbishment. Extensive investments from the government and private investors who are impressed with the town's vitality to move forward. Redundant buildings around the town are either being restored to their former glory or replaced with new modern friendly style architecture.

Huge funding has been granted to a new covered market Place. A new Marina Centre is being built and the Winter Gardens has just received funding to ensure its survival. The Venetian Waterways have been rejuvenated and are both beautiful and a great success.

The town's increase in business, tourism and domestic use has warranted the need for a third river crossing, which is now under construction. It will greatly improve the traffic flow and access to many areas of the town.



Great Yarmouth is the country's main centre for the development of offshore wind farms and there is increasing funding going into industrial startup units. The Borough has applied for £1.1M grant to help fund mentoring and training which will help employment.

On the culture front there has been massive investment in recent years and there are strong partnerships between different parts of the community and we are applying to be the City of Culture in 2025 alongside East Suffolk Council.

There is an increasing buzz in the town and the hard work over recent years is beginning to pay off. It is important that the community is actively involved in all these developments and that in addition to the physical developments we pay attention to the health and wellbeing of everyone living in the Borough.

