

Appendix F



Taunton Deane Borough Council
The Deane House, Belvedere Road,
Taunton, Somerset TA1 1HE

West Somerset Council
West Somerset House, Killick Way,
Williton, Somerset TA4 4QA

Our Ref:

Date: 18 January 2019

Jessica Prendergast
Director
Onion Collective CIC
Harbour Studios East
Quay
Harbour Road
Watchet
Somerset
TA23 0AQ

Sent by email

Dear Jessica,

Coastal Communities Fund (CCF) application for the development of East Quay, Watchet

We are writing to express our Councils' support to Onion Collective's major (£5m) application to the Coastal Communities Fund for the development of East Quay, Watchet. You will, of course, be aware that a new larger district council (Somerset West and Taunton) will be created in April 2019, covering the area currently served by our two separate authorities.

The East Quay cultural and enterprise development will transform the economic landscape of West Somerset and bring prosperity and pride back to a coastal town currently experiencing severe economic deprivation following the closure of its defining industries, namely the docks in the 1970s and, most recently, the closure of Wansbrough Paper Mill in 2015.

This carefully thought out and community led development represents a guiding light for regeneration developments. Local people have been central to the concept and development of the plans and this will mean that both the purpose of the buildings and aesthetics of the design come from community voices. We believe this is an exemplar

model of regeneration, particularly for coastal towns seeking a new post-industrial identity and will be a flagship project for the government's civil society ambitions.

The Onion Collective scheme at East Quay will provide:

- 37 new direct jobs in the building
- 166 new indirect jobs due to the increased tourism spend to the West Somerset area
- 17 safeguarded jobs
- 76 construction jobs, for the duration of the build

The purpose of East Quay, as a culture, enterprise and tourism development means that it will support each one of those three vital sectors needed for economic growth in the district. West Somerset currently has the lowest social mobility, lowest wages and lowest SME productivity in the country. This type of statistic is so severe it will only be overcome by innovative thinking and collaborative working. Councils can no longer work alone to address such levels of deprivation and must act with like-minded organisations who also wish to shift economic and social circumstances of a place to one of prosperity and wellbeing. As a social enterprise committed to lifting economic and social deprivation, Onion Collective are just such an organisation and we are delighted to be working with you to raise the prospects of our district.

West Somerset Council (WSC) has worked with Onion Collective since 2014 and has collaborated on a number of previous regeneration projects, including the asset transfer of Council owned land to them for the development of a new Visitor Centre for Watchet and a new refurbished Boat Museum. The project was an excellent example of partnership working and is now run successfully as co-located space for Watchet Town Council, Friends of the Flatner Museum and a local taxi firm.

WSC also worked closely with Onion Collective and Watchet Coastal Community Team on their recent Place Based Social Action bid to DCMS, (decision pending January 2019), which, if successful, will focus on citizen participation to address social issues. WSC is proud of the strong trust and working relationship that exists with Onion Collective and this project will forge ever closer ties between the newly created council, benefiting the prosperity and well-being of the wider area.

In addition to the option agreement that is already in place to enable this project on Council owned land at East Quay, WSC has been working closely with the team at Onion Collective to provide a loan facility that gives assurance to CCF that the required match funding is in place. To this end, an enabling loan of up to £1.5m has been agreed in principle, and will be recommended for approval at WSC Full Council on 20 February 2019. The same meeting will also consider positive recommendations in respect of the long term lease that will sit alongside the already agreed option agreement. It had been originally envisaged by the option agreement that the lease approval would take place on confirmation of funding being secured but due to the more the more stringent requirement of CCF to put the lease in place within one month of funding, this has been brought forward to the same meeting so that it is agreed in advance.

Through this letter, we wholeheartedly commend the Coastal Communities Fund to support this ambitious and exemplar application for the development of East Quay. It will bring a desperately needed injection of investment into one of the most disadvantaged communities in the country. We anticipate this project to act as a catalyst for the economic recovery of the whole area and believe it to be a truly transformative regeneration project.

Yours sincerely

John Williams
Leader, Taunton Deane Borough Council

Anthony Trollope-Bellew
Leader, West Somerset Council

