

COUNTY COUNCIL

24 JANUARY 2018

QUESTIONS FROM AAPs

Question from Three Towns AAP

There have been significant changes in the Crook area over the last few months with the opening of the new Lidl store and the relocation of the post office to the newsagents in East Bridge Street. There were plans for a new Aldi supermarket on the site of the former Queen Street depot site in the town centre. Is it possible to provide an update on this development and any other development opportunities for the town?

Response

Thank you for your question. In terms of the regeneration efforts in Crook, it's pleasing to see that the recent investments you have noted including supporting a local retailer to take on the post office operation continue to follow the masterplan priorities we established in November 2012.

As well as working to support these developments we have continued to work with Aldi to help them realise their plans for a new store on the Queen Street site and I understand that there should be an announcement of timescales for the development of the new store in the next few weeks. To tie in with the proposed store we are currently concluding some of the improvement works which have been undertaken around the town with a final phase of works underway at Elliott Street.

The refurbishment of the Crook civic centre is due to be completed at the end of March. This will see around 460 staff working from the civic centre building, which should also assist in retaining and attracting further retailers to the town.

Question from East Durham AAP

It is nice to see Seaham Marina and the sea front generally becoming a popular attraction for visitors. Are there any other tourism initiatives being explored for the coastal area?

Response

I would like to thank East Durham AAP for the question. In tourism terms the Durham Coast is one of the fastest growing areas of the county, latest figures show that 3.16 million people visited the coast in 2016, which was up by 3% on 2015. These visitors spent £120.7 million, which is also up by 3% on 2015. Investments in Seaham Marina and the sea front have supported the growth of the visitor economy and Durham is becoming increasingly valued by visitors as a high quality rural and coastal destination for days out, short

breaks and holidays. The Seaham Watersports Centre, which has only been operating since July 2017, further enhances the coast's reputation as a destination for outdoor activities.

The Durham Heritage Coast team and Visit County Durham work together to develop and promote walking, cycling, watersports and nature tourism on the coast and this was given a welcome boost with the announcement of a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Seascape Scheme. The scheme will improve access to beaches, explore the shipwrecks and habitats beneath the waves, improve biological recording through citizen science, construct a coastal conservation centre, tackle marine litter and create opportunities for local people and visitors to enjoy being on and in the sea. In addition, the coast is set to benefit from The England Coast Path, a new walking route that will follow the entire coast of England. For the first time people will have the right of access around England's open coast. This includes – where appropriate – any land, other than the trail itself, which forms part of the Coastal Margin. The path is being opened in sections but will, when completed, be the longest coastal path in the world. It will be a National Trail.

94% of all visitors to the Durham Coast are day visitors; lack of visitor accommodation on the coast makes it difficult to increase dwell time and convert day visitors into overnight visitors. Discussions are taking place with a number of private sector partners to develop visitor accommodation in Seaham and the surrounding areas, and a hotel and accommodation study for Seaham is currently underway which will highlight opportunities for investment to potential developers.