

Meadfoot Beach Chalet Development Business Plan

Project Goal

To renew and expand beach chalets at Meadfoot beach whilst upgrading the general area and maximising income from the available space by increasing the rentable units available and in turn increasing customer satisfaction.

Background of Meadfoot Beach

Meadfoot beach is located at the northern end of the bay in the Torquay area nestled below Ilsham Valley. The beach itself benefits from beautiful views which include the stunning Thatchers Rock, it consists of a pebbly beach which is fully tidal.

On the lower prom level there is a Beach Manager's office and large storage and workshop area. The Beach Manager's office is used during the summer period for the provision of Beach Management and supervision of the site and its chalets. The site also benefits from amenities which consist of a generously sized beach café with both internal and external seating with a thriving takeaway service. There is also a dive shop which provides holiday makers and locals with the opportunity to explore the undersea life. To the entrance of Meadfoot there is also a large public convenience facility.

There are currently a total of 69 chalets available for all year round use along the southern end of Meadfoot, consisting of 23 concrete roof chalets and 46 timber built chalets at ground level. The 23 roof chalets are 8' x 8' with a small work surface on the rear interior wall next to the single entrance doorway, there is also the provision of electricity, the chalet also benefits from a double opening glazed door leading to a private balcony. The lower 46 timber built prom level chalets are 8' x 6' and of which some include a rear storage container and all benefit from double non glazed wooden security doors opening straight out onto the promenade.

This aging facility has undergone a condition survey which has shown the need for urgent and extensive repairs with some chalets recommended for demolition. This report shows the chalets have fallen into such a state of disrepair where it is uneconomical to repair. The faults that are being experienced on the lower prom level chalets are that the wooden structures are suffering with extensive signs of rotting and with the securing steel anchoring bars failing. The chalets are also no longer fully watertight due to the ingress of water through the roofs and the back of the chalets. Furthermore the concrete roofs chalets are showing signs of failing. This includes the electricity supply, the ingress of water through the faulty roof structure and with extensive work needed to the floors, this facility is also suffering from the double opening glazed doors not allowing access to the private balconies and/or being able to be secured.

The Aim

The aim of the project is to demolish and clear the site to allow the erection of a new two storey chalet complex to consist of 65 lower prom level chalets which would benefit from a 8'x 6' interior with a work surface and an under surface cupboard to the rear, and to include a double opening glazed doors situated behind double opening security shutters, the interior glazed doors will allow the units to be used in the winter, these chalets may also include the provision of electricity and lights. At this lower level the structure would include a provision of one double unit for Commercial use and a double unit for the provision of the Beach Manager's office and storeroom. These lower chalets will extend the full length of the southern end of Meadfoot beach.

This structure would also help support the 68 roofs chalets which will be erected offset above the lower chalets to allow the roofs chalets to benefit from an 8' private balcony which will be accessed through double opening glazed doors. Inside these doors will be 8'x 8' including the provision of electricity and lights to allow use all year round. The roof chalets will also include a small work surface with under unit cupboard, they will have a door to the rear accessing a rear walkway.

This could also see some of the chalets being developed into double units for the use of overnight accommodation. Units would consist of 16' x 8' doubled room interior with a wet room consisting of shower, toilet and sink, and a kitchenette area, along with a living compartment. This option would benefit any visitors to the area looking for a unique short stay accommodation. The overnight accommodation would also allow the expansion of the dive centre enabling them to run intensive diving courses with the benefits of convenient accommodation for their clients.

This overall scheme would also see the increase to the all year round (12 months) use of the area which would in turn benefit the amenities on site, such as the beach café, allowing them to expand their business to include winter operation and could also allow them to open later into the evenings to reach out to a new client base wishing to experience a unique location to dine.

Further aims of the project are to upgrade the three communal drinking water outlets, this would see this facility upgraded to allow cold water shower and drinking water outlets for the use of the chalet renters and general beach users. This upgrade along with renewing the railings and upgrading the beach access steps will see Meadfoot beach brought up to date and a must visit location for locals and visitors alike.

With the above in mind the overall aim of the project must be to select a product that gives the best zero/low cost maintenance to allow for the future success of the area.

Other Considerations

A geological survey has been carried out on this site as part of the feasibility of this project; the results from this survey have recommended work to be carried out to stabilise the cliff. The results have given some concern on the stability of two main areas, some of the larger unstable rocks requiring rock netting and pinning, a rock catcher fence is required at the bottom of the cliff face along its entire length. This work may be necessary even with a do nothing option as the current structure is at risk.

Impacts

Positive impacts

- The proposal would result in an improvement of the local area.
- The extensive waiting lists will be reduced and regenerated by increasing the number of units available for rent.
- Increasing the offer by including chalets of varying sizes.
- Better all year round use by including electricity to beach chalets and upgrading the interiors.
- By bringing the facility up-to-date will increase visitor numbers to the area, which in turn will allow investment for further businesses perhaps the expansion of the water based activities.
- To upgrade and repair the infrastructure at the promenade level so to enhance the overall ambience of the area.
- To secure the cliff face from possible rock falls; which in turn would protect the existing and/or new structure along with the existing businesses.
- Significant increase in revenue.
- It would increase the income to the currently underused car parks above the site.
- Increase chalet all year round charges due to improved facilities.
- Savings can be made on existing and planned maintenance for a number of years.
- Develop increased winter footfall spreading economic activity over the shoulder months and increase the potential for further economic development.

Negative Impacts

- Possible increase in traffic flow.
- Disruption to the site during the closed season (winter).
- Customer complaints due to higher prices.

Risks

- Low take up of chalets rentals due to increase in chalet fees.
- Completion date slippage due to poor weather, planning, technical problems will reduce estimated income.
- Insufficient resources – staff capability – to progress the project – admin/coordination – this large chalet development will require an increase of one day per week for the beach hut coordinator – part time at present. (Accommodated within business plan).

Supporting Information

The beach hut provision by Residents and Visitor Services is an important part of the service delivery, while the rental received contributes to a major part of the service budget. The main customers of the service are local residents and as such the beach hut and chalet provision plays a significant part in increasing public satisfaction. The viability of the seafront recreation, leisure and local businesses is enhanced from the custom generated by the beach hut users. It is therefore important that Torbay Council continue to provide top quality facilities that meet the needs of all.

Meadfoot has a substantial waiting list for Beach chalets and a current 100% occupancy; this development will enable the Council to increase the number of units thus increasing footfall and providing a further potential to improve the café and toilet provision in a second phase.

The following Groups have been consulted

Beach hut Users Group (BUGS)

Question was asked at the BUGS Committee Meeting:
Would the users be interested in renting all year round?
Members gave a positive response to all year round rental.

Existing Users

A letter was sent advising that there would be a development on the Meadfoot site with a questionnaire attached.

Responses showed that the majority of the existing users would be happy to support this project, however, concerns were raised with the possible increase in rental. It was shown that the current users would like the provision of electricity.

Annual Survey

Questions that were asked on the survey were:

Would you be interested in renting all year round?

Would you be prepared to pay more for an improved chalet with some facilities?

There was a positive response to both these questions from the returned surveys.

Community Partnership

Wellswood Community Partnership have been consulted in an open meeting where they were shown artists impression and presentation of the scheme and the feeling from this was positive towards the new development at Meadfoot.

Reason for Decision/Timescale

- The present huts and chalets are reaching the end of their useful life.
- There is a considerable amount of repair work required under planned maintenance.
- The present income level cannot be maintained as units are taken out of use as they become unsafe or un-rentable.
- There will be a significant rise in public dissatisfaction as this area would look to be neglected.
- The loss of footfall as a result of taking units out of use would have a negative effect on local business.
- Increased numbers of huts and chalets would increase footfall for business and also for car parks.
- To ensure minimum site disruption and maximum generation of income whilst keeping loss of income to a minimum it will be necessary to plan and phase the works carefully. Works would need to commence as soon as the summer season is over.

Proposed Options

There are four proposal for consideration that could be undertaken:

Proposal 1: To demolish the existing wooden framed and concrete structures to allow for the erection of a new two tiered structure consisting of 65 lower rentable chalets, one double commercial unit, one double beach office facility, and 68 roof chalets for day use. This option would see an increase in the overall rentable units thus greatly reducing the waiting list and generating a much higher income. These new modern chalets would vastly improve the customer satisfaction of the overall area. Furthermore this option would allow for an increased use of the facility during the shoulder season therefore improving the local economic climate. In recent years extra beach huts equaling to a 20% overall growth across the Bay have impacted on the

administration of the service, therefore, this option also takes into account an increase in Admin support by one additional day per week to accommodate past and future developments. (See Appendix 2a). The proposals show a net loss against current income in year 1 with a net income in following years.

Proposal 2: To demolish the existing wooden framed and concrete structures to allow for the erection of a new two tiered structure consisting of 65 lower rentable chalets, one double commercial unit, one double beach office facility, and 48 roof chalets for day use and 10 double sized overnight units. This option would see an increase in the overall rentable units thus reducing the waiting list. These new modern chalets would vastly improve the customer satisfaction. Furthermore this option would allow for an increased use of the facility on the shoulder season therefore improving the local economical climate. This option would also offer a unique holidaying experience with the ability to rent the chalets for overnight use, this may also benefit the local dive centre for use of intensive training with onsite accommodation. This development would help support any future projects to re-develop the café thus allowing it to widen its customer basis to allow for a unique dining experience. In recent years extra beach huts equaling to a 20% overall growth across the Bay have impacted on the administration of the service, therefore, this option also takes into account an increase in Admin support by one additional day per week to accommodate past and future developments. This also sees the management and change over of the overnight accommodation factored out reducing the impact on the Resort Team. (See Appendix 2b). The proposals show at least five years of losses against the current income before a profit is made.

Proposal 3: To do nothing and carry on with ad hoc repairs as and when required, minor maintenance at present is carried out by Beach staff, however, the staff numbers have recently been reduced which has resulted in future repairs not being able to be carried out in a timely fashion. Major maintenance could be undertaken by Contractors but this would see a significant increase in the maintenance cost to the site. The Council will still face the requirement to demolish within the next few years. The current structural issues and overall appearance of the asset restrict the ability to obtain a realistic market rent for the units with renters not willing to pay the amount for a substandard structure with no facilities. This option would see an increase in customer dissatisfaction and criticism raised towards the Council, this option still shows an increase in Admin support due to the increased workload of refunding and dealing with complaints and also to take into account that in recent years extra beach huts equaling to a 20% overall growth across the Bay have impacted on the administration of the service. (See Appendix 2c). The profit and loss account shows a reduction in income as the huts deteriorate.

Proposal 4: Would be to demolish the existing units as and when they become unusable and rent the available space on a ground rent basis only allowing customers to site their own units. This option would reduce the future maintenance costs, minimise the need for any capital contribution. However, this would greatly reduce customer satisfaction and furthermore it would reduce income generation capabilities as this would only be a one tier system for only the summer season and would not encourage residents or visitors to the area.