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# Urban regeneration: thirty years of change on Plymouth's waterfront

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**COASTAL URBAN REGENERATION: THIRTY YEARS OF CHANGE ON PLYMOUTH'S WATERFRONT**

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# **COASTAL URBAN REGENERATION: THIRTY YEARS OF CHANGE ON PLYMOUTH'S WATERFRONT**

## **ABSTRACT**

Waterfront revitalisation has become one of the main areas of concentration and activity in urban regeneration as former port, military and resort sites seek new and appropriate uses. Various regeneration approaches have been implemented over the years, with most involving central-government funding, but with different levels of partnership with the private sector and/or the local community. This paper explores in detail the transformation of the waterfront in the English city of Plymouth from its former functions as a naval port and dockyard, with both military and commercial port activities, to its predominantly post-industrial focus on residential, leisure, tourism, and heritage uses. It is a process that has gained momentum over the last thirty years and is now central to the city's vision of its future.

# **COASTAL URBAN REGENERATION: THIRTY YEARS OF CHANGE ON PLYMOUTH'S WATERFRONT**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, waterfront revitalisation has become one of the main areas of urban planning policy formulation (Roberts and Sykes, 2000; Jones and Evans, 2008; Shaw and Robinson, 2010; Tallon, 2010). The processes of change in port, military and resort waterfront areas during the late twentieth century have often bequeathed abandoned, derelict and obsolete sites (Hoyle *et al.*, 1988; Hoyle and Pinder, 1992; Marshall, 2001). For local authorities and communities, the challenge has been to find new and appropriate uses for redundant waterfront sites through planning interventions and collaborative partnerships between public sector and private sector investors as well as local communities (Robinson *et al.*, 2005). Various approaches to the delivery of regeneration have been implemented over the years. Most of the interventions have been central government schemes, but with different levels of partnership with the private sector (largely in the 1980s and early 1990s) and/or the local community (from the late 1990s). The extent of funding in terms of resources and time periods has also varied, which has meant that, while some waterfront sites have been regenerated during the lifetime of a single scheme, others have needed to secure funding from a succession of different schemes.

This paper seeks to draw together, and place on record, the complicated, yet fascinating and hugely important, transformation of the waterfront in the English city of Plymouth. From its former functions as a naval port and dockyard, with both military and commercial port activities, to its predominantly post-industrial focus on

residential, leisure, tourism, and heritage uses, Plymouth's urban coastal zone has been profoundly changed and remodelled. It is a process that has gained momentum over the last thirty years and is now central to the city's vision and re-imagination of its future. The account explains the origins and growth of the city; the emergence of derelict sites on the waterfront in the 1980s; and the approaches and progress with regeneration of these waterfront sites. As a case study, this review of Plymouth's experience of regeneration addresses not only issues that are specific to this particular major Devon city, but also others that have much wider and more general significance in the UK and Europe.

## **HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PLYMOUTH**

Plymouth, with a population of about 256,384 (Census, 2011), is the largest urban centre on the peninsula of south-west England. Its coastal location offers advantages of high environmental quality, being close to Dartmoor National Park and two areas of outstanding natural beauty, as well as disadvantages from its isolated and peripheral location. Sited at the confluence of the Rivers Tamar and Plym on a ria coastline with a sheltered natural, deep-water, harbour known as The Sound, the origins and development of Plymouth have been inextricably linked to its maritime location. The sea has given the city its livelihood and distinctive personality. Trade and defence, including the naval dockyard, have consequently been important functions of the three original towns that now form the city of Plymouth: Sutton [Harbour], Stonehouse and Devonport.

The city of Plymouth is the result of the merging of these three towns, which remained geographically separate, self-contained and flourishing entities in their own

right well into the late nineteenth century. By the nineteenth century, the three towns had become an industrial powerhouse, with docks at Devonport, Millbay, Sutton Harbour and the Cattewater and all connected by a network of railway lines. Indeed, Plymouth might have been bigger as a port if it had not been for the British Admiralty which feared congestion in the water spaces of the Sound and the effect of competition for local labour on the wage demands of naval dockyard workers (Gill, 1997). In 1914, the three towns merged to create the Borough of Plymouth, followed by designation as a city in 1928 (see Figure 1).

The oldest part of present-day Plymouth is around Sutton Harbour and the Barbican, which formed the original settlement on this part of the coast. It developed from medieval times because the earliest port at nearby Plympton was increasingly difficult to reach as the estuary of the River Plym became silted. The Priors of Plympton selected Sutton Harbour as a location for a new port in 1281, linked to the town with a weekly market which they previously founded by 1254 (Gill, 1966). The area retains its medieval character in both the grid layout of narrow streets and the appearance of its timber-framed buildings. It also retains its function as a fishing port, although its commercial trade has contracted over the centuries. During the seventeenth century, it was the sixth busiest port in England. In September 1620, the Pilgrim Fathers set sail for America from the Mayflower Steps. In the 1660s, a Citadel was built by Charles II on the western flanks of the harbour entrance as a protection against the French. By the eighteenth century, the Barbican included a victualling yard for the Navy and, as a result, assumed such strategic and military importance that maps of the town were held in Paris and Madrid. By the nineteenth century, an emigration depot for emigrants bound for Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa was located just outside the harbour.

Convicts bound for penal colonies in Australia also departed from Plymouth (Brayshay, 1980; 1994; Brayshay and Selwood, 1997).

In 1847, the Sutton Harbour Improvement Company was formed to stabilise trade through harbour improvements, although its importance as a port and trading centre was ultimately constrained by its size and decline began to occur. However, during the late-nineteenth century, several commercial wharfs were developed along the waterfront known as the Cattewater which lies to the east of Sutton Harbour and the Barbican. Ultimately, the size of the Cattewater facilities was limited by restrictions imposed by the Admiralty, but they soon began to take trade away from the Barbican. Despite modern health and safety restrictions imposed by the projected blast zone of the oil depot, which limit any further development, the Cattewater remains an important commercial port.

The second town at Devonport was originally called Plymouth Dock. It was established as a new town on an open site in 1690 by King William III, who wanted a new dockyard to increase the capacity of the Royal Navy both to serve national needs at the start of imperial expansion and to protect England's western approaches. It became one of the fastest growing towns of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By 1720, its population had reached 3,000 and soon became more important than the original population centre around Sutton Harbour to the east. In recognition of its growing importance, King George IV granted the town separate civic status as a borough in 1824; the event was commemorated by the construction of a Town Hall and a 125-foot (38.1m) Greek doric column (see Figure 2).

The town's fortunes have fluctuated with those of the dockyard particularly since the Second World War. First, in 1952 the Navy requisitioned Devonport town centre as a storage enclave of the South Yard and enclosed it within a 3m high wall. As a consequence the community was split into two and the displaced inhabitants were rehoused in medium-rise to high-rise flats and apartments, which were less suited for families. In 2001, about three-quarters of the population of Devonport lived in social housing and 82 per cent of the housing stock comprised apartments, which provide a poor mix of accommodation and social groups (Plymouth City Council [PCC], 2007). The deteriorating physical environment had important social repercussions, especially in terms of anti-social behaviour, poor health and low educational achievement. Over one-quarter of the population of Devonport in 2001 suffered from long-term illnesses (26 per cent compared with 20 per cent in Plymouth as a whole). Life expectancy in Devonport is 73.1 years, in comparison with 78.6 years for the rest of Plymouth. A total of 34 per cent of the population of Devonport had no educational qualifications, while an additional 42 per cent completed their education at the age of 16 (GCSE level) (Plymouth City Council, 2007).

Second, as a consequence of the 'Peace Dividend' and part-privatisation of the dockyard in the 1980s, employment has steadily declined. In 1947 there were approximately 23,000 dockyard employees but this total had fallen to 6,000 by 1989; in 1991, only 4,000 jobs remained and the current number employed is about 3,500. These figures, of course, mask a much larger decline in employment in ancillary and supporting industries. Consequently, Devonport has become an area where the problems of chronic unemployment and social deprivation are concentrated. Indeed, the

neighbouring St Peters ward was one of the most deprived inner city areas in the UK in the 1990s.

Lying between Sutton Harbour and Devonport, the third town of Plymouth is Stonehouse. From its medieval origins, it grew particularly in the eighteenth century as a fashionable residential area for military officers associated with the Royal Marine Barracks established in the area in 1783, the Royal William Victualling Yard completed in 1835, and the Royal Naval Hospital in Stonehouse completed in 1758 (Brayshay *et al.*, 1999). The opening of the Great Western Docks at Millbay in 1857 as a commercial port and passenger terminal also created a substantial community employed to serve these activities. Rather than staying on board to sail to Southampton or London, it was quicker for transatlantic ocean liner passengers to disembark at Plymouth and complete their journey by rail. By 1905, 15 of the major ocean-going liner companies were using Millbay, including P&O and White Star. Great Western Railway 'Ocean Express' trains carried passengers to and from the pier-side terminus at Millbay. A number of hotels were located in the vicinity to accommodate departing and arriving passengers and these included the Pier Hotel (1850), the Duke of Cornwall Hotel (1863), the Continental and Albion Hotel (1904) and the Grand Hotel (1879). In 1938, one in nine sea passengers arrived in the UK via Plymouth. Millbay was also a packet station for overseas mail as well as being a commercial port for a range of products, including timber, coal and foodstuffs. Employment around Millbay Docks was substantial.

However, Stonehouse and Millbay Harbour fared badly both during and after the Second World War. Severely damaged by the bombings of the blitz, the area was

further blighted by the post-war reconstruction plans for the city as whole. The 1943 Plan for Plymouth earmarked Millbay as an industrial estate, with residential properties located to the north of Union Street (Abercrombie and Paton Watson, 1943). However, Stonehouse and the docks were only partly developed in this way and ended up as a chaotic mix of housing and industrial use. The emerging heritage groups lobbied against Abercrombie's road plans in order to protect the Palace Theatre from demolition. Millbay remained an ocean passenger terminal only until the 1960s; transatlantic air travel was stealing its market. Nevertheless, its economic viability was partially restored in 1973 when Brittany Ferries set up a terminal for freight and passenger services to Roscoff in France and, a year later, to Santander in Spain.

By the end of the twentieth century, the economic circumstances and fortunes of Plymouth had changed. The 'peace dividend' and successive defence reviews had reduced the importance of the naval dockyard, commercial traffic had reduced as containerisation had concentrated trade in larger ports, and transatlantic ocean passenger travel ceased. Large areas of waterfront sites became derelict and, given favourable economic circumstances, they were ripe for regeneration. The challenge of regenerating Plymouth's waterfront was a huge task. First, the length of the waterfront is at least 18 km long, but lacks linear coherence or connectivity and there is a complex pattern of landownership. Second, as the environmental and heritage assets of the waterfront are safeguarded by relevant designations (a Special Area of Conservation designation [SAC] under the European Commission Habitats Directive and Listed buildings and Ancient Monuments), any proposed development on the waterfront is rigorously scrutinised to ensure that it is sympathetic to its protected

status. Third, because until at least the 1960s so much of the City Council's attention had been focused on reconstructing the blitzed city centre (Essex and Brayshay, 2007; Gould, 2011), waterfront regeneration was neglected. In fact, little was done until the 1980s. The UK Ministry of Defence was slow to release redundant land for redevelopment. A former chief planner of Plymouth wrote in 1991 that:

“The council continues to press the Ministry of Defence to release land to reunite the area and provide local employment, and will continue to argue the case – even though the exercise of beating one's head against brick walls is not always pleasurable” (Shepley, 1991, p.219).

Fourth, the attractiveness and desirability of waterfront locations often leads to the gentrification, especially in relation to residential accommodation, raising issues of social equity.

## **WATERFRONT REGENERATION IN PLYMOUTH**

In 1989, a major consultancy report on the future use and regeneration of the city's 18 km waterfront was published (LDR International, 1989). This report articulated a series of proposals that formed the basis of Plymouth City Council's strategy, which was known as 'Tomorrow's Waterfront' (Plymouth City Council, 1990). Plymouth City Council was to be the coordinator, promoter and controller of waterfront change, but working with landowners, harbour companies and the Ministry of Defence. The strategy identified 12 key waterfront redevelopment areas (see Figure 1), with the main aims being:

- to increase employment opportunities

- to develop recreational and cultural facilities for local residents and tourists
- to increase public accessibility to the waterfront
- to protect and enhance the environment of the waterfront.

Initiatives to realise this strategy have taken a number of approaches over the last thirty or so years. Much of the redevelopment has depended upon the availability of central government funded schemes. Change around Sutton Harbour and the Barbican has been achieved through successful bids for government funding on an opportunistic basis through the 1990s (such as the Single Regeneration Budget and EU ERDF Objective 2 funding). Others sites on the waterfront, such as previous military land and Devonport, have secured longer-term funding, such as the Urban Development Corporation (£45m, 1993-98) and the New Deal for Communities (£50m, 2001-2011).

The waterfront has become central to the city's vision of its future. Based on a visioning report by David Mackay in 2003 (Mackay *et al.*, 2004), commissioned by the city's Local Strategic Partnership (Plymouth 2020 partnership), Plymouth City Council's Core Strategy of its Local Development Framework states its aspiration to become one of Europe's finest most vibrant waterfront cities:

*“By 2020, Plymouth will be one of Europe's finest most vibrant waterfront cities where an outstanding quality of life is enjoyed by everyone” (Plymouth City Council, 2007, p.11).*

The work of David Mackay and his team is arguably the most significant visionary work for the city since the Abercrombie Plan. David Mackay and his associates from MBM

Arquitectes and AZ Urban Studio, were appointed by Plymouth's Local Strategic Partnership to create a new waterfront vision for Plymouth as a reaction to the lack of inspiration that had characterised Plymouth's development over the previous few decades. Plymouth was a pioneer of post-war reconstruction with its Abercrombie inspired Beaux Arts city centre design, but the city was desperate for a new vision that would take it into the twenty-first century. David Mackay's commission came out of an urban vision conference that was held in Plymouth (Urban Plymouth...regeneration with inspiration, May, 2002) and David Mackay was chosen because of his proven track record of inspiring regeneration in other struggling waterfront cities, and most specifically, Barcelona.

All sectors of the community in Plymouth embraced *A Vision for Plymouth* with enthusiasm (see Figure 3), which surprised many, including David Mackay himself. Its goals have been embedded in all the strategic regeneration documents produced by both Plymouth City Council and other strategic partners and, whilst many of its ideas have been stifled by recent economic circumstances, the ideas are proving to be robust enough to guide regeneration in the city over time.

### **Sutton Harbour and the Barbican**

The Barbican area, although historically important and aesthetically attractive, was scarred by the presence of parked and moving vehicles on the western side of the harbour and semi-derelict land from former port, industrial and storage uses on the eastern side and other unsympathetic development. In 1991, Plymouth City Council commissioned the Civic Trust Regeneration Unit to formulate a comprehensive

regeneration strategy for the area. Key proposals were identified: pedestrianisation, relocating the fish market in modern premises, new lock gates, and a major visitor attraction (the National Marine Aquarium) (Civic Trust, 1991). These proposals had largely been delivered by 1998 through tapping, on an opportunistic basis, into funding available from government schemes. Thus, in the early 1990s, funding from the Urban Partnership Fund (£2.1m), EU RENAVAL programme (£2.1m) and Local Authority contributions (£4.7m) created the Cattedown Regeneration Project (£8.9m). This money was used to develop 24 ha. of brownfield land on the eastern side of the harbour, which enabled the construction of the new fish market at £3m (1995), the new Government Office of the South West, and the National Marine Aquarium, together with new roads and car parking. The construction of a £3.7m lock bridge across the mouth of Sutton Harbour in 1993 served two purposes: flood prevention against high tides and storm surges that often flooded the Barbican and, for the first time, a harbour-mouth pedestrian access connection between the western and eastern sides. The bridge link assisted in the realisation of the development potential of derelict land on the eastern side by creating easier access to and from the city. The National Marine Aquarium was therefore built on the land immediately on the other side of lock gates and was opened in 1998.

Between 1992 and 1996, a smaller Barbican Package (£1.7m), funded by the Urban Partnership Fund, the EU RENAVAL programme, Local Authorities and the Sutton Harbour Company, was implemented to raise the economic profile of the area and to establish it as a first-class tourist attraction. The funding facilitated the Southside Street Pedestrian Priority Scheme, the West Pier facelift, a shopfront enhancement initiative and the introduction of public art (such as ‘The Prawn’

sculpture). The main street through the Barbican (Southside Street) was made into a one-way thoroughfare with widened pavements, but not completely pedestrianized. Vehicular traffic was, however, removed from the roads along the Quayside thereby releasing substantial space for the public realm. This project was the winner of the Department of Environment, Transport and Regions Secretary of State's Award for Partnership in Urban Regeneration.

Between 1995 and 2001, the Barbican Regeneration Package (£7m), funded by the Single Regeneration Budget and EU ERDF Objective 2 with contributions from local authorities, the Sutton Harbour Company, English Heritage, National Lottery, English Partnerships and the private sector, was implemented. The package funded the promotion and marketing of the Barbican as a historic artistic quarter, environmental improvements (e.g., paving, car parking and facelifts), and specific projects (e.g., heritage trails, heritage rooms and Barbican Theatre improvements). The opening in 2002 of the Mayflower Visitor Centre, located close to the Mayflower Steps memorial, was another of the outcomes of this package. The Mayflower Visitor Centre provides an account to the history of Sutton Harbour with particular emphasis on the Mayflower story. It now forms part of the Barbican Tourist Information Centre.

Another important initiative in the Barbican has been the construction of a commercial landing stage for local ferry services and tourist trips, which enabled easy access to boats directly from Commercial Wharf in the Barbican, rather than from the less-accessible Elphinstone Wharf. The landing stage was finally opened in 2008, but only after many years of problems with funding and construction difficulties. It is

now proving invaluable to connect tourists and local people to key waterfront locations, such as Mount Batten, the Royal William Yard and the village of Cawsand, as well as being the embarkation point for the popular waterfront and Tamar tours.

Sutton Harbour has, by these means, been reinvented and renewed as a destination for visitors to Plymouth, with attractions, boat trips, marina facilities, cafés and restaurants, tourist-related shops and car parks (see Figure 4). It has also become the venue for various events, such as the annual jazz music festival and the occasional Trans-atlantic yacht race, such as the Transact in 2008. It also remains a working environment, with the fishing industry continuing on the eastern side in the modern fish market. New residential properties, such as Eau 1 and Eau 2, have been built on the north eastern quays reflecting the City Council's proposals (inspired by David Mackay's vision) to create more mixed uses around this part of Sutton Harbour (Plymouth City Council, 2008). In November, 2014, Sutton Harbour Holdings PLC announced an ambitious masterplan to transform Sutton Harbour into a national visitor destination. The first stage of this plan was a new boardwalk, consisting of three two-storey restaurant and retail units, which will connect the southern area of the Harbour to the north without having to leave the water's edge. This project secured planning permission in early 2015.

### **Military sites through the Plymouth Urban Development Corporation**

Opportunities have arisen for the redevelopment of former military land on the waterfront including the Navy's Royal William Yard, Mount Wise and the Royal Air Force (RAF) station at Mount Batten. These three sites were made suitable for new

investment by the Plymouth Urban Development Corporation (PUDC), which operated on the waterfront between 1993 and 1998. Urban Development Corporations were short-life bodies set up by central government (under the John Major Conservative administration) with the objective of regenerating areas through the assembly of land, provision of infrastructure, financial assistance, and simplified planning. Local authorities were relieved of responsibilities for the areas concerned during the lifetime of an Urban Development Corporation. The PUDC had a total budget of £45m to spend on improving the three Plymouth sites to a point where the private sector would be willing to invest.

The Royal William Yard was a former Naval Victualling Yard, built to the 1820s designs of Sir John Rennie (see Figure 5). This site presented the PUDC with two main challenges. First, the complex of structures is architecturally very significant and includes ten Listed Buildings (seven Grade I, two Grade II\* and one Grade II). It was necessary to achieve a careful balance between the demands and needs of any new uses and the protection of the architectural and historic integrity of the assemblage. Second, the site was built for access from the sea; road access was therefore exceptionally poor and this deficiency was likely to affect the viability of any future uses. The PUDC spent £22m on undertaking essential repairs to the buildings of the victualling yard, installing modern services, refurbishing derelict and run-down structures and improving access and car parking in Stonehouse. The site was set to be transformed by a major property company into a factory outlet shopping centre, together with public houses, restaurants and cafés, an hotel, housing, a visitor centre, craft workshops and offices. However, by the end of the lifetime of the PUDC, these investments had not materialised. In 1999, the site was taken on by the South

West Regional Development Agency, who reached an 'exclusivity agreement' in November 2003 with Urban Splash, a company specialising in the innovative redevelopment of historic buildings. This company proceeded to redevelop the buildings in a historically sensitive and innovative way, including residential apartments, restaurants, office space and art galleries. The requirement for a flood defence wall to protect against a 200-year event produced an innovative solution of a glass wall so as to not detract from the external appearance of the buildings. Nevertheless, the severity of the storms of February 2014 have required that further flood defence works are to be planned. Indeed, increased residential development in all Plymouth's waterfront locations has further heightened the need for protection against natural disasters. It is germane to recall the Atlantic tsunami of 1755, triggered by an earthquake in Lisbon, Portugal, which created a wave amplitude of three metres at Plymouth (Blanc, 2011).

The benefits of this long process of infrastructure improvements are now being realised with restaurants, bars and arts facilities opening up in the Royal William Yard. Ironically, these new, very popular and lively leisure facilities are coming up against objections from the new residents of the Yard who have enjoyed a relatively peaceful time whilst the commercial activities have taken longer to come forward.

At Mount Wise, the former naval site received £5m of investment from the PUDC to stimulate a further £6.9m from other sources. Derelict buildings have been removed, new access roads constructed and buildings have been repaired and refurbished. The site now contains 52 housing association properties, an education

centre, a new nursery and family day-centre, together with play areas and open spaces. Lottery funding has been sought to restore the Napoleonic Fort on the site and to refurbish the outdoor swimming pool on the waterfront.

At Mount Batten, formerly a Royal Air Force station that dated back to 1913, the PUDC invested £11m to create a mixed-use site of residential, light industry, leisure and public open space. The station had remained open as a training establishment for the RAF until 1992 when it was handed over to the PUDC for redevelopment. In 1991, the site was designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument by English Heritage in recognition of its archaeological significance over a very much longer span of time.

The redevelopment of Mount Batten posed special problems because of the site's historical and archaeological significance, as well as its prominence in the land- and sea-scape of the waterfront. In addition, the capacity of road access to the site was (and remains) limited, despite some minor highway improvements and traffic management. Potential demand for the site included residential, leisure, tourism, light industry, offices and community facilities, but there was strong local feeling that easy access by footpaths to the open spaces and the waterfront were needed. The views and outlook of the hospice, located on land adjacent land to the site, also had to be protected. The PUDC attempted to seek the opinions of residents on the strengths and weaknesses of various strategies in a Public Consultation document (April, 1994). Three realistic solutions, each with a different development emphasis, were presented for public comment (Options 1-3). Options 1A and 1B proposed a mix of activities including residential, light industry and leisure, but at a level that preserved the

appearance of the headland. Option 2 proposed residential development across the site, including a new village on the headland. Under this option, the extent of open space and public access would be much reduced. Option 3 focused on maximising the employment opportunities. In July 1994, following detailed consultation with local people, an initial area development framework was approved by the PUDC's board and agreed (PUDC, 1994 a & b). A local monitoring committee, consisting of interested local groups and residents, had been established to comment on the proposals and development as it occurred.

The PUDC completed their five-year operation to redevelop Plymouth's waterfront at the end of March, 1998. The redevelopment at Mount Batten consisted of residential development (57 Westbury homes completed [see Figure 6] 17 town houses in a crescent built by Dream Lifestyle, and four 'underground' properties, which were eventually built above ground); a marina (by Yacht Havens) and marine-related light industries (local firms accommodated in hangars); and a water sports centre for the Mount Batten Sailing Association, a restaurant and an art gallery. A water-taxi pontoon was built to operate a regular link to the city centre. The rest of the site was opened to public access with new coastal footpaths and access provided along the Batten breakwater and to the amphitheatre. The total investment at the Mount Batten site by the PUDC was £11.4m.

The Mount Batten redevelopment was, however, controversial. The Westbury housing development conflicted with the wishes of many local people, mainly because it covered the 'Wellfield' area which had been used by the local community for village fêtes and other festivities before 1913. As a concession, the housing estate

incorporated a large open space in front of the hospice. Similarly, local objections to a light industrial use proposed for a vacant site on the headland caused the developer to withdraw their application. Nevertheless, the mix of uses at Mount Batten may be seen as a notably successful attempt to create an environment for residential, employment and leisure opportunities. However, it is a case that highlights the problems that can be experienced with urban regeneration schemes in any location, namely balancing the economic objectives with the protection of the historic and aesthetic significance of potential redevelopment sites and respecting the views of the local population.

### **Millbay**

The redevelopment of the derelict port facilities at Millbay has fallen outside any major government funding scheme. The site was highlighted in the Mackay Vision for Plymouth as having potential for a Barcelona-Olympic-Village-style waterfront development, although not well integrated with the city centre. The proposal for a new boulevard cutting diagonally across from the city centre is a central feature of the planning permissions for Millbay, but unfortunately this element of the regeneration proposals is still to be realised. Inevitably, during a time of economic recession, the higher value elements of the vision (such as housing) are more deliverable than the wider public benefits, in particular the boulevard. The Council is faced with a difficult challenge of not discouraging economic growth in this area, whilst still trying to deliver the Mackay Vision aspirations for Millbay in a coherent rather than incremental basis. Nevertheless, an improving economic outlook in 2015 is beginning to see the realisation of 'Plymouth's Coastal Quarter'. New residential development

has been completed on the site (Cargo 1 and 2), together with a new Free School and RNLI building (see Figure 7). In September, 2013, the King Point Marina at Millbay was opened, representing a £4.5m of investment for 171 berths on an eight hectare site. Planning applications for new marinas, retail and hotel developments are also coming forward.

A dominating feature of Millbay until 2008 was the old grain silo next to the Brittany Ferry terminal. This large, grey concrete structure dominated the skyline and prevented further development on this side of Millbay. There were various “urban myths” associated with the grain silo that appeared to prevent it from being demolished. These included: it was a listed building and English Heritage would not allow its demolition; it acted as a wind break that helped the ferry to dock safely; the cost of demolition was so prohibitively complex and expensive that it would never be attempted; and it was so infested with rats that it would create an environmental health hazard to attempt demolition. None of these claims were true, but many ideas subsequently came forward for the reuse of the grain silo - such as a diving centre and hotel! However, eventually the decision was made by the landowners (Associated British Ports) simply to demolish the grain silo and this action was carried out with minimum fuss and the space thereby yielded for port purposes.

### **Millfields (former Royal Naval Hospital)**

The former Royal Naval Hospital lies in the area of Stonehouse. The hospital, built in 1758, treated seamen wounded in overseas wars and remained open until 1995. The hospital site was designed in a pavilion style to enable injured seaman to be separated

out into different wards and thus minimise the spread of infection. It was also enclosed by a high wall to prevent press-ganged seamen from escaping into the wider city. These design constraints have influenced the regeneration of the Millfields since it ceased to be needed for military purposes. The site is now used both for business units together with high-value and much-sought after apartments. Ironically, the presence of a listed wall around the site has created a very secure gated community in the socially deprived area of Stonehouse.

### **North Stonehouse**

The area of Stonehouse, north of Union Street, reflects the significant damage caused by the World War Two bombing. There are both areas of enormous historic importance, such as the Catholic Cathedral, and retained Georgian streets, interspersed with post-war social housing projects developed from bombed areas based on the Abercrombie Plan. As the most socially deprived area of Plymouth in the 1990s, Stonehouse received significant Government funding to regenerate this area of the city. The projects were driven by the Stonehouse Area Plan (1997). Perhaps the most successful part of the regeneration plan was the Council housing refurbishment programme, the Housing for People project, which successfully brought the flats up to modern accommodation standards.

### **Devonport**

Devonport has been one of the recipients of the last Labour Government's 'New Deal for Communities' programme (2001-2011), which provided ten years of funding to improve some of the most deprived areas in the UK (Dargan, 2007; Foden *et al.*,

2010). The framework for the programme specified ‘place-related’ outcomes, such as addressing crime, community and housing; and ‘people-related’ outcomes, such as education, health and worklessness. The share for Devonport was £48.73m, which was spent on a broad set of agendas including health, education, employment, community safety, liveability and community development. The key feature of this scheme was that, within the framework for the programme established by the government, the priorities should be locally determined by the communities affected (rather than by statutory agencies). The Devonport Regeneration Community Partnership was set up in July 2001 to establish a consensus for action, which was encapsulated in a community plan entitled ‘Devonport People’s Dreams’.

The ‘people outcomes’ consisted of a large number of small projects, which cumulatively contributed to an improvement in the community’s quality of life. A number of schemes are noteworthy in this respect. The construction of the Brickfield Sport Centre, consisting of a sports hall, fitness suite, dance studio and community rooms, has created a hub for the community as well as an opportunity to improve the health and fitness of the population. It also became home to the Plymouth Albion Rugby Club. Other community facilities included the refurbishment of the Devonport Playhouse (for theatre groups), the Plymouth Music Zone (to create hobbies for those interested in contemporary music, including the young, disabled and individuals recovering from drug or alcohol misuse), and the Green Ark Children’s Centre. Funding was also provided for school breakfast clubs, to ensure that children have an adequate breakfast before the start of the school day, and campaigns to promote the ‘five-a-day’ (i.e., five portions of fruit and or vegetables) healthy-eating initiative.

The ‘place outcomes’ concentrated on the redevelopment of the South Yard Storage Enclave, which had been the town centre of Devonport before the Second World War. The site was cleared of military buildings to create space for Redrow to build 450 homes (including 84 affordable properties) together with health-care facilities, shops and a new supermarket, and offices under the banner of Vision@Devonport from 2005 (see Figure 8). Redrow has also contributed £800,000 for new buses, bus shelters and community facilities to serve the area. Most of the properties are houses rather than apartments and aim to rectify the imbalance in Devonport’s housing stock. The layout of the new development has incorporated views to historical landmarks and even retained the surviving old market hall and the façade of an old bank as the frontage to a residential property. The old market hall has been purchased by Plymouth City Council as the basis of a community-based regeneration project. Demolition of the enclosing dockyard wall began in January 2007 and is now in the final stages of implementation.

The regeneration of Devonport has included the redevelopment of an inter-war council estate that consisted of flats (apartments) sited on a thin wedge of land between the north and south yards, known as Gun Wharf. The old flats were demolished and replaced according to a new design for the site which was established through a ‘Planning for Real’ resident consultation exercise conducted in 2006. The design consisted of a central ‘corridor’ punctuated by a central circus, which adopted the ‘Home Zone’ concept whereby pedestrians have priority and car parking is limited to one vehicle per household. The construction included locally sourced products, including timber, rather than UPVC, for the window frames. The development was mixed occupation, consisting of 35 private, 18 shared ownership and 46 housing

association properties. A total of 15 of the original residents returned to live in the new development. The quality of the design and construction has been recognised by a number of national awards and has done much to raise confidence in the area (see Figure 9).

The Gun Wharf regeneration programme has also stimulated other physical changes in Devonport, such as the redevelopment of blocks of apartments from the 1960s on Ker Street with 75 dwellings of mixed house type (including 30 affordable properties) and integrated office space. The old Guildhall has also been restored through a £1.75m package of works to establish a Creative Hub to bring enterprise, economic growth and visitors to Devonport. In September 2010, the construction of a £120m development of 469 ‘Georgian-inspired’ homes on the 11 hectare site at Mount Wise commenced. The development is being promoted as the ‘Village by the Sea’ and clearly represents gentrification rather than being for local residents. The old cricket pitch is being retained as a central feature of the development which also includes a 21-bed hotel and gastro-pub, a convenience store and office space.

A quantitative ‘value-for-money’ indication of the success of the New Deal for Communities approach in Devonport is that the £48.73m of government funding has generated an additional £350m of inward investment. Another evaluation of the scheme has taken an overtly qualitative approach rather than using quantitative measures of land area development, units built or overall cost and value for money. The public opinion poll survey company, MORI, undertook a survey of around 500 people in each New Deal area at two-year intervals over the life of the programme (2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008). As far as possible, they canvassed the opinions of the

same 500 people. The results (see Table 1) indicate that 57 per cent of residents interviewed in Devonport felt that the New Deal programme had improved the area by 2008. Most other indicators had improved significantly, except for physical activity of 20 minutes or more (-2 percentage points, 2002-2008) and satisfaction with accommodation (-1 percentage points, 2002-2008), which might be explained by minor survey fluctuations or rising expectations of the community.

### **The Hoe**

The Hoe has limited opportunities for built regeneration because its value as a setting for views across Plymouth Sound and as a leisure and event space. It is also the site for the iconic Smeaton's Tower and numerous memorials to significant events in Plymouth's history – most notably, the Cenotaph and the Drake Memorial. However, there have been some significant Hoe regeneration initiatives over the past few years that have helped to improve Plymouth's tourist potential. In the early 2000s, the City Council restored the Art Deco lido, Tinside Pool and Plymouth can now boast one of the few operational lidos in the United Kingdom. Restaurants and cafés have also started to appear along the Hoe foreshore, including the recent addition of the Rhodes @ The Dome restaurant created by celebrity Chef Gary Rhodes that has used the site of a former museum that was closed down by the City Council as a result of public sector cuts.

### **Drake's Island**

The potential redevelopment of Drake's Island represents an important, but controversial aspect of the revitalisation of the waterfront. Its prominent visibility in the Sound – seemingly close but intriguingly inaccessible – raise questions about why the city has failed repeatedly to find a successful and sustainable uses for the island. As a defensive fortification since at least the sixteenth century through to after the Second World War, after being employed for various purposes for relatively short periods thereafter, it has remained largely neglected and inaccessible since 1989. It was purchased from the Crown Estate by a local businessman in 1995, who has made a number of unsuccessful planning applications to convert the buildings into a luxury hotel (1999, 2012 and 2015). These applications highlight the complex series of environmental and historic conservation challenges that face such schemes in sensitive waterfront locations.

The main grounds for refusal of the latest planning application for Drake's Island were two-fold (Plymouth City Council, 2015). First, the development was likely to disturb a small breeding colony of little egrets, which are protected by the Tamar Estuaries Complex Special Protection Area (SPA) and the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Case law determines that there is a need for certainty that there will be no adverse effect on these protections before consent can be granted. The potential for off-site mitigation, by making alternative roost sites suitable, requires capital works and ongoing maintenance which the developer was not willing to consider. There were also environmental concerns about the effect of increased recreational boat traffic on sea-grass beds and that any mitigation measures, such as a voluntary no-anchor zone, would not be enforceable or effective.

Second, there were concerns about the potential for flooding and wave action on some parts of the proposed redevelopment, especially in spaces lying at or below water level and subject to wave action during storms. It was felt that these spaces should be left undeveloped, although as a compromise it was agreed that they could be used as lounges and bathrooms rather than bedroom accommodation. However, the developer was not willing to make this amendment as it would affect the viability of the whole project. Compromises have been reached on other issues, such as the effect of redevelopment on the historic integrity of the buildings. In order to allow more natural light and wider sea views for proposed hotel rooms in the casemates building, which is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument, the developer wished to remove a number of historic blast shields. English Heritage suggested a hybrid solution in which key blast screens were retained, but larger openings could be cut subject to agreement about detail and a structural survey. The long process (still ongoing) of finding a way to regenerate Drake's Island illustrates the level of detailed planning required to achieve appropriate development, while also protecting the natural environment and cultural heritage, and meeting all other needs and demands on all parts of the city's waterfront.

### **Waterfront Business Improvement District and City Deal**

Since 2008, the challenge - given the economic recession and steep cuts in government funding - has been in maintaining the momentum of regeneration. In 2012, a Business Improvement District (BID) for the Plymouth waterfront was established through the support and financial contributions from existing businesses in

the designated area for a maximum of five years. Businesses voted in favour of the BID and the Business Plan devised in consultation with them. Each business pays a levy based on their rateable value to create a pool of money to fund agreed initiatives that will have a positive impact on their trading environment, such as improved marketing, better visitor welcome and signage (including water bus/ferry connections along the waterfront), new major events, cleaner and safer waterfront and environmental improvements. Together with matched funding from various service departments of Plymouth City Council, a total of £6.2 m of investment is expected to be achieved by 2017. This investment will not only further enhance the profile of Plymouth's waterfront as a visitor destination and an inward investment opportunity, but also secure the momentum of regeneration through a period of recession and austerity.

The revitalisation of Plymouth's waterfront was given further stimulus in 2014 with the award of the Plymouth and South West Peninsula City Deal, which devolves powers and funding from central government to deliver economic growth across the region. The scheme has the potential to place the city at the heart of the region's economy through plans to transform the South Yard in Devonport into a marine industries production campus. The City Deal also includes a business support programme (GAIN) for small and medium sized enterprises and a 'Deal for Young People' to tackle youth unemployment. Expected benefits include 9,500 permanent jobs; 32,400m<sup>2</sup> of new marine workspace; £800m gross added value; and a platform to build international investment and export programme for a trade expo to coincide with the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1620 sailing of the Mayflower in 2020 (Plymouth City Council, 2014). Land ownership of South Yard has transferred from the Ministry

of Defence to Plymouth City Council and planning consent was granted at the end of March 2015.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The transformation of Plymouth's waterfront since the late-1980s has represented a significant challenge. The city came to the task relatively late, because of the fixation with the post-war reconstruction of the city centre, which created some disadvantages as well as advantages. The degree of dilapidation on the waterfront was undoubtedly worse in Plymouth than it would have been had they got on with regeneration work much earlier, but the experience of the successes and failures of other places could be drawn upon. A number of different approaches and delivery models have been attempted to regenerate Plymouth's waterfront and these reflect the twists and turns in central government policies and approaches over time. However, there has been a constant emphasis on collaboration and partnership: at first within the public sector and with the private sector, but increasingly with local community engagement and involvement. Regeneration of old waterfronts is an expensive, complex and often highly controversial undertaking. In Plymouth since the early 1990s, at least £110m of government funding has been spent on the regeneration of the waterfront, which has generated at least an additional £500m of inward investment from the private sector and other sources. The results of these interventions have taken time to show their effects, with the real benefits only really becoming evident well beyond the life of the initiatives: often over twenty years or more. The regeneration of Plymouth's waterfront demonstrates that projects cannot simply focus on economic opportunities, but must incorporate housing and cultural dimensions for the local community. There

is often a need to reconnect waterfront locations back into the urban fabric of the city by building new or improving existing access routes, as well as ensuring connectivity along the waterfront, through walkways and/or water transport. As well as commercial success, the boost to the morale and sense of well-being generated by improving derelict waterfront areas is not easily evaluated in monetary terms but is certainly significant. This paper has sought to chart and explain the highly complex, multi-faceted and challenging series of individual projects and initiatives undertaken to improve Plymouth's waterfront during the last thirty years. It has shown both the striking scale of what has been achieved and the considerable challenges that have been faced. Plymouth's story is clearly internationally important as a case study of the regeneration of an old port city: so much has already been done, yet more of course remains to be accomplished. Through sustained efforts, the city's ambitious aspiration to become one of Europe's finest waterfront cities by 2020 remains an achievable target.

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Figure 3. David Mackay's *Vision for Plymouth* (2004) was intended to provide inspiration for the regeneration of the city centre and waterfront. His proposals included the retention of the Abercrombie grid, but with an intensification of land use, together with its reconnection with the surrounding neighbourhoods, especially Millbay (through a new boulevard) and Sutton Harbour (including new residential areas at the east end). The changes proposed by MacKay are indicated in red.  
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Figure 8. Redevelopment of the South Yard Storage Enclave in March 2012. Before the Second World War, this area was the site of the town centre of Devonport. It was requisitioned by the Navy in 1952. The enclosing dockyard wall is just visible in the bottom right hand corner of the photograph. New mixed use development by Redrow is taking shape on the former storage enclave. The old market building (adjacent to the clock tower) is being retained within the layout of the new development and has now been purchased by Plymouth City Council as the basis of a community-led regeneration scheme.

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<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Percentage 2002</b>	<b>Percentage 2008</b>
Satisfied to live in Devonport	66	77
Abandoned/burnt out cars on streets	20	5
Vandalism	77	48
Youths on street	75	64
Drug dealing	68	47
Fear of crime	50	28
Mugged	50	24
Attacked	24	12
Never eat five a day	33	18
Physical activity of 20 minutes or more	90	88
Satisfaction with accommodation	82	81

SOURCE: MORI Survey 2008 as quoted in Devonport Regeneration Community Partnership Board (15 January, 2009).



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