Launceston Townscape Heritage Initiative
Final Report – December 2010
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1 INTRODUCTION .............................................................. 1
2 BACKGROUND .............................................................. 2
2.1 Townscape Heritage Initiatives – Introduction .................. 2
2.2 History of the bid ...................................................... 2
2.3 The context of the THI submission ............................... 3
2.3.1 Cornwall Context .................................................. 3
2.3.2 Local Social and Economic Profile ........................... 3
2.4 THI Objectives ......................................................... 4
3 METHODOLOGY .......................................................... 5
3.1 The Target Area ........................................................... 5
3.2 Historic Context .......................................................... 5
3.2.1 Launceston’s Historical Development ....................... 5
3.2.2 Launceston’s Historic Settlement Character ............... 5
3.3 Problems faced by Launceston’s Historic Environment .... 6
3.4 Condition survey ........................................................ 7
3.4.1 Criteria for priority buildings .................................... 7
3.5 Management of the scheme ......................................... 8
3.5.1 The Team – THI Officers and supporting roles .......... 8
3.6 Reporting ................................................................. 8
3.7 Communications ....................................................... 8
3.8 Systems & Project Documentation .................................. 9
3.8.1 Photographic Record ............................................... 9
3.9 Publicity ................................................................. 9
3.10 Funding ................................................................. 9
3.10.1 Completion dates .................................................. 10
3.11 Grants .................................................................... 10
3.11.1 Grant Rates ......................................................... 10
4 RESULTS ..................................................................... 11
4.1 Take up of grants ...................................................... 11
4.2 Summary of Outputs .................................................. 11
4.3 Projects ................................................................... 11
4.3.1 Town square enhancement and pedestrianisation ...... 11
4.3.2 Former Liberal Club (now Liberty House) ............... 13
4.3.3 Town Hall ............................................................ 14
4.3.4 3 Broad Street ....................................................... 15
4.3.5 Coach house to rear of 5-7 Southgate Street .......... 17
4.3.6 5 Westgate Street ................................................ 17
4.3.7 10 Newport Square ............................................. 18
4.3.8 35 St Thomas Road ............................................. 19
4.4 Training ................................................................. 20
4.4.1 Contractor and team training with Cornish Lime Company 20
4.4.2 Seminar for building owners and contractors .......... 20
4.4.3 Access seminar .................................................... 20
4.4.4 Heritage training events at the Castle .................... 21
4.5 How success was measured ....................................... 21
4.6 Additional benefits .................................................. 22
4.6.1 Parade ground enhancement ............................... 22
4.6.2 Church Street pavement ....................................... 22
4.6.3 Undergrounding of cables .................................... 22
4.6.4 Church Street, photo studio .................................. 23
4.6.5 Town trail leaflets ............................................... 24
4.6.6 Other advice and projects .................................... 24
5 DISCUSSION ............................................................. 24
5.1 Target buildings/ area ............................................... 24
5.2 Condition surveys and estimated costs ....................... 24
5.3 Agents and contractors ............................................. 25
5.3.1 Public realm ....................................................... 25
5.3.2 Buildings .......................................................... 25
5.4 Public realm results and management .................... 26
5.5 Recording and assessing outputs ................................. 27
5.6 THI and wider regeneration issues ............................ 31
5.7 Securing the legacy .................................................. 31
5.7.1 Strategic planning ................................................ 31
5.7.2 Development Control ........................................... 32
5.7.3 Enforcement, urgent works and repairs notices ...... 32
5.7.4 Parking and traffic management ......................... 32
6 CONCLUSIONS ........................................................ 33

Launceston Townscape Heritage Initiative - Final Report.
1 INTRODUCTION

This report provides the final, detailed review of the Launceston Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI). It has been compiled by Graham Lawrence, Sarah Cawrse and Gemma Kidd, for Cornwall Council following the conclusion of the Launceston THI in October 2009.

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the performance and effectiveness of the Launceston THI. As well as providing a record of the scheme’s achievements, issues and administration processes, it is intended to give feedback to the funding bodies about the operation of the scheme. It is hoped that the report will also be of benefit to those considering implementing similar schemes in their area.

This report covers the following areas:

**Background** – why and how the THI happened

**Methodology** – how the scheme was administered

**Results** – what the THI set out to achieve and whether these objectives were met

**Discussion** – key findings, issues, what worked, and what could be done differently

**Conclusion** – the future and what could be done to take the legacy of Launceston THI forward.
2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Townscape Heritage Initiatives – Introduction

The ‘Townscape Heritage Initiative’ (THI), launched in 1998, is the Heritage Lottery Fund’s (HLF) grant giving programme for the repair and regeneration of the historic environment in towns and cities throughout the UK. Highest priority is given to applications from areas of social and economic deprivation, and focus on a real conservation-led approach to regeneration. The HLF has invested nearly £200m through the THI programme since it started in 1998.

THI grants support schemes are led by a partnership of the local authority and other, regional and national organisations that aim to regenerate a conservation area. These partners contribute money to a ‘common fund’, with HLF providing up to 75% of the total amount. The common fund is managed by the partnership, and is used to allocate third-party grants towards works on individual building projects within the scheme and support a range of activities that encourage participation in the heritage and improve understanding and enjoyment of it.

THI’s are targeted at Conservation Areas; are not restricted to listed buildings; are limited to a set period; and are managed day-to-day by the Local Authority. The schemes are focused on areas and works that will have the greatest effect on the preservation, enhancement and regeneration of conservation areas that require economic as well as physical regeneration, in particular where property repairs and enhancements would help sustain local employment, provide new homes and encourage inward investment.

2.2 History of the bid

During 2001-4 Launceston and its hinterland of 21 parishes successfully developed a Community Strategic Plan - Launceston 2020 - through the South West of England Regional Development Agency’s award winning Market and Coastal Towns Initiative (MCTI). The Plan has been endorsed by all key partners as a basis for regeneration activity and is being actively supported and progressed. This plan identified the need to improve Launceston’s historic environment as a unique asset.

The Stage 1 bid was made to the Heritage Lottery Fund in April 2004, confirmation of its success was received in October 2004.

This was followed by a successful Heritage Lottery fund Stage 2 bid in October 2005, with funding also secured from North Cornwall District Council (NCDC), European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), South West of England Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) and Launceston Town Council.

The Launceston Townscape Heritage Initiative commenced in November 2006, with a common fund totalling £1,209,639 secured from the five funding partners. Other partnership funding outside the Common Fund was provided by:

- Private owners who will contribute to the costs of upgrading property in their care.
- Cornwall County Council via highway funds.
2.3 The context of the THI submission

2.3.1 Cornwall Context

Cornwall has very low average earnings and is amongst the most deprived areas within the UK. In recognition of its serious economic and structural problems, the county has been awarded European Objective One status with around £300 million available to be allocated from European Union structural funds during 2000-2006. This is the highest level of European regional aid, reserved for regions with less than 75% of the EU average GDP. It is the only UK region that will re-qualify for the highest level of funding in 2007-13 (convergence funds), alongside most of the new member East European states.

The Cornwall and Scilly Objective One Single Programming Document (SPD) identified the need for public realm schemes such as Civic Pride or Townscape Heritage Initiatives to boost business confidence and community confidence in key towns.

2.3.2 Local Social and Economic Profile

The population of Launceston in 2001 was estimated at 7,135. In common with much of Cornwall, it is skewed towards more elderly age groups, in Launceston’s case to an even more marked degree than the rest of North Cornwall. The population is expected to grow with the introduction of new housing and employment land – Launceston is identified as a Main Town in the Cornwall Structure Plan 2004.

The DETR Indices of Deprivation 2000 showed that Launceston South and Launceston North were both amongst the worst 30% of wards in England. Launceston South ward was amongst the 20 most deprived wards in Cornwall in terms of income and health deprivation. Overall, Launceston South ranked 2144 out of a total 8414 English wards, and Launceston North ranked 2157. In terms of income deprivation Launceston South ranked 1,335, and in terms of health deprivation, 1251.

The more recent English Indices of Deprivation 2004 appeared to show some improvement from 2000, however, the lack of affordable housing and poor accessibility to services are particular issues for Launceston (amongst the worst 20% of deprived wards in England).

Deprivation levels in Launceston are such that it is recognised as an Area of Special Need under the Objective One programme, eligible for additional community capacity building and skills development support.

Problems of apparent isolation and poor connectivity add to the many issues that Launceston and its surrounding area face, with the town centre and Newport mainly dependent on local resident spend. The poor local economic situation means the relatively high costs associated with labour intensive and costly repair to historic buildings has led to many building proprietors within the identified Launceston THI area being unwilling/unable to invest in their property because of the poor return. Although Launceston received a modest amount of assistance under Town Schemes (1980 - 1996), this was insufficient to prompt a step change. Many buildings have had no or poor quality maintenance work carried out in recent years; the run down appearance of the building stock does not currently help to encourage new business or custom.

There is a perceived lack of services and facilities within Launceston, poor transport links, plus underinvestment in the public realm and privately owned properties, Launceston has
been unable to attract new custom from outside the town area. This trend is set to continue unless significant levels of improvements are made to the area, to enable the town to re-market and raise its profile as a gateway to Cornwall and the county’s historic capital – in order to increase visitor levels and inward investment.

The Objective 1 Programme provided the potential for substantial support for the THI and other regeneration projects in Launceston.

2.4 THI Objectives

It was apparent that there were problems in the town. The Launceston THI strategy had four key themes, to address these problems, which were:

- Repair, maintenance and enhancement of run down historic buildings to conserve the ‘product’.
- Bringing vacant floorspace back into use and thereby increasing activity levels and sustainability.
- Enhancement of the public realm to improve perception and accessibility.
- Better marketing of the town’s outstanding historic character to increase visitor levels and spend.

Specific objectives for the Launceston THI were derived from the needs analysis in Section 2 and Launceston 2020. They were:

- To support comprehensive repair and enhancements caused by poor building condition and under use within the town centre primary commercial centre.
- To affect repairs to at least 50% of listed buildings identified as being at risk in the Town Centre and St Thomas Conservation Areas (Newport area).
- To promote the reoccupation of key vacant buildings thereby increasing the economic activity and residential accommodation within the town centre.
- To restore lost architectural features on principal facades of historic buildings including historic shop frontages.
- To repair/enhance historic street features especially at key nodal points and gateways in the Town Centre and St Thomas.
- To lobby and influence other stakeholders to allocate resources to reduce vehicle flows and congestion in the historic areas of Launceston.
- To generate new jobs and safeguard existing ones by investing in physical construction and upgrading works.
- To utilise the THI project to provide associated educational, craft and professional skills training opportunities.
- To promote traditional building techniques and skills.
- To encourage greater investment in the long term care of the historic fabric of the town by means of owner education programmes about ongoing care and maintenance.
- To promote a culture of civic pride and understanding of the historic heritage of Launceston within the local community and those responsible for promoting and marketing Launceston, and to facilitate the direct involvement of local people in this process. Target audiences include owners, businesses, elected representatives and officers, and schools.
- To improve confidence for private sector business investors in order to secure a sustainable long term future for the town centre.
• To promote the long term care of the public realm by securing appropriate management regimes.
• Assist marketing initiatives based on Launceston’s outstanding heritage.

Investment in the historic fabric would benefit the appearance of the town, improve confidence, quality of life and economic performance and encourage a cycle of investment.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 The Target Area

The Launceston Conservation Area was chosen as the target area. This area has been recognised as the main historic core to the town and encapsulates the main commercial areas. As part of the stage 1 bid a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan was commissioned and then endorsed. Through this the built environment was evaluated and the existing Conservation Area boundary reviewed to reflect the quality of the built environment.

3.2 Historic Context

The following text is taken from the Cornwall & Scilly Urban Survey, Historic characterisation for regeneration. Launceston, July 2005.

3.2.1 Launceston’s Historical Development

The earliest development in Launceston occurred in St Stephens where one of Cornwall’s pre-Domesday markets was held. This was also the site of a pre-Norman monastery that was reconstituted as an Augustinian priory in the twelfth century and then re-sited at St Thomas’. A Norman castle was built on the neighbouring hillside (Dunheved) and took the market from St Stephen; a third settlement, Newport, grew up in the valley between, above the priory, and so three distinct boroughs were created – St Stephens, Newport and Launceston (Dunheved). All three settlements continued to expand with industry developing in the Kensey Valley. Up until the Dissolution, the Augustinian monastery played a major part in the life of the settlement. After this date its other historic roles – market venue, centre for local waterside industries and the Assizes – continued to shape the development of the town. During the nineteenth century the town’s importance as a centre for administration and commerce continued to develop, and the arrival of the railway heralded the beginnings of a nascent tourist industry. Despite losing the Assizes to Bodmin in 1835 and the market finally closing in the 1990s Launceston is still an important local centre and serves a large rural hinterland with many crossings over into the county from Devon.

3.2.2 Launceston’s Historic Settlement Character

Launceston’s history and geographical location have created a town with a strong, locally distinctive character. Major elements include:

• The castle and historic town centre, packed with listed buildings representing a variety of periods, architectural styles and good quality materials.
A striking natural setting including dramatic hill slopes and an attractive river valley.
- Surviving medieval street patterns and good quality historic street surfacing.
- Elegant and carefully planned suburban streets.
- Areas of historic open space within the urban setting.

3.3 Problems faced by Launceston’s Historic Environment

Launceston has a valued historic environment legacy recognised by the prominent Norman castle and its high concentration of Listed Buildings. The Towns historic Buildings continue to survive but many were suffering through a lack of maintenance. Within the core of the town many independent businesses were not able to financially accommodate major repairs to their properties and as such historic fabric had been at risk. Two of the target properties which were empty and in very poor condition had owners who were not financially able to support funds to undertake the comprehensive works which were necessary to bring them back into a viable use. One of these properties the former Liberal Club was a major landmark building which had lain empty for years positioned at the commercial gateway to the north of the town. Its down at heal appearance was not only affecting the appearance of this part of the town but it was also lessening the commercial viability of this area given its abandoned appearance which prompted people to turn away from this area.

In the main shopping street of the town there were very few shops which stood empty however some target properties experienced businesses moving on as their condition or commercial attractiveness was poor. There was clearly upper floor space which was underused and could be realised back into use either to support existing businesses or to provide space for new ventures.

The town centre is not easily adaptable for large multinational businesses who require large uninterrupted floor space as such there is a small scale out of town retail park which compliments this need, retaining specialist trade within the town. This has certainly protected the pressure from adapting and altering historic buildings however with small independent retailers either renting or being owner occupiers there has not been the financial means for them to always invest in the fabric of their properties.

Buildings at risk survey which was carried out to compliment the understanding of the built historic environment confirmed that repairs undertaken respecting conservation standards given property costs and commercial viability could not be implemented without public sector grant aid, as the returns would not justify the cost of the works in most cases.

Launceston is blessed with many building contractors however due to commercial pressures there traditional building skills had either diminished or were not regularly put into practice. Therefore it was felt that with the historic
legacy of the town and future work that this skill base needed to be refreshed and developed.

The streetscape of Launceston has a rich legacy of fine granite paving which significantly contributes to the setting of this medieval town. The prominence of motor vehicles in the town square was causing conflict with pedestrians and as such it was realised that an opportunity to pedestrianise part of the town centre would provide benefits to the town.

3.4 Condition survey

There was an original Launceston Building Condition Survey carried out in 1999 which was used to help identify potential THI target buildings. In 2005 an expanded re-survey was undertaken to cover all potential target buildings. This was conducted by an experienced conservation architect (pdp Green Consulting), using standard English Heritage Buildings at Risk assessment criteria relating to condition and occupancy. Findings were recorded in an Access database with digital photographs.

Of the 292 buildings surveyed, 89 were found to be in Categories 1-4 either ‘at risk’ or ‘to be watched’. 17 were ‘at risk’. Typical remedial works required including re-roofing, new rainwater goods, render repairs, slate hanging, joinery, structural carpentry repairs and restoring historic features, such as chimneys, fenestration, and shop fronts. The age of some of the buildings is such that many have timber framed upper stories in need of significant remedial works. Upper stories in the town centre are often vacant, especially at second floor level.

These surveys went to form the basis of the priority building list for the scheme.

The public realm need in Launceston was assessed by means of the CSUS study, Conservation Areas Appraisal and Streetscape Design Guide with further detailed work undertaken by Cornwall County Council (CCC) as highway authority in response to the Community Strategic Plan and the upcoming Local Transport Plan for 2006-2011 (LTP2). During 2005, CCC undertook consultation to ensure that the details of the traffic management works were acceptable to the local community and other stakeholders, in line with the wishes of the local community; The Square was identified as the priority scheme.

3.4.1 Criteria for priority buildings

For building projects a schedule of 58 priority target buildings was established from the Building Condition Survey on the basis of the criteria below:

- Building in risk category 4 or worse (worst score highest).
- Listed Buildings (weighted by grade).
- Listed Buildings having group value (as per Statutory List).
- Key building as defined by Conservation Areas Appraisal.
- Vacant or part vacant building.
- Buildings fronting areas where significant public realm works are proposed.
- Building where comprehensive works are necessary.

The priority list was dynamic and priorities in some instances changed as more information became available. Any revisions
to the overall schedule were agreed with the HLF and other funding partners as part of the THI annual review. No critical projects were proposed.

3.5 Management of the scheme

The Launceston THI was managed and administered by North Cornwall District Council (Cornwall Council as of April 2009).

3.5.1 The Team – THI Officers and supporting roles

Initial bids - The development phase of the THI and the preparation of funding application were largely undertaken by Cornwall Enterprise (Georgina McClaren), Catherine Smith & Sarah Jory, Economic Development Team, North Cornwall District Council

Project Manager – Sarah Cawrse, NCDC Conservation Officer was initially appointed as the Project Manager for the THI however due to maternity leave during the project Graham Lawrence Consultant Conservation Officer was appointed on a 1 day a week basis in November 2006 to oversee the project. Due to Graham’s involvement and knowledge of the scheme this arrangement continued upon Sarah’s return to work until the conclusion of the scheme.

Project Officer – This post was advertised in local and nationwide via the Institute of Historic Building, as a full time, three year contract. Lorna Lane was appointed to this post, which was then extended to cover to the end of the project.

Administrative Support – The administrative support for the project was also provided via a new role advertised in the press. Clare Jones was successful in securing this post on a half time basis for the first two years of the project. She continued in this role until April 2009.

Additional Advice – Internal experts where called upon when required, a close relationship with Steve England, Head of Accountancy and Exchequer services was formed and worked well in terms of financial guidance. Quantity surveying advice was available in-house.

Dave Beattie (Project Manager) and David Stuart (Historic Area Advisor for English Heritage) also provided overall guidance and advice on the scheme.

3.6 Reporting

Quarterly reports were produced for the funding partners as part of the funding claims and for quarterly Steering Group meetings. Steering Group meeting minutes were also circulated to all the project funders. As priorities and requirements changed over the course of the scheme, these regular funders’ meetings offered an opportunity to raise any concerns or queries regarding operation of the scheme, funders’ requirements and individual projects. Regular management group meetings were also held by the project team to update on, and assess, progress. A variety of other bodies received updates and input from the THI team were as follows

3.7 Communications

The Launceston THI was administered by North Cornwall District Council (latterly Cornwall Council post April 2009) and was run from offices at the Tourist Information Centre, in the Market House Arcade within the centre of Launceston. This town centre office was a convenient location to meet with
potential grantees, agents and contractors (particularly before work commenced on site to discuss plans, payments etc), and allowed for easy and regular site visits to oversee work with the agents and contractors.

As the project office was some distance from the main council offices in Bodmin, communication was via telephone and e-mail. Systems were put in place; however, there were some unresolved system issues that arose from the THI having a computer network completely independent from the rest of the authority systems/networks, although relevant information was eventually readily accessible to all of the THI team.

3.8 Systems & Project Documentation

A system was set up before the project commenced and as the project progressed documentation was held both on paper and in electronic form allowing it to be easily accessible for all project staff. There is a clear audit trail in place for all the grant projects.

3.8.1 Photographic Record

**Historic** – A photographic survey of the town was undertaken during the project. Historic photographs were also sought through using the extensive records at the local town museum.

**Digital** - A digital photographic record of the projects was vital to help document the scheme. Photographs were taken of potential buildings in the first instance, prior to any work commencing, and if work proceeded then regular photographs were taken throughout the course of the project and on completion.

3.9 Publicity

At the start of the scheme a quick guide to the scheme was created which included general information including grant rates, eligibility of works and the aims of the scheme. This leaflet was distributed to all priority building owners and also made available to other interested parties.

Articles appeared in local press throughout the lifetime of the initiative recording the progress of the regeneration works. Periodic press releases were sent to the local press to keep local people informed of the progress, including the grand opening of the newly completed square and to mark the end of the scheme.

3.10 Funding

The scheme was match funded by Heritage Lottery Fund, North Cornwall District Council (NCDC), European Regional Development Fund (Objective One), South West of England Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) and Launceston Town Council. The total common fund was £1,209,639 a breakdown of which is shown below. Other partnership funding outside the Common Fund was also provided by, Cornwall County Council via highway funds and Private owners contributions as shown below.
3.10.1 Completion dates

The practical completion date for the project was 30th September 2009 with the financial completion date set for December 2010.

3.11 Grants

The grants were made available for ‘eligible’ work only. This included:

- General structural repairs and consequential reinstatement, specialist treatments to eradicate established dry rot or beetle infestation, and damp-eradication measures where damp is causing structural damage to the building.
- Re-roofing and high level repairs (provided not considered maintenance work), including chimney repairs, leadwork and rainwater goods.
- Brickwork and stonework repairs for structural as opposed to cosmetic reasons, including render repairs and re-rendering.
- The repair of existing windows and external doors and other external joinery.
- The reinstatement of distinctive architectural features, such as particularly decorative ironwork and the reinstatement of shop fronts to the original design.
- Expenditure on fees for Professional Advisers was also eligible for grant.

Funding was generally not made available towards the cost of conversions, alterations or adaptations, modernisation, routine maintenance, the provision or renewal of services, or for external cleaning and redecoration (unless considered part of a larger scheme), unless the property was derelict to start with in which case the conservation deficit formula applied.

3.11.1 Grant Rates

The grant rates for eligible works were outlined in the original bid as follows:

- 50% for standard eligible repairs.
- 60% for traditional re-slating and slate hanging with both new Cornish and second hand Cornish slate, including the reuse of existing slate.

<table>
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<th>Funder</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<th>% of all public funds (for ERDF)</th>
<th>% of all funds (for SWRDA)</th>
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<td>Sub total Common Fund</td>
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</table>
• 75% for the reinstatement of lost architectural features, and traditional forecourt, lane or boundary feature which are of no economic benefit in themselves. It was recognised that if market conditions were to alter then there may be an option to alter the grant rates during the life of the scheme.

A 100% grant rate was proposed for schemes to repair or restore street surfacing or features in the public realm, to fund the difference in cost between normal provision and the costs of repair/replacement to conservation standard.

Professional fees were also grant aided. The percentage rate for this was an average percentage calculated from the overall intervention rate of the eligible works. Similar calculations had been used for other schemes in the South West.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Take up of grants

At the start of the project in November 2006 the owners of all of target buildings were contacted directly and expressions of interest were invited for possible buildings. Particular attention was given to key target buildings including 13a and 4 High Street - both grade II* buildings that would have benefited greatly from the delivery of grant aided works. The owners of these properties elected not to proceed with grant application, as they already had plans to carry out basic works to the buildings in due course.

Due to the scale of works on some of the target buildings the grant fund was allocated quite quickly and the THI was over-subscribed.

4.2 Summary of Outputs

The outputs and their measurement were designed to provide a picture of the success of the scheme and to demonstrate the economic and regenerative value resulting for the repair of the target buildings and steelworks. A summary of outputs compared with targets is provided in section 4.5

4.3 Projects

4.3.1 Town square enhancement and pedestrianisation

The design and delivery of the town square enhancement was a prime objective of the THI scheme. The enhancement part of the scheme was designed by the project manager and the highways elements by Cornwall County Council. Partly due to the removal of parking from the square and also the aim of taking the chance to rationalise on-street parking, the scheme was part of a larger process to bring better traffic management to the whole of the historic core.
The public consultations were thorough and extensive as successive rounds were needed for amendments to parking and delivery arrangements throughout the town centre. There was also the need to strengthen the historic underground reservoir which was found to be partly beneath the war memorial as well as the loading area. As a result of these constraints the start was delayed a little.

The scheme was delivered on time and within budget by the team from Cormac with minimal disruption considering the nature of the work and its sensitive location. Close working on site between the THI officers and Cormac ensured smooth delivery.

In order to deliver the scheme within budget and using Cornish granite it proved necessary to use reclaimed setts rather than new machine cut ones as originally intended. After consultation with the highway engineers and access advisors the reclaimed setts were judged suitable.

The THI could not fund the street furniture element so some creative thinking was needed to ensure a complete project. Granite bollards were sourced free of charge from Cormac’s materials store and funding packages had to be put together for the bin, electric supply and benches. North Cornwall District Council played a crucial role in ensuring these parts of the scheme were delivered. The bespoke benches were designed at no cost by the Project Manager, De Lank quarry (Ennstone) made the bench ends and provided one set of bench ends free of charge. The oak bench seats were made by Clifford Joinery and they put the benches together in their workshop. The granite planters were provided by sponsors of Launceston in Bloom and the design was adapted to incorporate them. An inscribed stone was designed and provided by the Launceston History Society to record the execution of Cuthbert Mayne - this was also incorporated into the design.
The challenges presented by the project were many but through co-operation and persistence the result was one of evident quality that has been well received by local people. Even most of the critics prior to the scheme can be said to have been won over. A successful launch day was held and the new square has been used for a wide range of organised markets and events, as well as being an informal space to relax and enjoy at all other times.

4.3.2 Former Liberal Club (now Liberty House)

The former Liberal Club was a much loved (and surprisingly unlisted) architectural gem on the edge of the commercial core of the town. Designed by the prolific and able local architect Otho Peter the building had fallen into disuse and needed much investment to secure a sustainable future.

Without the grant aid of the THI the building would most probably have been subdivided into flats and the regeneration opportunity lost. The public would also have lost the opportunity to enjoy some of the best views in the town of the castle and St Stephens, which are offered from the upper floors.

When quotations came back for the work at the former Liberal Club it became clear that this would take a significant chunk of the available common fund; but in consultation with the project monitors it was decided that as a regeneration project it still represented good value.

Although not listed the building was treated with the level of care that would be expected of a protected building and its architectural character has been repaired and revitalised. Modern services and access arrangements have been installed.
in such a way as to be discrete but evident and the entire building is now fit for a range of productive uses.

4.3.3 Town Hall

The town hall is another example of the work of Otho Peter and a prominent brooding gothic presence on the main road through the town, opposite the castle. The building has been underused for many years and needed considerable investment to make it more useful as a community focal point. Launceston Town Council had worked with Launceston Forum and other stakeholders to identify ways to make the building more usable. Despite spending a considerable sum on a feasibility report there was no clear consensus as to what was wanted or needed.

The THI team organised a plan and design session which identified a range of adaptation works which most parties involved could agree to, but none of this could be achieved without investment in the fabric. The focus of the THI grant was to deal with the nail-sick roof and the aging leadwork so that the ambitious plans for the interior could move forward.

Whilst the extent of the work was quite evident beforehand, the costs that came back were again higher than anticipated. In particular the scaffolding costs were very high indeed but a sophisticated design was also very necessary due to the complex nature of the building form, its location and the need to continue use of parts of the interior.
As well as providing a first class conservation job to the roof, the THI scheme grant provided the chance to repair and restore several significant features. It also enabled the Council’s architect to make a detailed record of inaccessible architectural features which will help accurate restoration in the future as fine carved detailing is being progressively lost.

With the external work completed the Town Council are progressing the next phase of work internally. This will improve facilities in the town hall, create a lobby and bar area plus an up to date kitchen and re-locate the Council office upstairs so that two multi-purpose rooms are provided downstairs. This internal work has now commenced on site for a completion date for the end of 2010. This work costing over £1 million has been funded by the town council, building upon the first phase of work which was supported by the THI. It is envisaged that the upgraded facilities will be a major venue for a wide variety of functions serving the town and beyond, raising the profile of the town, providing a much needed facility which will not only benefit the town economically and socially but allow continued long term investment in the building.

4.3.4 3 Broad Street

The poor condition of this building meant that the upper floors had been unusable for some considerable time and as well as leaks there was a major pigeon infestation. Whilst the ground floor was in use it was far from what would normally be considered acceptable accommodation for a thriving business.
An existing permission for conversion of the building into two flats above the shop, which would also incorporate the basement, was the basis of the scheme. It was expected that significant structural works would be necessary and there was a hope that some earlier fabric may be uncovered beneath the mostly Georgian surfaces. What turned up proved to be far beyond expectation but demanded some re-thinking of the structural work and internal planning.

The building turned out to be a fairly complete timber framed 16th century town house which would’ve looked much like Gillards sweet shop on Church Street - jettied with a pair of gables.

The owners were enthusiastic about the discoveries and shared the desire to reveal significant sections of the older fabric. So the outcome is a building that has a quality Victorian shop frontage, layers of Georgian work and glimpses of the original fabric, especially the plank and muntin screens on the upper floors that indicate that the plan form survived largely unchanged over the centuries. Another layer of interest were bits of packing crate used to clad internal walls and newspaper cuttings used to paper a small loft room that was apparently used by apprentices.

From a regeneration viewpoint the property now has a larger and more viable shop unit in the town centre and two good residential units helping to support economic vitality.
4.3.5 Coach house to rear of 5-7 Southgate Street

The rear service range of the main street frontage property is part of the rare high quality brick built Georgian houses that are a feature of Launceston. A combination of structural issues and roof leaks made the upper floor uninhabitable and threatened the ongoing use of the ground floor as the kitchen for the adjacent restaurant business.

A legacy of bad cement based repair to the brickwork was an apparent problem that little could be done to redress so the focus of the scheme was to repair the rag slate roof and the structural issues.

On opening up it was apparent that most of the early 18th century roof structure was intact. The original specification involved excessive replacement of old structure and addition of new. The THI team insisted on a more sensitive approach and thanks to a helpful 'can-do' approach from the builder it proved possible to save virtually all of the historic fabric with some evident and effective structural interventions.

The THI supported work, has secured the employment associated with the ground floor kitchen to the adjacent restaurant and has provided a new good quality affordable residential unit for rent above.

4.3.6 5 Westgate Street

This was one of the smaller projects supported. The poor state of the roof meant the upper floors could not be used and the ground floor was in need of investment which would not be forthcoming with a leaky roof. Although the repairs
were not prominent, they were visible and they have secured the future of the building.

The corrugated sheet roof was replaced in sized natural slate and the historic chimney stack was repaired.

4.3.7 10 Newport Square

Newport was founded as a trading, processing and manufacturing settlement by the monks of St Thomas Abbey. For centuries the place was alive with activity and into the 20th century there remained former mills and working buildings where hides were tanned, tools made and produce processed using water power from the Kensey. One by one they have gone and only a few examples remain. Number 10 Newport Square is an interesting hybrid building - mostly residential but with racks for the preparation of hides or cloth in the roofspace and probable use of the rear wing for associated manufacturing.

Although some distance from the commercial core this Building at Risk was considered vital to the wider regeneration aims of the THI. It was a prominent and historically rare building that looked run down and could not be revitalised without financial support.

The shortage of quality materials available at the time of construction, coupled with its quite low status meant that the building contained a lot of ‘bark on’ structural timber which on casual inspection appeared of little or no historic value. Many
would also have considered it rotten and in need of replacement.

The surface finishes and joinery incorporated some nice understated decorative touches and there were a number of two panelled doors likely to have been reused from elsewhere at the time of construction. The THI team had to combine enthusiasm and persuasion to convince the owner and his advisors that this material was actually of historic interest and was well worthy of retention.

Once it had been agreed which severely rotted elements simply had to go, a line was drawn and all went remarkably well. Quite soon the local repair team got their eye in and developed an appreciation for the bits of branch, mud and smears of original plaster that constituted the special interest of the property. The racks in the roofspace have been untouched and simply had insulation installed beneath them.

The end result has saved a humble but very prominent and rare building at risk and provided two good affordable residential units for rent.

4.3.8 35 St Thomas Road

This was the smallest grant scheme - a re-roofing job on a residential building. The owners were very keen and the building was on the target list.
4.4 Training

The targets set for the THI to deliver for training proved unrealistic in terms of NVQ qualifications. Efforts were made to secure the services of an NVQ assessor but without success. The THI officer also targeted local building firms offering training for apprentices or less experienced members of staff but there was a general reluctance to allow time off for attendance even though course fees were to be paid by the THI.

For these reasons a more flexible approach to training was agreed with the project monitors and the budget was used to very good effect.

4.4.1 Contractor and team training with Cornish Lime Company

The Cornish Lime Company (CLC) were identified as the best local provider of training in traditional skills and the use of lime and traditional products was an essential element of most of the THI projects.

The THI officer and Admin Assistant both attended the CLC course which enhanced their personal skills in the field and helped in dealing with agents and contractors.

The training budget was also used to send eight contractors and employees on the CLC course. This training had a distinctly positive outcome as these trainees were immediately able to transfer their new skills into the projects and thereby gain valuable ‘real world’ experience. This was especially notable on the former Liberal Club and at 10 Newport Square; the skills gained will continue to provide a beneficial legacy for the local buildings that these trainees work on in the years ahead.

As is often the way the trainees adopted their new knowledge and skills with enthusiasm and looked forward to working with lime regularly in the future.

4.4.2 Seminar for building owners and contractors

Early in the THI scheme the Project Manager presented an evening seminar for old building owners and contractors at the Eagle House hotel. The event was well attended and also marked the launch of an online guidance note on ‘Looking after your old building’ by North Cornwall District Council which continues to be available on the Cornwall Council website.

4.4.3 Access seminar

A Seminar concentrating on Access issues was held on 26 March 2007 at the White Hart Hotel in the centre of the town. The Seminar was delivered by a Guest speaker, Mr Alan Richards, a Disabled Access Auditor and a Conservation Officer. They addressed the gathering on the ethos surrounding disabled access, with particular reference to access in historic buildings. All speakers were available to take questions specific to matters in Launceston where as a collective groups advice was able to be given. The venue for the event was carefully selected in discussion with the Chamber of Commerce. The event was found to be very useful to those who attended and those who couldn’t make it were able to be sent a newsletter summarising the event.
4.4.4 Heritage training events at the Castle

The two heritage training events held at the Castle were organised by the THI in conjunction with English Heritage and proved to be very successful indeed. Experts in thatch, cob, lime, willow and hazel work were recruited and the THI team gave demonstrations of wattle and daub work.

In 2008 a three day event was held with one day for primary school children, one for college trainees and a public day. Despite quite poor weather the first two days were a great success. The public day however proved less successful as the awful weather and ineffective small shelter meant the day was unfortunately a bit of a wash out for all.

The popularity of the 2008 event encouraged the THI officer to organise a bigger and better event for 2009. The same contributors returned but this time there was a good sized marquee so that all of the activities could take place undercover. The first two days saw nearly 400 children from seven primary schools in the area come along to have some hands on experience of traditional craft skills. Days 3 and 4 were dedicated to young people from nearby colleges; some were studying rural skills, others were learning construction techniques. The final day was open to the general public to come along and have a go.

The event was very well received with staff from the schools and colleges expressing the wish that it could be an annual event - a view that was shared by English Heritage. The 2009 event was filmed as a record of the event.

4.5 How success was measured

As far as possible the success of the Launceston THI was measured against the predicted/intended outputs, but as already stated some of these proved to be overly optimistic or simply undeliverable. The issues will be covered in more detail in the ‘Discussion’ section below but the key points are:-

- Fewer buildings helped than intended but several high profile schemes delivered genuine and meaningful regeneration as well as securing important historic buildings.
- The scheme had the potential to help several more key buildings if match funding had been available for a second phase.
• Despite the difficulty of delivering the town square enhancement within budget, on time and in the face of criticism, the new square has been a great success and is much appreciated by local residents.
• Although the training element of the THI had to be adapted the results were very positive, especially the Heritage Skills training days.

4.6 Additional benefits

The THI team took the approach that the scheme was a catalyst for regeneration and also an opportunity to enthuse local people about their local heritage. As a result the office became a point of contact for anyone wanting advice about their own building or seeking help on wider heritage issues. Guidance was generally related to the Character Appraisal and Management Plan (CAMP) that were well received locally and delivery of projects identified within the CAMP were targeted.

As well as smaller requests the team was involved in securing funding and delivery of some very significant enhancements that weren’t formally part of the THI. These are detailed below.

4.6.1 Parade ground enhancement

The Parade Ground is an important historic space bounded by the churchyard and the line of the medieval town wall; it is a versatile space close to the town centre and with outstanding views over the Kensey and Tamar towards Dartmoor. There were problems including poor surfacing, weeds and instability of the churchyard retaining walls.

North Cornwall District Council made funds available for work here and it was designed by Cornwall Council. The THI team offered advice on the project. The space has been considerably enhanced by the scheme.

4.6.2 Church Street pavement

The setting of the Grade I church has been eroded over time with the introduction of modern concrete pavements and block paviours. As a prelude to the Parade Ground scheme this area was paved using granite and the setting of the church was successfully restored.

4.6.3 Undergrounding of cables
The plethora of cables on Western Road were identified in the Conservation Area Management Plan as detracting from the Castle, Town Hall and presenting a poor image at the main entrance to the town centre. The THI officer was instrumental in pursuing this enhancement; gaining support and funding from the utility company and funding from North Cornwall District Council for the trenching of the cables improving the view when entering the Historic Town Centre.

4.6.4 Church Street, photo studio

The grant aided works have encouraged other repair works to take place in Launceston since the completion of the THI. An example of this is the old photo studio in Church Street. Historic photos clearly illustrated what it once looked like and the owners re-instated historic features and saved this property from falling into total disrepair.

It is now occupied and a feature of the high street with a great trading space.
4.6.5 Town trail leaflets

In conjunction with the THI, North Cornwall District Council produced some excellent new town trail leaflets which are available from a number of outlets in the town and are intended to be self financing into the future.

4.6.6 Other advice and projects

During the life of the THI the team were involved in many other smaller, but nonetheless significant, matters. This included the impact of proposed developments, enforcement issues, practical advice on repairs, shopfront design etc. Below are a few examples:

Beneath the layers of applied fascias was an historic layer in good order, so this was adapted and restored.

A dilapidated bench on St Thomas Hill was replaced with one purpose made by one of the Town Council maintenance team using leftover granite from the town square, based on a design idea from the THI Project Manager.

Number 9 Newport Square is an example of the flexibility of the THI team as a local conservation resource. When this vulnerable listed building went to auction the THI team photographed the rare internal features and were on hand to advise potential purchasers.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Target buildings/ area

The target buildings and their locations was appropriate for the scheme. Although a lot of the right buildings were targeted some key buildings could not be helped due to a low response and take up rate by owners/occupiers. The scale of some of the projects also meant that the number of buildings helped was fewer than anticipated.

5.2 Condition surveys and estimated costs

The Condition Surveys undertaken as part of the Stage 2 bid in 2005 provided an accurate indication of the type and scale of work needed to the buildings.

Conversely the estimated costs proved to be much greater that initially anticipated for all of the buildings that received funding. The problem is epitomised by the Town Hall project
where the cost of scaffolding alone was greater than the estimated repair costs.

The predicted outputs, in terms of number of buildings helped, were based on these estimates, and therefore, the reason for the numerical shortfall in the number of offers made and grants awarded can easily be seen.

The estimated cost of the town square enhancement also proved low and the rise in material costs plus inflation in the time between the bid and delivery was problematic. The THI team was not prepared to compromise this flagship scheme in the heart of a Cornish town by using imported granite when there was a working quarry just a few miles away. The decision to deliver within budget by using reclaimed setts (instead of newly cut ones) was not ideal though the quality of the finished surface is now recognised by virtually all those who use the space and many feel it adds texture and character to the area.

5.3 Agents and contractors

5.3.1 Public realm

Costs for the town square enhancement project mounted due to the need for excessive public consultations about traffic management, parking and the location of taxi provision on behalf of Cornwall County Highways. A lack of clarity about design and consultative costs from the County Council led to further money needed to be allocated to this piece of work. At a time when every effort of controlling costs to stay within budget was being made it was frustrating to see unforeseen and uncontrollable costs mounting with no apparent direct benefit to the scheme.

Unfortunately adverse publicity in the press arose relating to the ‘cobbles’ (reclaimed setts) that were used in the scheme. The material had been sourced by the County Council Officers and had been passed as suitable; the onus fell on the THI Project Officer to explain the situation to the aggrieved. The Project Officer handled the situation with calmness and skill and the outcome was acceptable to all concerned.

The Cormac team was skilled, considerate, and friendly to the public and was happy to discuss working solutions to queries and problems that arose. The fact that the same small team did most of the work helped to ensure consistency of quality in the work and detailing; it was clear that they wanted to do a good job for the town and took pride in their work.

5.3.2 Buildings

The THI team were very proactive in meeting with all of the agents and contractors at an early stage and then making regular visits to discuss arising matters. This was aided by the team being bases in the town. On the three largest schemes - Liberty House, the Town Hall and Broad Street there were a succession of decisions which needed to be made that demanded conservation knowledge and flexibility. On each occasion there was discussion of options before a solution was agreed and on all of these projects there were strong working relationships that ensured good results.

The smaller schemes saw more direct liaison with the contractors on site, mostly without agents; 5-7 Southgate and 10 Newport Square both had contractors on site who were happy to talk through problems and listen to the THI team. Site inspections were invariably friendly; with contractors keen to show something that had been found, or a repair they were pleased with, or something that they
wanted a view on before proceeding. These open and harmonious working relationships really helped achieve standards which all that were involved could be justly proud of.

5.4 Public realm results and management

The town square was well received on completion and the Grand Opening was a great success, with the community coming together to celebrate its new space. As well as organising this event the Project Officer worked behind the scenes and in her own time to organise and manage the booking of other events. The regular butter market and other visiting markets have added vitality to the town centre and a variety of other entertainments or charity events have taken place.

One of the key design principles of the square was to provide a respectful setting for the war memorial and a fitting space for remembrance. This proved to be the case and the first Remembrance Day parade went off very well indeed.

At Christmas the square also came alive as a place for community celebration.
Looking forward, the butter market has its own organising committee and the Town Council now play an active role in managing the booking of events. It is anticipated that the space will continue to be well used in ways that benefit the businesses around the square and the wider community.

5.5 Recording and assessing outputs

The outputs established in the Business Plan set the aims for the THI; as time progressed some had to be adapted, supplemented or replaced, but this was always done in conjunction with the Project Monitors. The re-profiled targets are listed here, the ones set by SWRDA and ERDF are marked with an asterisk (*). The RDA targets listed first with ERDF targets in brackets. The actual results that were achieved are below:

1. Conservation Areas improved and regenerated

\[\text{Target: } 2 \quad \text{Actual: } 2\]

The separate conservation areas were amalgamated into one large designation as part of the Management Plan in 2006. Based on the previous Conservation Area’s the main town centre was greatly improved and regenerated by the THI and the Newport CA was regenerated by the repair and enhancement of Number 10g which was a very prominent Building at Risk.

2. Historic buildings improved/enhanced (*)

\[\text{Target: } 3 (4) \quad \text{Actual: } 7 \text{ (of which 4 were listed buildings)}\]

Seven buildings were grant aided by the THI; these properties were as follows:

- Town Hall/Guildhall (Grade II).
- 35 St Thomas Road (Grade II).
- The Former Liberal Club (unlisted – two properties grant aided).
- 3 Broad Street (Grade II).
- 5-7 Southgate Street (curtilage to grade II*).
- 8 Westgate Street (unlisted).
- 10 Newport Square (Grade II).

3. Buildings at Risk in the Town Centre and St Thomas Conservation Areas (Newport area) repaired and brought into use.

\[\text{Target: } 50\% \quad \text{Actual: } 75\% \text{ of the buildings that were grant aided were at risk.}\]

Buildings at Risk were specifically targeted by the THI team and six of the grant aided buildings were ‘at risk’ based on BAR criteria - four of them in high categories, these were:

- The former Liberal Club (BAR category 2).
- 10 Newport Square (BAR category 1).
- 5-7 Southgate Street (BAR category 3).
- 3 Broad Street (BAR category 2).

These buildings have now been removed from these categories.

4. Floor space returned to commercial use.

\[\text{Target: } 6 \text{ vacant or part vacant buildings converted to new use, amounting to}\]

Launceston Townscape Heritage Initiative - Final Report.
1,272 sqm. floorspace.  
Actual: 577.125 sqm. floorspace

Seven of the eight properties that were grant aided were wholly or partially vacant due to their condition. All are now fully occupied or ready for occupation, but quite a lot of the floor space is residential and therefore does not count towards this specific target. Although the total floorspace was only 597sq.m this represents a significant result for this number of buildings.

5. Buildings with restored features/shopfronts.

Target: 12  
Actual: 0

No grant aid was given specifically for the restoration of shopfronts or features, but many significant architectural features were repaired or restored on the buildings that were grant aided. Shopfronts were restored at 3 Broad Street and the former Liberal Club and improved by negotiation (though not funded) at 5 Westgate Street. During the course of the THI the team advised on improvements to at least five other shopfronts and associated signage.

6. Public realm sites upgraded in town centre.

Target: 1 (ERDF Target)  
Actual: 1

The enhancement budget only just covered the cost of the town square works but by negotiation with North Cornwall District Council, Cornwall County Council and Launceston Town Council as well as Western Power there were other significant enhancements undertaken (see 3.6 above). As a result five public realm sites were enhanced with the direct input of the THI team.

7. Small or Medium sized enterprises (SME’s) assisted (*)

Target: 6 (4)  
Actual: 7 (4 within the Objective One period)

Many of the buildings were vacant before the grant aided work was carried out so not more than a couple of SME’s were directly assisted through the scheme. This however does not take into account the local contractors, suppliers and agents that have benefited from the actual works undertaken by THI projects. Other businesses in the town centre have undoubtedly been helped by an improved trading environment with greater footfall and the positive atmosphere generated by the scheme and especially the public realm enhancement works, probably exceeding the targets set.

8. New business start ups facilitated

Target: 2 (SWRDA target)  
Actual: 3

Liberty House itself is a new business that offers a conference and entertainment facility to businesses and the general public. This aspect of the business is run alongside Jericho’s restaurant which has very close ties to the local farm shop and independent food producers. Resulting in two new business start ups and continued support for two existing SME’s in the town.

In addition to this, the refurbished Town Hall, although a public building, can be seen as a new business start up as once the new catering and bar/cafe area is completed the whole building will be used much more for business and
entertainment by the local community.

9. Net jobs safeguarded (*)

Target: 5 (1)
Actual: 6

The restaurant kitchen on the ground floor of Southgate Street was becoming unusable due to the condition of the building so those three jobs were safeguarded by the works being undertaken. Likewise three full time equivalent (fte) jobs were enabled to be retained at Westgate Street, albeit in a different business. Therefore, these two projects have safeguarded 6 jobs.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the completion of the Town Square and its enthusiastic adoption by the community helped several businesses to survive the difficult trading conditions that fell on the national economy almost immediately after its completion. This is, however, hard to put a number on.

10. Net jobs created (*)

Target: 2 (1)
Actual: 9

Eight new jobs were created at Liberty House (former Liberal Club), including chefs, waiting staff and other administrative office based, behind the scenes roles.

The former occupier of the shop unit at Broad Street moved into vacant premises around the corner, so the one full time equivalent job created by the new occupier is additional to the above, therefore a total of 9 new jobs were created.

11. Significant contribution to Launceston Community Strategic Action Plan

The outputs listed for the THI took into consideration the aims of the Launceston Community Strategy Action Plan. As a result of the success of the THI there will be a significant contribution to achieving their strategic objectives.

12. Private sector contribution

Target: £457,206 (SWRDA Target – 27% of total project fund)
Actual: £582,967 +

Individual property owners have contributed far in excess of the original target. In addition a lot of non eligible works were undertaken at the same time as the THI work; this is not included in this figure due to difficulty accurately collecting these figures.

13. Additional net GDP safeguard (*)

Target: £116,438 (£26,946)
Actual: £138,000 net GDP safeguarded

Guidance in the Programme Complement and SPD Guidance notes assumes for one net job adds £23,000 to GDP.

$6 \text{ net jobs safeguarded} \times £23,000 = £138,000 \text{ GDP Safeguarded}$, during Objective One Period.

14. Additional net GDP created (*)

Target: £38,833 (£16,560)
Actual: £207,000 net GDP created
Guidance in the Programme Complement and SPD Guidance notes assumes for one net job adds £23,000 to GDP.

9 net jobs safeguarded x £23,000 = **£207,000 GDP created**, during Objective One Period.

15. **Advisory workshops/training seminars held**

    **Target:** 14  
    **Actual:** 11  

The use of the training budget was adapted with agreement from the Monitors. Well attended training events were held for members of the business community, historic building owners and contractors as well as local people and school children. In summary these were as follow:-

- Cornish Lime Company training for contractors and THI staff.
- Looking after your old building seminar for owners and contractors.
- Access seminar for owners, agent and contractors.
- Heritage Training days (8 days in total) at the Castle, these were attended by primary school children, college trainees and the general public.

16. **People assisted with skills development**

    **Target:** 42 (SWRDA Target)  
    **Actual:** over 400 primary school children, 57 Further Education construction students from local colleges  

Many students were assisted through the very successful training events held in conjunction with English Heritage in the Castle grounds. Over 400 primary school students attended the interactive traditional skills workshops, and 57 students who are on construction courses at local colleges also attended the events. All these students benefited from exposure to traditional skills giving them some basic experience and knowledge that would prove useful to them in the future.

17. **6 NVQ Level 3 achieved in use of locally distinctive building techniques**

    **Target:** 6  
    **Actual:** 0  

NVQ level 3 takes years of training and experience to achieve so it this was a slightly unrealistic target to achieve during the duration of the scheme. The THI did, however, send ten people on the Lime in Construction course at the Cornish Lime Company - a course recognised by the National Heritage Training Group. Some of them were able to put their training into practice on grant aided projects that were part of the THI scheme.

The Construction students who attended the Traditional Skills Training days gained invaluable experience in traditional local materials, construction methods and techniques used which contributes to them achieving their qualifications.

18. **Implementation of streetscape design manual**

Cornwall Council’s Landscape and Urban Design Unit have produced a manual called ‘Launceston Design Guide’ in conjunction with the THI team that is to be used in the preparation of designs for streetscape improvements in the town in the future.
Excellent PR for town and its heritage

The THI projects have helped raise the profile of the town directly, through related publicity and indirectly through magazine articles etc. The activities facilitated by the Town Square enhancement have attracted more people to Launceston and the THI’s positive affirmation of the town’s merits has helped to enthuse a significant proportion of the local population. This process is ongoing and another boost will come when the town hall re-launch happens.

During the lifetime of the THI guidance leaflets were produced on of the main one being ‘Looking after your old building’ which was disseminated in part by the THI team. There were also two Town Trail leaflets produced, a short and long walk, these leaflets are available throughout the town and include some of the key buildings that were part of the THI scheme.

THI and wider regeneration issues

The THI team worked closely with the Launceston Forum, Town Council and other bodies with an interest in regeneration of the wider area. There are key strategic decisions that need to be made to consolidate the local economy within the historic heart of the town and the Kensey Valley. Getting enhanced access and the right mix of uses is vital and something that was beyond the scope of the THI itself. The vision of Launceston as a place where good employers may be attracted by the quality of life and the historic environment is closer to being achievable thanks to the THI, but further effort and focus is needed for the town to achieve its considerable potential.

Whilst the scale of the THI was relatively modest in the greater scheme of things, it is considered that it has been an important link. By putting the commercial heart of the town on a better footing, making it a nicer place to spend time and revitalising some key buildings the THI has been a catalyst. By encouraging enthusiasm for the town’s heritage and undoubted quality the THI has helped the town to improve its own self image. The negativity at the outset has been replaced with a more confident view of the future and despite the present financial hardships the town is better placed to bounce back higher when things get better in the wider economy.

Securing the legacy

During the period of the THI the project team encouraged a rigorous and consistent approach to both heritage conservation and regeneration initiatives.

Now that the THI is over there is a pressing need for the Local Planning Authority in particular to take up the baton, secure the positive legacy and take it forward. Most of the tools needed are under the control of Cornwall Council and the Town Council, so the onus lies with them to aid the future prosperity of Launceston and the protection of its heritage assets - two goals that are inextricably linked. There has been a feeling among some residents that being at the very western edge of Cornwall their voices will not be heard and they will lose out to towns closer to the centres of authority.

Strategic planning

The expansion of the town in recent years has tended to move the focus of commercial activity away from the town centre towards the A30. Whilst this may be inevitable there
has been little consideration given to the connectivity of this development with the historic town. New residential development has also been poorly connected in terms of walking, cycling and public transport so as a consequence many new residents make little use of the town centre.

The Kensey valley was historically the focus of economic activity and that status needs to be reinvented with imaginative use of available buildings and spaces. With the right priming this zone could be an ideal site for well paid employment opportunities. Improved connectedness to the town centre and the Exeter road are essential to achieve this. A more co-ordinated approach to development with a commitment to quality design is needed to make the most of the available space. This presents scope for re-development that could facilitate a range of employment uses that exploit the natural attractiveness of Launceston, its hinterland and the North Cornwall coast.

Delivery of a Kensey Valley cycle route would be good for locals and would sit well with the railway, castle, abbey ruins and the historic town core as an attractive tourist centre.

5.7.2 Development Control

Some poor infill development has been allowed within and around the Conservation Area, vigilance is needed to secure high standards of design, materials and detailing in any future developments. Attention also needs to be given to the wider townscape of the town given the topographical layout of the town and the dominance of the Castle of which the setting of the town with views into and out of it together with its skyline are important.

5.7.3 Enforcement, urgent works and repairs notices

Whilst enforcement action has been taken on several occasions during the life of the THI, resolution has been slow and unfortunately many of the items against which action has been taken remain in place.

There are notable examples where Urgent Works Notices have been threatened and have secured action; others have seen action promised but not yet delivered. Targets remaining include:-

- Garden building at Eagle House hotel - roofless and supported by scaffolding - a building at risk.
- Walls at Eagle House and the property opposite - historic brick walls damaged by vehicles and weeds growing from open joints.
- Chapel, Castle St - vacant and vulnerable to vandalism.

A Repairs Notice remains a possible option for 9 High St that, despite regular promises of remedial works being undertaken remains, at the time of writing, vacant, leaking and structurally insecure.

5.7.4 Parking and traffic management

Over a number of years there has been a culture of widespread abuse of parking and traffic restrictions in Launceston town centre. After exhaustive consultation as part of the THI town square enhancement there were revisions to parking arrangements and traffic flows but from day one these have not been enforced. This continues to cause danger to the public and has caused regular damage to listed buildings as delivery vehicles try to manoeuvre around illegally parked vehicles.
This ongoing failure to enforce traffic restrictions has a daily impact on those people who are trying to use their town centre in the manner intended. In the absence of enforcement in High St and Church St the THI manager has suggested that Cornwall Council look at physically blocking these streets with a minimal number of suitable bollards; it is hoped that this will happen in the future.

6 CONCLUSIONS

Launceston THI has been a successful regeneration scheme. Whilst the outputs have not been entirely consistent with the targets set at the beginning, they have delivered results of a quality that will last. As well as bringing 597 sq m of vacant or underused floorspace into use, securing or creating 15 jobs and setting the associated buildings up for a sustainable future, the THI has helped kick start the ongoing revitalisation of the town. The high quality of work achieved in the projects is clearly apparent and is easily accessible for all to see with all projects being visible to the public. There is a clear appreciation that traditional skills have been used throughout and buildings previously dismissed and neglected now stand proud and useful.

The THI has enabled appropriate repairs and reinstatement using local materials employing traditional methods and local craftsmanship. This has acted as a catalyst in the repair of other buildings in the town since the conclusion of the scheme including the former Orange Tea Rooms and the comprehensive second stage refurbishment of the town Hall both of which were undertaken without grant aid.

Through the public realm works the historic centre has a new image that is much appreciated by locals and visitors; once again there is the bustle of market days and somewhere for the community to meet and chat or gather in celebration. For the first time in years a positive buzz has stirred in Launceston and hopefully it will continue to resonate.

The THI training initiatives have started 8 building workers on a new path towards better understanding and care of the heritage assets they work on. Hundreds of young people have been given the chance to experience craft and heritage skills that has offered them a glimpse of past lifestyles.
If you would like this information in another format please contact:

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