

THE SEARCH IS ON FOR BEACH HUT INNOVATORS
EASTBOURNE BOROUGH COUNCIL
LAUNCHES ICONIC BEACH HUTS COMPETITION

Eastbourne Borough Council, this week launches a contest that will engage local talent in the planning and building of iconic beach huts in the Devonshire Ward area of the city. As part of the Driving Devonshire Forward initiative and in a move designed to contribute to the area's regeneration, create new visitor attractions and enhance Eastbourne's reputation as a town embracing culture and design, the council is putting out a call to professional architects to submit ideas for beach hut like structures that will become valuable community resources in the years to come. Alongside this, there is a designated community category.

Christine Harmar Brown Project Manager says

"The aspiration is to encourage bold, imaginative designs that respond to the environment and expand the idea on how a beach hut might be used. A beach hut could be used as a performance space, as an exhibition space, a place to write or read or paint, a place for children to play, a dreaming place or somewhere to have an exclusive cream tea. The huts may be made of recycled material sourced from the beach and they might look like waves, or shell- or they might look like space pods and be made from steel. The hunt is on to find innovative designs that will impress our prestigious panel of judges. The winning submissions will be fully realised and be of benefit to the area way into the future."

The judging panel will comprise **Martin Jones**, Senior Programme Manager – Regeneration, HEDP, **Annie Wills** Head of Tourism, Eastbourne Borough Council, **Cllr Margaret Bannister** Driving Devonshire Forward Steering Group representative and special guest judge ground-breaking sculptor **Alex Chinneck**. Alex has been the mastermind behind succession of major public artworks that have captured international admiration and attention. These include: sliding the entire brick facade from a house into the front garden of the property; completely inverting two four-storey commercial buildings; constructing a full-size house from 7500 wax bricks that proceeded to melt over thirty days; and creating the illusion that a stone building on London's iconic Covent Garden Piazza had miraculously levitated into the air. Alex is currently working on a landmark project for the London Design Festival 2015; his biggest undertaking to date.

The outcome of the competition will be five bespoke designed iconic huts which will be sited at key locations in Devonshire ward, to the east of the pier, forming part of the bicycle route of the Coastal Culture Trail linking three award winning galleries: Towner Art Gallery in Eastbourne, De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill and Jerwood Gallery in Hastings. The beach huts will be key landmarks along the seafront, harnessing the resurgence of interest in coastal communities, attracting new visitors to Eastbourne and becoming symbols of Eastbourne; matching high quality design, visual flair and function.

The competition consists of two separate categories. In addition to inviting submissions from practising, registered architects, there is a separate category for community members to work with the project's consultant architect, and submit designs for a community arts project hut.

Alex Chinneck says

I am delighted to be involved with Eastbourne's Beach Hut competition. It's a brilliant idea, which taps into the town's heritage at the same time as looking to the future. There is a wealth of talent out there and we are expecting ideas that will be both practical and surprising. I am tremendously excited about what we will discover"

Cllr Margaret Bannister from Eastbourne Borough Council says

This Driving Devonshire Forward initiative is exciting for the ward, Eastbourne and beyond. The iconic beach huts will enhance the seafront while attracting visitors to come and see what will effectively be a series of public artworks, showing Eastbourne in a new light.

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Notes to editors

Background information

Eastbourne is the largest coastal town in East Sussex. It offers an increasingly attractive and popular environment for people to live and work; high quality facilities, proximity to the South Downs National Park and employment opportunities alongside its more traditional role as a holiday destination for 4.1m day visitors per year and 2.04m staying night trips.

The Housing and Economic Development Partnership (HEDP) is a partnership between Eastbourne Borough Council and Eastbourne Homes Ltd. HEDP's role is to provide new homes, bring empty homes back into use, neighbourhood regeneration and economic development across the borough, with a focus on Devonshire ward. Devonshire ward lies to the east of the town centre; it includes the seafront from the pier east to Sovereign Leisure Centre. The ward contains all land uses typical of a resort town centre, from shopping and venues for nightlife, large hotels, small hotels and guest houses, family homes and houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). As such it reflects the diversity of Eastbourne and has many of the factors both positive and negative that often characterise town centres of seaside resorts.

Driving Devonshire Forward (DDF)

In 2013 HEDP commissioned an urban design study of the ward to formulate and develop a vision for the social and physical regeneration of the ward. The community were at the heart of this project, which resulted in Driving Devonshire Forward (DDF). The DDF is the community's strategic vision and plans for the ward, the regeneration 'branding' and sets the guiding principles for all projects.

Eastbourne's Seafront

The seafront is a strategic regional attraction, fulfilling its potential through cultural and sporting activity and use by the community as a local amenity. The emerging EBC seafront local plan will shape and define the tourist offer.

The tourist industry is an important part of a diversified economic portfolio. It is important to note one of the most encouraging trends in recent years has been the recovery in the British seaside industry. This has been driven in part by the progress some seaside towns have made in carving out a niche offer, and the success of schemes to promote England as a destination.

Several seaside towns have successfully been re-branded on a coherent cultural programme. The ward's specific context justifies a bespoke approach. New landmarks in key public spaces, for example at key junctions or on the beach, with an extraordinary design brief, can act as catalysts to regenerate a local area.

Beach huts

Eastbourne, like many other coastal towns, provides beach huts as part of its visitor offer. Currently there are 87 huts and 69 brick built chalets at six locations, all west of the pier. There are currently no beach huts east of the pier. However, there are key visitor seafront attractions: Redoubt Museum, Treasure Island, Spray Watersports Centre, Fort Fun and Princes Park. The council are installing 20 traditional huts to the east of Spray Watersports in addition to the 5 iconic huts.

Competition Managers

B&R Productions Ltd has been appointed by EBC to manage the competition on their behalf up until the announcement of the winning designs. B&R Productions has appointed Simon Barker of Barker Shorten LLP as Project Architect to work with the community on developing their ideas. EBC will thereafter contract him to realise the selected scheme for the Community Project Hut.