

Watchet Warships CIC

Rescue Plan - MTB 219



Watchet Warships CIC

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Community Interest Company Limited by Guarantee

Watchet Warships CIC

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MTB 219

MTB 219 is a 73ft Vosper MTB Launched in July 1941 She was involved was involved in the attempts to intercept the Scharnhorst, Gneisneau and Prinz Eugen (known as the "Channel Dash") and, under the command of Lt. Mark Arnold-Forster RNVR, she sank the German destroyer Seeadler and the Kriegsmarinewerft Motor Torpedo Boat Itlis on 13 May 1942. She continued to attack enemy shipping until she was paid off in 19 December 1943.

MTB 219 is the only surviving vessel of her class and bears the signs of war damage including bullet holes in the forward saloon area. She is currently stored in a steel Thames Barge in Chelsea, but her hull is reasonably sound and about 95% of the original interior remains authentic. She has been a houseboat in Chelsea for the last fifty years and has been used for filming during this time. MTB219 has achieved recognition on the National Historic Ships Register, but now has to be moved from her moorings.

She will need to be moved by September 2013 so the plan is: 1-2 weeks of rectification work will need to be done on the hull within the barge. This will be temporary fibre glass sheathing to ensure she is water tight. A metal and wood lifting cradle will then also be constructed around her while she is within her barge. Once she is secure she will be towed across to the embankment to crane her out onto a lorry. The journey through London to the A4 then on to the M4 will have to take place at night so that roads can be closed due to her width. The Lorry will then take her to EDF's facilities in Combwich in Somerset, to be craned into the River Parrett. She will then be towed down the coast into Watchet where she will then be lifted out to her new home.

We estimate that this will cost approximately £10,000 for rectification materials, craneage, transport, crange, towage and the final crange in Watchet. EDF will allow us to use their facilities free of charge at Combwich; Harris Transport have agreed to supply transport at cost and with a volunteer driver and we are in negotiations with Baldwins Cranes for a reduced rate. All towage will be done at cost and we have the goodwill of Watchet Harbour Marina and Chelsea Yacht and Boat Company to provide volunteers at either end of the journey. The labour for the rectification works will also be performed by volunteers.

The National Historic Ships Society have also agreed to an emergency fund to their maximum amount.

Our History

HMS Gay Archer (P1041) is a restored Fast Patrol Boat (FPB) built in 1952 by Vosper's at Portchester, in Hampshire. Although built in response to the perceived defence threats following the Korean War, the petrol-engined boats of the Gay Class were essentially a World War II design, because the then new generation of diesel-driven Dark Class were still only at the development stage. This Class was the first to be specifically designed as multi-task boats. They could carry guns, or torpedoes, or a mix of both, or they could be fitted as mine-layers.

Gay Archer was commissioned into the 2nd FPB Squadron, based at HMS HORNET in Gosport. During a NATO exercise in Scandinavian waters she was nearly lost at Aarhus in Denmark following an explosion in a boat alongside her. In May 1954 she, along with three other Gay Class Fast Patrol Boats, escorted Queen Elizabeth on the Royal Yacht Britannia down the River Thames following the

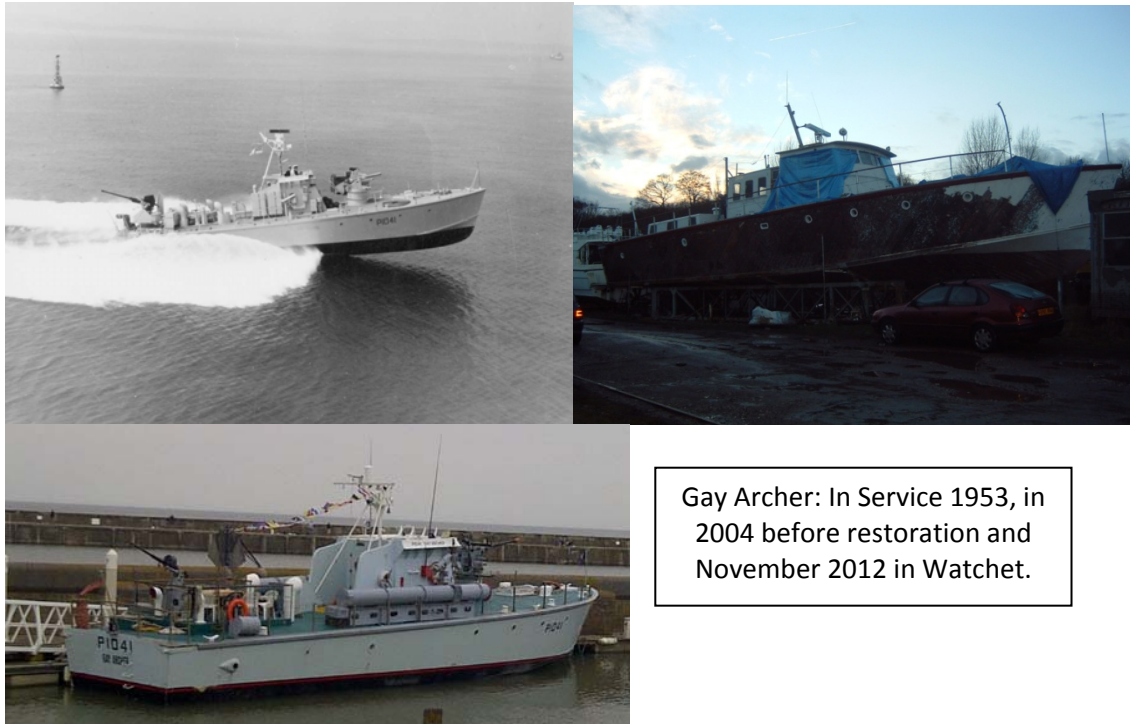
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Queen's tour of the Commonwealth to Westminster Basin. Subsequently she also survived grounding off Portsmouth before being paid off in 1957 and placed into reserve. After a short life as a target towing 'tug', she was eventually retired to Troon in Scotland and scheduled for scrap.

In 2004 Paul and Rhian Childs purchased the vessel for a nominal £1; but then sold their house and possessions to fund her restoration back to seaworthiness and stock configuration. Following a two year restoration she made her way down the rivers Weaver and Mersey and down the Bristol Channel and she now resides in Watchet in Somerset.



In the summer of 2012 Paul opened Gay Archer up to the visiting public so people could come and see what he had achieved. Although only on an ad hoc basis, spare evenings and weekends, this was met with great enthusiasm from both visitors and Watchet towns-people, who loved the idea of having a new attraction in the harbour.

In November 2012 Gay Archer was joined by MASB 27 (a 1941 anti-submarine boat used in the defence of the English Channel during WWII and also the lead ship for the Omaha Beach landings on D-Day) and Hyperion (a 1940 army co-operations boat who took King George VI over to Gold & Sword Beach on D-Day +10) and the idea of 'Watchet Warships' was born.

Although the restoration of the Gay Archer is complete, aside from on-going maintenance, the other craft will need full restoration back to sea-going condition. All ships have achieved recognition on the National Register of Historic Vessels. The Register provides an overview of the UK's extant historic vessels and is used to identify and prioritise significant vessels that should be conserved, provide guidance to decision-makers on the allocation of funding, and give an early warning of ships 'at risk'. Once MTB 219 joins the flotilla Watchet Warships will comprise of the largest collection of ex Royal Navy small attack craft in the world.

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The plan is to restore and maintain this growing collection of historically significant vessels and display them in Watchet as “floating museums” and tributes to our military forces. It is calculated that the economic sustainability of these craft will be sustained through visitor numbers and commercial enterprise which will in turn improve the economic diversity of Watchet and West Somerset.

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Watchet Warships CIC has been registered to benefit the general public, but primarily the social and economic communities of Watchet and West Somerset; increasing tourism, education and business opportunities via the restoration and maintenance of a growing collection of historically significant vessels and displaying them in Watchet as “floating museums” in order to encourage access to military heritage and improve local economic sustainability.

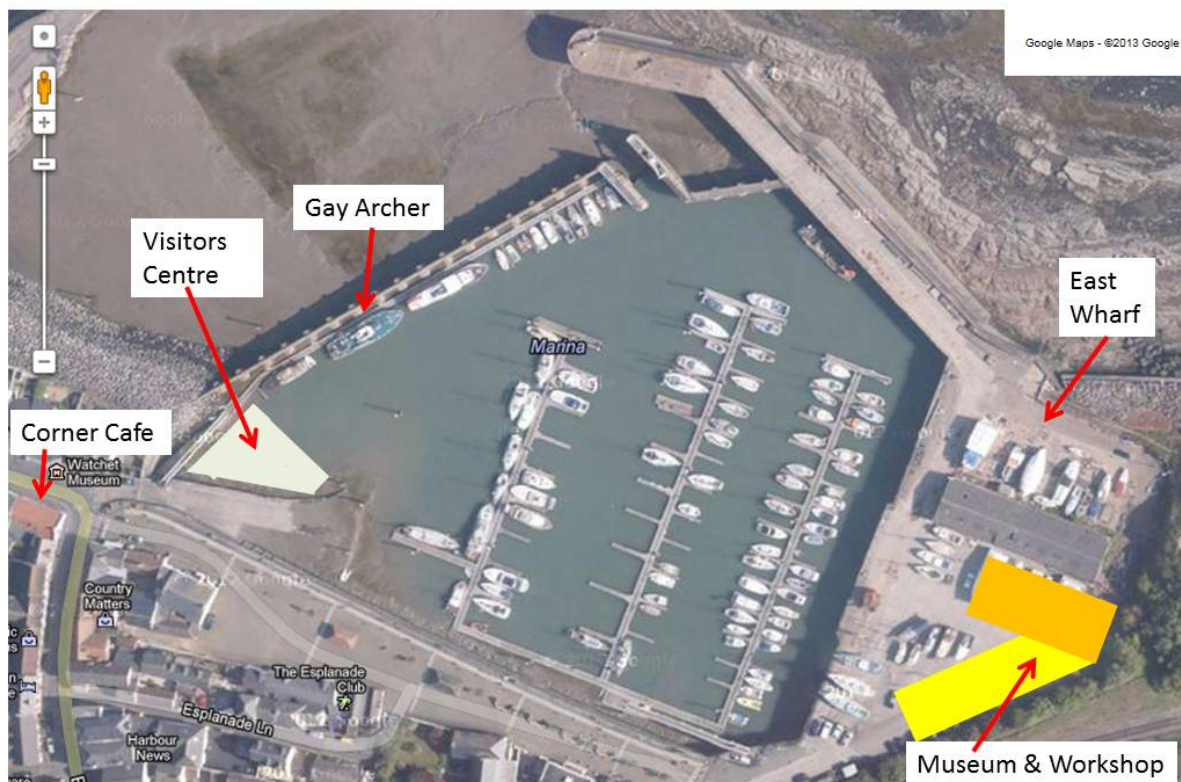
Activities	How will the activity benefit the community?
To restore, maintain and protect a unique collection of military sea going vessels	...the preservation of sea going heritage for future generations to enjoy and appreciate, boosting tourism for the local economy. The vessels themselves are the only ones left of their class and types in the world and thus form an irreplaceable collection.
To establish a museum and contribute to the sustainability of Watchet harbour as a location for displaying the preserved vessels	...the advancement and promotion of education in the maritime history of primarily (but not limited to) 20th Century Sea Defence, Watchet and West Somerset - to boost local culture and economy through tourism by increasing visitor numbers and improving access.
To provide marine skills training in a working marine environment using industry standard equipment and techniques and comparing them to historic seamanship methods and practices	...the improvement of the local economic situation by creating and improving access to marine industry and transferable business skills training via volunteer work and apprenticeships in conjunction with local educational establishments. ...improved cultural and historical links by ensuring old seamanship skills and crafts are not lost, but passed on to a new generation.
To support the creation and development of local or marine based businesses within Watchet and around the Harbour	...the increased sustainability of Watchet’s local economy by assisting the formation of new businesses, encouraging existing business growth and increase business collaboration to boost employment and benefit from economies of scale.
If the company makes any surplus it will be used for the support and maintenance of the flotilla, reinvestment in the business and investment in cultural, marine, or economic projects to the benefit of the Watchet community.	

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Business Idea

Watchet Warships CIC has the primary objective of restoring and maintaining a fleet of historically valuable ships, preserving them for future generations. We therefore need to create a sound and sustainable business model for Watchet Warships CIC so that the boats pay for themselves through visitor numbers and business interests. This will then regenerate the Watchet economy by increasing visitors; by offering out of season projects and activities we will then provide all year round trade.

By building on the foundation of housing the largest collection of ex Royal Navy small attack craft it is envisaged that the unique collection will become a world-wide attraction with the ability to boost both the local and UK tourism economies.



Build a Floating Visitors Centre

Many artefacts which have been donated to Watchet Warships from well-wishers and veterans are laid out within the confines of Gay Archer, which, despite being 25m long and 6.5m wide, is a confined area especially once visitors board. It also means that we are unable to give an in depth history of Coastal Forces history as the display space is inadequate.

We propose to use a portion of the marina behind where Gay Archer and MASB27 are currently moored to establish a floating visitors centre. An occupancy licence has been agreed with the Marina operator (Watchet Harbour Marina Ltd) for this area along with the adjoining pontoon.

The available museum area will be approximately 2500 square feet. We propose to lay down pontoons as a base for a larch wood clad building, to replicate the look of a 1940's style building thus keeping in theme with the boats. The building itself will be built out of reclaimed timber and we aim

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to build in as many ecological features into the design as possible. There will then be a semi triangular veranda which can be used as a viewing platform for the boats.

This will provide us with an enhanced space for displaying artefacts and information and also provide an area for a retail outlet based around maritime and Coastal Forces memorabilia. The existing security access point would be enhanced to improve access for aged and disabled visitors.

The design of the interior space would honour an open plan feel with displays which could be located to suit the occasion; allowing the space to be used as a community area for other events. We plan to provide a community space for lectures, give talks, show films, and as a rehearsal and meeting space for local groups. The venue could also afford space for receptions and parties to provide yet another revenue stream.

It is proposed to keep the visitors centre open all year round, and have activity days and weekends out of season to try and tackle Watchet's currently seasonal economy. We wish to draw in the local interest by offering "Model Days" where members of the community and local schools can be involved in the design and construction of model boats, paint pictures and produce other arts and crafts projects relating to the museum.

Centre of Excellence & Museum

As with most museums with a 'mechanical element' we will need a workshop area to use as maintenance, stores space and also provide restoration space for future projects. This will include recycling old wood from wrecks into usable wood for restoration work. The plan is to keep the integrity of the boats "in date" as used wood is already seasoned. We aim to create space to machine components and other aspects of engineering work which are vitally needed to maintain and restore.

In 2005 Somerset County Council commissioned a study from Fisher Associates to investigate the feasibility of developing business units for marine based industry to try and tackle the economic situation in Watchet. The report came to the conclusion that developing the East Wharf of Watchet Harbour would enable the marina to "...become a magnate to attract new berth holders, a high number of visiting boaters and tourists from its surrounding areas" which would have "considerable indirect and induced [beneficial] economic impacts."¹ We therefore need to attract sailing visitors to the harbour; hopefully encouraging them to see Watchet's current marine business operations, allowing businesses to expand sustainably.

Although Watchet Harbour has significant historical value as an operating harbour, it has no buildings of conservational value; the only remaining building being of a 1960's construction which would require the removal and replacement of its asbestos roof. It is envisaged that this building will be refurbished allowing the northern half of East Wharf to be more successfully utilised by the marina operator, Watchet Harbour Marina Ltd.

Watchet Warships would therefore like to purchase the remaining land on the East Wharf and create a restoration centre, turning Watchet East Wharf into a "Marine Centre of Excellence" for the Bristol Channel. This would be located in the southern half of the East Wharf. The idea being that the

¹ Somerset County Council Feasibility study of development of marine based industries in the Watchet locality, Fisher Associates 2005, accessed January 2013 http://www.watchet.net/wharf/docs/Fisher_Report.pdf

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Centre of Excellence will allow the training of both volunteers and young apprentices in all aspects of boat operation and restoration skills. The ultimate intention of this is to attract more historic vessels to Watchet and also create a skilled workforce who will be able to support these, and other, vessels via commercial enterprise. It is envisaged that at least four apprenticeships will be created in the high value marine industry, through the Worshipful Company of Shipwrights; with a further two apprenticeships created in business administration and event management to join the local growth industry of hospitality and tourism.

A viewing gallery of the restoration works will be open to an interested public and provide a further tourist attraction to Watchet. Restoration progress with photographs and videos will be posted to Twitter, Facebook and YouTube to market and promote the museum.

The building would also contain a larger museum development in the manner of the Fleet Air Arm Museum, Yeovilton. The museum would primarily be to educate, entertain and promote the history of Coastal Forces and the local Maritime heritage. This provides continuity of the theme of the boats being restored and will include the history of Watchet both as a commercial port and its military history; the primary display will be a Queen Bee on a catapult as used pre-WWII. The first Queen Bees were launched from the cruiser HMS Neptune anchored off Watchet, but were later catapulted from the gun park at Doniford Bay Light Artillery Range.

The building will be architecturally remarkable; built to the highest possible eco-friendly standards, structured to fit in visually with the current town and harbour architecture and designed to reduce the energy intensity of the machinery needed, through combined measures of rational use of energy and integration of renewable energy technologies. It will also incorporate a community terrace on the roof with scenic views of the Bristol Channel and West Somerset Steam Railway to enhance the image of the area and attract further investment in the harbour.

If we attract sailing visitors into Watchet Harbour it is expected that they will be impressed with the regeneration of East Wharf and be encouraged to use the marine repair facilities that exist. As customers increase to these companies so more jobs will be created in the high value marine industry. It is hoped that this will encourage other complementary businesses to be incubated and grow; allowing Watchet the economic diversification into all aspects of boat operation and restoration. By being open all year round and promoting both regular activities and special events we hope to attract tourism out of season to our new 'destination' infrastructure. The viewing terrace will be open to access all year creating a new public place to be enjoyed by both visitors and locals alike, and possibly encourage visitors seeking a positive work/life balance to become locals!

Saving the Corner House Cafe

The Corner House Cafe is situated opposite the west slip of the Marina on the junction of Swain Street, Market Street and the Esplanade. It is therefore at the heart of Watchet's shopping area. This building is in danger of closing down due to the current owner's ill health which would have a detrimental impact on the High Street and would be demoralising to Watchet's social and economic hopes.

The aim is to retain the historical café in Watchet and continue to provide refreshments to locals and visitors to the museum without taking trade away from the main street or increasing competition with existing businesses. This will safeguard existing jobs and (as visitor numbers grow) building a

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pathway for local people into the local industry growth sector of tourism and hospitality. The current opening times will be extended to address an expressed community need for diversification of the current evening social options; thusly creating further employment.

The café also provides extensive living accommodation above which we propose to divide into two spaces: use as office space for the museum and cafe (negating the need to obtain office space elsewhere; reducing running costs) and providing a 1-2 bedroomed apartment. The apartment would be offered to the local populace as there is a shortage of affordable rented accommodation in the area.

The Corner House has a projected turnover of £150,000 pa and is being marketed for £349,950.00. All profits generated by the café would be put into the preservation of the historic ships and into projects of community benefit. We will be applying to West Somerset Council to list the Corner Cafe as an asset of community value, we will also be applying to English Heritage and the DCMS to get the property listed.

Transport Links

We aim to obtain a parcel of land next to the Wansbrough Paper Mill to provide car and coach parking facilities to prevent congestion in the town. The spaces will be charged at the same rates as council car parks in the town; thus avoiding competition with local services. We will operate a Park & Ride and bicycle hire scheme which will regenerate the town by encouraging access through additional parking facilities; while minimising pollution within the town centre helping it to retain its historical roots. The bicycle hire service will encourage sightseers to cycle around the local area. Maps will be provided of attractions and scenic routes in and around Watchet and to boost the trade of the locality.

Anyone using the car park to visit the museum/centre of excellence will receive a refund of the parking fees against their entrance fees. We aim to have the park and ride drop off point around the vicinity of the Corner House with the pick-up point planned to be on the East Wharf; thus all visitors will be encouraged to access all areas of Watchet town centre. We envisage this will increase trade along Swain Street/Market Street/ Esplanade etc. which in turn will create further jobs and opportunities for local people and businesses.

We will promote West Somerset Railway aiming to offer discounted museum entrance tickets to those travelling by rail; an environmentally friendly way to travel and reducing congestion in the area. Holiday camps are currently located along the railway line and will be targeted to encourage visitors to travel to Watchet by train.

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Market Conditions

Watchet is what is known as a rural market town located on the West Somerset coast of the Bristol Channel. It is located 20 miles from the M5 corridor and situated in the centre of the historic West Somerset Steam Railway which runs between Minehead and Bishops Lydeard in Taunton. Watchet Harbour, opened in 2001, is in an ideal location for pleasure boats, being within easy sail of Cardiff, Swansea, Bristol and Portishead.

Flanked by Butlins at Minehead and Haven Holidays at Burnham on Sea, Watchet should be a prime site for tourists; indeed it has been said that Watchet has the potential to become *“The Padstow of Somerset”*². The general consensus of residents is that no-one comes to Watchet as it doesn't have a big attraction to draw visitors in. It has a small volunteer run Market House Museum and also a Boat Museum, but this is only open in summer, on a part time basis again by volunteers. Watchet therefore has an undeveloped weak and seasonal economy.

According to the *West Somerset Local Planning Authority Area Town and Village Centres Study*³ Watchet is the fifth most deprived smaller seaside town in the country, with areas immediately around the town falling down the ranking (i.e. deprivation increasing) since 2007. West Somerset is ranked 15th in the list of most deprived local authorities and has high unemployment rates, ranked 335th out of 408 districts, with increasing long term hardening unemployment.

The 2008 Value of Tourism report shows the importance of tourism to the Somerset economy, but that it is well behind other areas (Dorset, Devon and Cornwall) on both the scale of the industry and the relatively low visitor spend. There is therefore a need to *“strengthen the value of the tourism in Somerset... to ensure a quality offer that enhances the distinctive strengths of the area”*.

Somerset has a lower than average proportion of qualified people with West Somerset having the least qualified (20.3%) in Somerset. By creating an attraction with apprenticeships we will address these issues. We also fit in with Somerset County Council's 'Economic Assessment 2011' priorities of: *“increasing access to employment, attracting tourists and ensuring people have the right skills and qualifications”*. The West Somerset Council's 'Local Plan to 2032' aims to: *“Develop the quality of the tourism offer within the area”* and the Government Tourism Plan states that *“our goal should be to persuade more of us to holiday at home”*; creating a new attraction will help this and *“ensure we remain a competitive, value for money and attractive destination for a growing proportion of international visitors in future”*.

So far only a brief analysis of the current tourism situation has been done through conversations with representatives of the Fleet Air Arm Museum, the West Somerset Steam Railway and the Watchet Market House Museum. The three places were chosen for different reasons to try and provide a snapshot of the potential tourist market that Watchet Warships will be appealing to.

Watchet Market House Museum

² Somerset County Council Feasibility study of development of marine based industries in the Watchet locality, Fisher Associates 2005, http://www.watchet.net/wharf/docs/Fisher_Report.pdf, accessed March 2013

³ <http://www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk/getattachment/Planning---Building/Planning-Policy/Evidence-Base-Information/Town-and-Village-Centres-Report/Appendix-4---Watchet-Health-Check.pdf.aspx>, accessed 10 May 2013

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The Market House is a museum based on the local area history and geology of Watchet. From Anglo-Saxon times (where Watchet housed a Royal Mint for Alfred the Great) up until the 1999 Watchet was a thriving harbour town which could count numerous interesting characters among its residents. For many years, wood pulp and esparto grass were imported to supply the Wansbrough paper mill, which still operates in the town today.

Along the local shoreline Watchet is well known as a place where the red rocks of the Triassic pass upwards into the grey marine rocks of the Jurassic periods and the museum is able to display a wide selection of locally-found fossils, many picked up by people walking on the foreshore.

The Market House is located approx. 100 yards from where the floating visitors centre will be located, so it is expected that at the beginning the visitors we attract will be the same 'passing' visitors they have and so they represent the current situation of the tourism market specifically to Watchet. In 2012 the Market House had 33,700 visitors between Easter and the end of October. This was down from 2011 when they received 37,400 visitors and again less than their best year when they received 42,000 visitors in 2008. The museum is free entry, reliant on donations from visitors, but they have previously received grants for specific displays and projects. In the past they did try charging an entry fee but found that they actually made less money than they did from donations.

The Museum itself is in a prime location on the corner of where the Esplanade meets Market Street and the main shopping area in Swain Street; however it is very tiny and thus limited as to what and how it displays. When they get a number of visitors at the same time it becomes difficult for the visitor to see all objects as the area gets quite cramped; so they have a system of rotating what is on display. Unfortunately this is not advertised to the visitor so doesn't encourage repeat visits.

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Product – Geology, Watchet 'character' residents, sea port history	Incredible stories, interesting and fascinating to the historian/geologists	Space limitations & doesn't advertise display rotations
Price – Free Entry	Encourages all comers and fans donate well	Reliant on volunteers, restricts promotional budget
Place – At the 'heart' of town	Can't be missed when in Watchet, housed in an historic landmark building	Cramped conditions when lots of visitors restricting access to displays, no disabled access
Promotion	Excellent website, but again not promoted, appears to have SEO issues. Features on Watchet Chamber of Trade website	Can't afford advertising, doesn't promote to tourist centres/Visit England etc.
Personnel – Reliant on Volunteers	Some enthusiastic and knowledgeable	Varying skillset, knowledge and time constraints
Performance	Repeat business from fans & locals	Visitor numbers down 2012 on 2011, blamed on Olympics &

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Jubilee

Process	Does offer out of season promotional lectures – but does it at another venue in town (again space limitations)	Doesn't encourage further visitors into Watchet relies on people already passing through, only seasonal opening (Easter to Oct), "nothing for the kids"
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West Somerset Stream Railway

The WSSR runs is a branch line of what used to be the Great Western Railway and passes through some lovely scenery including the Quantock Hills, Dunster Castle and the coastal views between Bishops Lydiard in Taunton and Minehead. Similarly to what we will offer they are a "transport heritage" site, but with the added bonus that customers actually get to ride on the heritage. The railway has 10 stations in total along the route all run as separate entities by various trusts and businesses made up of a mixture of volunteers and paid staff.

It is well known as one of the top 20 charging attractions in the South West (Gloucester/Wiltshire down to Cornwall) and offers a number of model train and railway heritage museums along route. They operate both steam and diesel trains throughout the year with out of season promotions (Santa Specials, Murder Mysteries, Pie & a Pint Days) to keep passenger numbers up.

In 2012 the WSSR had 215,000 passengers, which was down on 2011 when they had 250,000. They have seen a decline in passenger numbers over the last five years, but not by as much as 14%. However this drop was expected due to day trippers staying at home to watch the Olympics and Diamond Jubilee. Although this was damaging to summer 2012 passenger numbers, it is hoped that they will encourage more international visitors to the UK this year. However, it is doubted that the extra visitors will filter this far down into the West Country.

The railway operates different ticket prices:

2013 Prices	In Advance	On the Day
Adult Rover (15-59)	£15.60	£17.00
Senior Rover (60+)	£14.20	£15.40
Children (5-15)	£7.80	£8.50
Family, 2 Adults & ≥ 4 Children	£43.00	£45.00

Strengths

Weaknesses

Product – Heritage steam journeys	Appeals to enthusiasts willing to pay more	Declining numbers, but hopefully aging population will help
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through picturesque views		
Price –	Prices ‘cheaper than average’ for a heritage railway	Still needs to rely on charitable trusts to cover all costs
Various		
Place –	Minehead station in popular resort	Bishops Lydeard out of town, have to drive to get there
Promotion	Promoted on most tourist websites, leaflets distributed to tourist offices and other museums	
Personnel –	Enthusiastic, knowledgeable, training provided	Skills passed on to & from volunteers
Paid Staff and Volunteers		
Performance	Lots of repeat business from both local enthusiasts and holiday makers	Visitor numbers down 14% 2012 on 2011 and steadily declining in general
Process	Opens all year around with differing train times to suit demand	Passengers in decline but not enough to promote action

Fleet Air Arm Museum

The Fleet Air Arm Museum features a number of static aircraft, including a Concorde, from around the world and other exhibits across four large halls. It presents the development of naval aviation from the first Royal Navy airship in 1909 and early bi-planes, to today's formidable air power from the sea. In addition to exhibits and interactive displays they have created the Aircraft Carrier Experience where passengers take a virtual helicopter ride to a carrier and experience planes taking off and landing through film, lighting and sound effects. Another popular section is the workshops where visitors can view the restorers at work through a windowed viewing gallery.

Although not in the top 20 South West visitor attractions (they put this down to “being in the middle of nowhere”, so visitors have to make specific trips to them) they have been described as “.. *one of the best 'technology' museum experiences I have ever had. The aircraft were presented very well with good information to support.....Can't say enough to congratulate the team on creating such a memorable experience*”⁴ They host numerous events throughout the year including Model Swap meets, film nights and historical talks, and offer special discounts including Father’s Day specials and Tesco Club card voucher schemes. They also offer ‘behind the scenes’ group tours, special 15+ group prices and catering at their Swordfish restaurant.

⁴ <http://www.fleetairarm.com/aviation-museum-testimonials.aspx>, accessed 28th April 2013

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In 2012 they received 110,000 visitors, down on 2011's 115,000 and despite being open all year around this was mainly in the summer season; out of season they consider it a good day if they have received 15 visitors in a day. They also account for the drop by the Olympics but generally their numbers are reasonably consistent. They believe that this is possibly due to rising public awareness of our military forces due to recent conflicts. Like the Railway they appeal to enthusiasts who are willing to travel and pay more; if you're interested it is easily possible to be in the museum all day, or longer as one admission lasts for an entire year's worth of entry.

Standard Rates	Price
Adult	£13.50
Child (5-16 years)	£10.00
Senior Citizens, Students, Unemployed, Ex Service Association * Valid ID Needed	£12.00
Family (2 Adults + 2 Child)	£39.00
Family (1 Adult + 2 Child)	£27.00
Disabled Rate	Price
Disabled Adult + Carer	£12.00 + £7.50
Disabled Child (5-16 yrs)	£7.50
Service Rate	Price
UK Service Personnel (with valid ID) + 4 guests	Free & 50% off individual rates

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Product – Interactive Naval history	Appeals to enthusiasts, surprises their families & friends with quality	Enthusiasm waning amongst younger generation
Price – Various	Enthusiasts willing to pay more	More expensive than other museums
Place – Next to RNAS Yeovilton	Can watch planes taking off in good weather	Have to specifically travel there, poor public transport link
Promotion	Good website, leaflets distributed to tourist offices and other museums	Not listed on Visit England
Personnel – Paid Staff	Enthusiastic, knowledgeable, friendly and efficient	
Performance	Steady visitor numbers	Possibly due to current conflict publicity, very seasonal
Process	Opens all year around with speciality days, discounts and deals	Hasn't successfully encouraged out of season visitors

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Potential Customers

The market research that we have done so far is anecdotal; however it is predicted that once funding is complete the Museum and associated activities will become self-sustaining through visitor numbers.

By using Visit England's 'Day Visits Annual Report 2012', 'Top 20 Paid Attractions South West 2011' and Visit Britain's 'Employment generated by tourism in Britain' we know a day visitor to a small rural town spends an average £29; each FTE job is supported by approx. £39,200 of spend and that a price point of £5.00 entry fee would be a reasonable charge. The 'Day Visits Annual Report 2012' also shows that

The Market House Museum in Watchet had 33,700 visitors in 2012; we are therefore using this as our base visitor figure, so no extra visitor spend in Watchet in year one but providing the museum with an income of £168,500.

By year three we have the goal of attracting 110,000 visitors, the number of visitors the Fleet Air Arm, Yeovilton (a similarly themed museum) had in 2012. We should therefore have an income of £550,000 and be providing Watchet with a visitor spend of £2,212,700 supporting 56 jobs.

By year five we want to be attracting the same number of visitors to Watchet as the West Somerset Steam Railway has (215,000 in 2012) equating to a projected income of £1,075,000 and a visitor spend of £5,257,700 supporting 134 jobs.

We believe that this is achievable if we promote to and have exhibits that appeal to families, retirees and enthusiasts, charge an affordable entry fee and use both traditional and electronic promotional methods.

External Influences

Political

Politically now is a good time to start up a socially minded enterprise. The Government's enthusiasm for 'The Big Society' has provided legislation which we will be able to take advantage of including the Community Right to Bid and the Community Right to Build.

Agencies such as *Locality* (the leading network of community-led organisations) and the NCVO (National Council of Voluntary Organisations) have been specifically set up to encourage ideas and companies such as ours and we have already begun to benefit from their support and advice.

It is unfortunate that our Armed Forces are engaged in various conflicts around the world, however the controversy surrounding these conflicts means that they continue to remain in the media spotlight. Public awareness and support for our veterans and service personnel is therefore on the rise and this is provoking further public interest in military history.

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Economic

The UK is currently facing a very challenging time economically and everyone is cutting spending and trying to make savings. This is making it very difficult for small businesses to raise investments and loans through the usual business channels of banks and investors. It is especially hard for companies such as ourselves who are not established and don't have the ability to invest any funds.

There are however agencies that have been set up to offer funding and economic sustainability advice for small businesses, and these will need to be investigated thoroughly. If our feasibility study is favourable we plan to develop a bid to the Coastal Communities Fund. Due to the heritage of our location and the ships the Heritage Lottery Fund has also been identified as a source of funding. These and other funding sources will need to be assessed for their availability and appropriateness; again it is envisaged that the training and advice from Locality, the NCVO and also the Museum Association will be essential in our development of a sustainable funding plan.

One opportunity we have is that people are choosing to stay at home instead of going abroad on holiday. Visit England's reports show 'Staycationers' are having to choose short breaks and day trips rather than long summer holidays; it is hoped that once converted they will continue to holiday in the UK when the economy improves, however the sustainability of this trend appears to be dependent on the weather.⁵

Social

All three of the existing attractions we spoke to appeal and depend on enthusiasts (as volunteer staff, primary visitors and as the core income providers) therefore the ability to appeal to a niche is important. As we will be concentrating on Naval and local military history we should be able to develop a core of advocates and devotees.

However, the general decline experienced by the West Somerset Railway appears to be consistent with general tourist figures, which in the South West show a 3% drop to railways and a 2% drop to heritage centres⁶. We will therefore need to ensure that we appeal to a more general public; providing interesting and exciting exhibits to foster repeat business.

If we are to take advantage of the Community Rights to Bid and Build legislation it will also be essential to have community support. The lack of development on the East Wharf of Watchet Marina has been a thorn in the side of the Watchet Community since the Marina was completed in 2001. However although we think that we have a good idea, others may not. It will be essential to consult with the Watchet Community to ensure that we take on board everybody's ideas and have that support. At a minimum we plan to consult with Watchet Town Council, WACET (Chamber of Trade), Watchet Harbour Marina, Watchet Conservation Society, Watchet Harbour Advisory, Watchet Boat Owners Association, Watchet Energy Group and Watchet 2025 as well as general public consultations.

⁵ Visit England *Economic Downturn and the "Staycation"*, http://www.visitengland.org/insight-statistics/market-research/Economic_Downturn_and_the_Staycation/index.aspx, accessed March 2013

⁶ Visit England's *Visitor Attraction Trends in England 2011*, <http://www.visitengland.org/insight-statistics/major-tourism-surveys/attractions/index.aspx>, accessed March 2013

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Technological

The advance in communications technology over the last few years and the popularisation of social networking provide an excellent promotional platform especially if we wish to engage a wider range of people and not just enthusiasts. It will have to be a priority to be interesting and entertaining if we are to rise above the plethora of other facebookers, twiterers and YouTubers. There is some evidence to suggest using electronic promotion can help to increase revenue for an attraction, in 2011 *“Gross revenue increased by +7% among those offering digital communications compared with just +2% among those not offering.”*⁷

New technologies and novel interfaces, such as touch-screens and apps that reveal more about the history of a display, can also be interweaved to make more interactive, exciting exhibits. There is some evidence to show that new technologies can help visitors engage, and that people learn more if they're learning in directly engaging ways. Conversely museum visiting can be considered a fundamentally a social activity, where you go and discuss things with friends and family; so a balance has to be struck so that user lone interaction doesn't destroy social exchange and dialogue. Technology also develops quite quickly and it would be detrimental to use the latest technology in an exhibit if it will then make it look dated next year.

Legal

Although experienced in running small businesses we're not very experienced in the running of museums. It will therefore become essential to join the Museum Association, the Association of Independent Museums and acquire a mentor who can offer us guidance in this area. At a minimum we will need to explore our legal obligations in respect of: Business, Retail, Landlords and Public Liability Insurances, Café, Restaurant and alcohol Licences, Health and Safety obligations, Employment Law, Disability Legislation and the Data Protection Act so we can hold visitors details.

Environmental

At all times during the consultation, build and operation of Watchet Warships 'sustainability' will be a major concern. We need to build on the economic and social benefits of our attractions, but must minimise any undesirable impacts we may have on the local environment. We must ensure that we meet the needs of our potential visitors whilst protecting and enhancing the needs of our host community in Watchet; both now and in the future.

At design stage we will implement as many eco- features as we can to:

- protect and enhance local biodiversity.
- ensure that materials are responsibly sourced – where possible knowing their provenance from the bottom of the supply chain.
- involve the local community and enhance the environment.
- benefit the local economy and prioritise goods and services from the local area.
- use innovative building design to the highest environmental standards structured to fit in visually with the current town and harbour architecture and designed to reduce the energy

⁷ Visit England's *Visitor Attraction Trends in England 2011*, <http://www.visitengland.org/insight-statistics/major-tourism-surveys/attractions/index.aspx>, accessed March 2013

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intensity of the machinery needed, through combined measures of rational use of energy and integration of renewable energy technologies.

- have smart logistics and encourage people to travel to and from the museum in the most sustainable way possible – train and bicycle.
- minimise waste and reduce, reuse and recycle, aiming for the goal of zero waste