



# THE RAMSGATE SOCIETY

The Sail Loft. 5, Priory Courtyard. Ramsgate. Kent CT11 9PW

Cllr. Rick Everitt  
Leader  
Thanet District Council  
Council Offices  
Cecil Street  
Margate. Kent  
CT9 1XZ

3rd September 2024

## **RE: Tall Ships Proposal Ramsgate**

Dear Rick

Many thanks for your detailed response of 23 August 2024 to our Tall Ships Feasibility Study.

We are disappointed at your initial conclusion but we are nevertheless delighted to see that you share our view regarding the potential long term lasting positive effects of a Tall Ships event and its considerable economic impact on Ramsgate specifically and Thanet generally, amounting to a contribution to the local economy of between £12 million and £14 million.

We note and understand your concerns regarding any potential financial risk to TDC which must be fully protected if the project is to proceed to the Delivery Stage. This issue can be fully examined as part of the **Stage 2 Viability Work**.

We have since the outset of our work on the project taken the view that this is a three-stage process:

**Stage 1 – Feasibility** – is the project feasible and verifiable from a practical point of view? Here, we examined broad cost and income levels, market potential, organisation structure all supported by the considerable experience of many ports who have undertaken such projects and the experience since 1950 with input from Sail Training International who promote these events on behalf of the ship owners/operators who participate in the events.

**Stage 2 – Viability** – is the project financially, organisationally and, from a participant's perspective, viable and verifiably so. At this second stage we examine all costs supported as necessary by quotes/sample agreements, potential revenue streams, cash flow implications and specific risks together with appropriate and verifiable risk mitigation strategies.

**Stage 3 – Procurement and Delivery**– at this stage we move into the delivery phase (predicted time frame in the order of 18 months) driven by contracted experts

in Tall Ships Operations and Tall Ships Event Management supported by Local expertise and community volunteers.

Just to further clarify the present position – we have requested a **grant** of £10,000 from TDC to finance the Stage 2 Viability, **not a subsidy**, based upon which TDC will be able to determine, from verifiable evidence, whether or not they wish to proceed to the Procurement and Delivery Stage.

It is, and remains, our objective to be totally open and transparent regarding the risk profile and to reject the project if there are significant unacceptable financial risks to TDC as a result of the Stage 2 Viability exercise.

We note in this context the concerns expressed in your letter regarding the estimates used in the Feasibility Study and would point out that on the issue of pontoons and dredging, we have not fully defined these operational requirements which will be determined by fleet configuration and positioning which will of course be done during the Stage 2 Viability phase outlined above.

We note your suggestion that we could/should look to financing Phase 2 Viability Stage from private sources and this is something we may have to consider if a grant from TDC is not forthcoming.

You state in your letter that "Unfortunately, the overall position does not therefore support the investment of public funds in the project at this stage, due to the financial risks and uncertainties surrounding this event. *Over and above this and due to subsidy control issues, it would not be a simple matter of providing cash flow funding.*"

We are unaware of any 'subsidy control' implications related to our request for a **grant** towards the cost of the Viability Study and would be grateful if you would clarify how a grant for this purpose might constitute a regulatory infringement.

We hope this response will help alleviate your legitimate concerns, and that you will reconsider our request for a grant for the Phase 2 Viability work. We are happy to discuss these matters further and we look forward to your further comments and suggestions.

With all best wishes

John Walker  
Chairman  
The Ramsgate Society  
07984 572944

Stephen Byrne  
The Ramsgate Regeneration Alliance