



## case study

## equal opportunities



Objective One is  
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The Objective One Partnership  
for Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly

### PENRYN TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE

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### the project

This is a partnership project aimed at encouraging investment in Penryn Town Centre through the conservation of the historic environment and associated environmental enhancement.

The Programme has invested £670,000 from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in the project which has a total cost of £1,340,000. This total cost will be match funded by individual applicants to provide a total of £2m investment.

The focus of the project is to restore, enhance and improve the historic fabric of the town centre of Penryn (buildings and open spaces) to aid the economic regeneration of the commercial areas and generally revitalise the historic heart of the town. The aim is to provide vitality and viability to the town centre by improving the historic environment and encouraging more visitors to the area and increasing levels of spend within the economy. A wide range of individual projects can be funded from shop frontages to environmental enhancements.

*“Conservation of historic buildings can have a wide impact on the community and the economic vitality of a town”* says Project Manager Dr Alyson Cooper. It will address the poor condition of 25 buildings, improve over 5,000 square metres of commercial space, bring 9 buildings back into full use and repair 19 shopfronts.

Through supporting individual projects, the scheme will promote consideration of physical access both to shops and within/around the streetscape. All proposed projects are subject to planning and building regulations which address the legislative aspects of physical access, designing access into the built environment (for example, the Disability Discrimination Act, and Part M of Building Regulations). The project will aim to provide additional advice on access issues through the offer of an Access Audit Service, completed by the Project Officer, a trained Access Officer. This will



enable a more proactive approach to addressing physical access to the historic environment, over and above legislative requirements. Access audits on individual buildings and THI projects will enhance projects coming forward under the scheme and provide a holistic approach to access. Access audits highlight areas where improvements can be made (including wheelchair access and visual impairment aids) given the constraints of the historic environment.

The initial motivator for the project was that of improving the historic environment. However, links to economic regeneration and the benefits of considering equal opportunities soon became apparent. As one of a series of projects in the locality, the project team is looking to provide wider economic outputs and to act as an exemplar project.

### measures of equal opportunities adopted

**To enable equality of access to opportunities for people with disabilities, including all levels of training and sustainable employment:**

The Project Management team have worked to ensure that all of the individually funded projects which comprise the THI scheme have added value by addressing physical access to buildings wherever possible within the design. This approach has increased



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physical access to shops and services thus potentially impacting upon both the number of customers (disabled, less mobile individuals, families with pushchairs etc) and potential employment opportunities for disabled people.

### **To support activities that increase the adoption of equal opportunities strategies and family friendly policies and / or the awareness of benefits of equal opportunities:**

The project supports individual applicants in addressing equal opportunities issues and provides additional support through the provision of access audits. This process covers management and training issues for staff. The whole process is hoped to support the provision of family friendly services and facilities within the town centre.

### **To enable equality of access to opportunities, including all levels of training and sustainable employment for people who are disadvantaged in the economy, including by virtue of age, ethnicity, rural isolation etc:**

The project addresses equality of opportunity for people disadvantaged in the economy through providing a more accessible and viable town centre environment.

### **benefits of equal opportunities**

Physical access to and within historic environments is often an issue for planning authorities. The Penryn THI scheme has provided an opportunity to address these issues whilst supporting the re-invigoration of the town centre and boosting the local economy through the bringing of empty buildings back into use, addressing the state of repair of others and enhancing the historic public realm / streetscape. All of the improvements were undertaken within the context of enhancing access for all and addressing equal opportunities whenever possible – to provide / increased physical access to shops and services, and thus helping to widen the market for these businesses.

Consideration has been given to the Disability Discrimination Act within environmental regeneration elements of the project – both legislative requirements and other additional improvements - to facilitate access for all. The materials used have been considered in relation to the surrounding environment and disability issues (e.g. types of surfaces used, lighting).

Addressing issues of access are part and parcel of physical build / alteration framework. Incorporating



Equal Opportunities has been a necessity – not something over and above the normal. There have been benefits to the inclusion of equal opportunities within the project, but that there is uncertainty about how this can be measured – especially financially – due to the wide ranging impact of the project within Penryn. There is a wider impact than just for individuals; an economic benefit to the town as a whole.

### **lessons learnt**

*“The provision of new shopfronts will provide significant improvements for those with restricted mobility particularly through ensuring shops are accessible to wheelchairs.”* (Community consultation)

*“It is vital that an holistic approach is adopted to ensure that the community as a whole benefits. It has been a delight to be proactive and to encourage grantees to look at the wider picture and address equality of opportunity.”* (Project Manager Dr Alyson Cooper)

*“There are substantial opportunities for increasing trade within the town, including the nearby CUC Campus. Improvements to Listed Buildings and the wider Conservation Area are an important step. Encouraging the incorporation of Access for All issues within all works will contribute to a flourishing, sustainable Town Centre.”* (Gill Grant, Mayor)

**For more information about how you can incorporate equal opportunities into your project please contact the Objective One Partnership Office on 01872 241379 or email [objectiveone@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:objectiveone@cornwall.gov.uk).**