



BTV: Karljohansvern Project

A development plan for Cultural Tourism



THE BTV PROJECT

This report is written under the auspices of the BTV Project, part-funded by the Buskerud, Telemark and Vestfold Regional Co-operation.

In 2004 the Heyerdahl Institute and Glasgow Caledonian University were successful in gaining funding for the BTV Project to consolidate earlier collaborative work and to focus on three main objectives:

1. To promote the building of international alliances in the BTV region;
2. To develop international educational co-operation across county borders;
3. To direct attention towards bridging the gap between business and research.

In the final period of the project (2007-2008), a decision was taken to advance Objectives 1 and 3 of the Project by working together with a regional network of separate cultural, heritage and tourism development projects in Buskerud, Telemark and Vestfold, with a focus on creating additional value.

The Project was jointly managed by the Heyerdahl Institute and by the Moffat Centre at Glasgow Caledonian University and involved Norwegian graduates from the MSc Cultural Heritage Studies at GCU in undertaking the work, as follows:

1. **Initial workshop in Stavern** (organised by Vestfold County Council with workshop and lectures led by the Moffat Centre and the Heyerdahl Institute, January 2007);
2. **Baseline data collection** by the graduates, working with the Moffat Centre (Spring 2007);
3. **Learning journey to Scotland** (led by the Moffat Centre and the Heyerdahl Institute, April 2007);
4. **Detailed site visits** with a view to developing and identifying project-specific future strategies for the creation of additional value (led by the Moffat Centre, Vestfold County Council and the Heyerdahl Institute, September 2007);
5. **Draft reports on site visits sent to projects** (the Moffat Centre, October 2007);
6. **Final work shop in Norway** to develop and identify future strategies for the development of the BTV-project network (led by Vestfold County Council, the Moffat Centre and the Heyerdahl Institute, planned to be held in Horten, January 2008).

This report marks the fifth and penultimate stage of this project.

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1 KARLJOHANSVERN

Karljohansvern (hereafter abbreviated to KJV) is a peninsula, attached to a fortified island by causeway, close to the centre of Horten. The site measures approximately 3 km in length (from its most southerly point to the northern tip of the fortified island) and is approximately 1 km across at its widest point. The land is clearly visible from Horten's seashore and from the upper parts of the town, yet remains under-utilised by the local population, despite being adjacent to the central area. KJV was largely closed to the public for many years as a result of military activity and vehicular access is via a single bridge over a man-made defensive channel that separates the site from the town. KJV is home to about 250 civilians, with about 850 people employed in industry there, together with a further 200 military personnel.

2 CURRENT PRIORITIES

The strategic aim of the development partners is the creation of a vibrant cultural park, which the people of Horten and district feel is there for them to explore and enjoy, that will also:

- **provide economically viable business opportunities developed in keeping with the site's heritage (in addition to the existing industrial area);**
- **be inhabited by a small but stable resident population;**
- **be visited by people from elsewhere in the region and tourists alike;**

in response to the ongoing withdrawal from KJV by the Royal Norwegian Navy.

As will be seen below, the achievement of this over-arching strategic aim has informed the generation of a number of tactical objectives, which the development partners are currently pursuing / planning to pursue:

1. The creation of a democratic local co-ordination forum, to share ideas and build a sense of shared ownership in the area's future;
2. An examination of feasibility for the establishment of a visitor office & information service on KJV;
3. The development of a traffic and parking plan for KJV, especially given the single point of vehicular access described above, which will remain necessary for the servicing of the industrial area;
4. The development of an information and interpretation plan to guide visitors and to enhance their enjoyment and understanding of the KJV peninsula;
5. The continuation of the management of KJV's attractive cultural landscape and to seek improvements to this where appropriate;
6. The sustainable development of KJV's built heritage, balancing compliance with conservation policies with the over-arching strategic aim of ensuring that KJV is a socially and economically vibrant community.

An assessment of the development partners' plans and of the site itself follows, with reference made to challenges and potential benchmarks.

3 CONTEXT

As can clearly be seen from the list of priorities above, the regeneration of the KJV site contains all of the classic complexity associated with the pursuit of sustainable development – balancing economic viability with conservation and community needs, and, as will be seen below, trying to achieve the same whilst dealing with a plethora of independent actors, who can have competing objectives and who have variable status vis-à-vis property rights.

The KJV site has long been used for military activity, which intensified when it took over from Stavern as the centre of naval activity in the Nineteenth Century. Today it is home to:

- ongoing military activity and military housing (although the Navy are in the process of a phased withdrawal);
- a large, mixed-use industrial area and a (now small) commercial boatyard, complete with historic dry dock;
- private dwelling houses, some in ex-military buildings, some not;
- a small historic hotel;
- three museums, including a large maritime museum, the National Museum of Photography and a local heritage centre (all based in historic buildings);
- an architecturally striking brick Church (the exterior of which is in a state of disrepair);
- ex-naval vessels including a submarine that can be visited by the public and a frigate which cannot be visited at present.

These buildings and vessels do not however cover the whole site (see map below) and considerable expanses of designed and semi-natural habitat exist, including woods and beaches. KJV is also home to the Royal Norwegian Navy Band (which holds popular concerts throughout the country, including three or four per year at their home base of KJV). A variety of outdoor events for up to 10,000 are held there in the warmer months. In recent times KJV has started to become a popular place to set up home and place of work for artists.

On walking around the KJV site the visitor quickly gets a sense that this is an attractive place, with significant heritage value, which has the potential to be developed into an area that has something to offer everyone – a place which allows one to

“Slow down in the urban area”



4 CHALLENGES

Any revitalisation of the peninsula, which meets the strategic aim of the development partners, whilst accommodating National policy priorities, the needs of current businesses in the industrial area and satisfying residents will not be easy.

1) Although the development partners, led by the Kommune, have an overall vision for KJV, the implementation of this vision is significantly hampered by:

a) **The number of actors involved with the site** – some as owners (e.g. existing industry, Navy, Ministry of Culture, Horten Kommune, private residents, KNM Narvik Foundation etc.) and others performing regulatory functions (e.g. Vestfold Fylkeskommune, Riksantikvaren etc.). Improving dialogue and co-ordination between actors is a prerequisite for realising projects and aspirations.

b) **Policy constraints**, including pressure to dispose of military resources in small parcels for maximum financial gain and the conservation requirements of Riksantikvaren etc. Fighting against these constraints is unlikely to bear fruit other than (perhaps) in the very long term, so working within them is assumed in this report. As one of the Navy's primary goals is to realise as much money as possible from the site's sell-off, it has to be accepted that land and buildings will continue to be offered for sale in small lots, at a price that is often outwith the reach of the local authorities / people looking to start small businesses / educational establishments. Regulation of the development of built heritage by Riksantikvaren and the Fylkeskommune can however be seen as a positive counter-balance to this financial constraint. Private developers do not grant themselves permission to convert historic buildings and regulation will constrain their options as much as it does the Kommune etc.

c) **Finances & timescale** – each development partner faces financial constraints in their own right, e.g. in relation to purchasing buildings or restoring ships. Shared financial prioritisation e.g. via a development trust would help, although this will be controversial. The current project timescale (until 2008) is insufficient for a task of this size.

2) The successful re-development of the KJV site as a sustainable community and a place to “Slow down in the urban area” will also depend on the pursuit of practical improvements to the management of the site, including addressing the following:

a) **Finding out about KJV** – the website is attractive, updated regularly and informative, both about the heritage of the site and about events held there. It is however in Norwegian only. If the development partners wish to increase visitation by tourists, the site will need to have multi-lingual pages and be well-linked to popular tourism websites.

b) **Finding KJV** – although local people know how to find KJV, signposts directing visitors to the area could be improved – anecdotal evidence was reported in relation to potential visitors being unable to find the site, giving up and going home.

c) **Finding one's way round KJV** – the information board in the main car park (see overleaf) is again rendered in Norwegian only. It is not immediately clear to the visitor what there is to see, what buildings and areas they are allowed to / encouraged to enter and which they are not, nor how one goes about getting to them. This is a significant issue, which can be addressed by the use of sympathetic signposting / waymarking and the erection of interpretive panels at appropriate points across the site. Mobile telephone technology now allows for information to be provided to visitors in a range of languages, including lesser-used ones.



d) **Prioritisation for maintenance and development of the existing resource base** – there is a degree of uncertainty over the final destiny of the buildings being purchased in the Gamle Horten area, a lack of funding in relation to preparing the frigate for visitors and a lack of agreement as regards future maintenance of the gardens (currently funded by the Navy). It will be central to the success of the site that maintenance and development of existing resources is prioritised over (politically high profile) acquisition of assets.

e) **Existing attractions** – the critical issue in relation to increasing visitor numbers to the two Museums on KJV is the extension of opening hours. It is difficult for people to visit places which have such seriously restricted opening hours.

5 BENCHMARKS

There are several places that the KJV development partners can look to for inspiration, some close to home, some further away.

1) In terms of examples in Norway, the example of the **Bygdøy** peninsula in Oslo with its museums, waterfront and green spaces is an obvious comparator and the sort of place that KJV could eventually become, albeit on a smaller scale. Again in the Oslo area, the island of **Hovedøya** in the Oslo Fjord is a special place that allows for relaxation in the urban area – no traffic, historic buildings, an attractive environment and places to eat, without being overly-commercialised.

2) The example of **Margaret Island** in the middle of the Danube in Budapest is another interesting example. Accessed by bridges, Margaret Island again has a mixture of heritage buildings, green space, places to eat and relax, is used to host events and has accommodation available. Despite its popularity and small size, being on Margaret Island does give the visitor a sense of being able to “*Slow down in the urban area*”. Margaret Island is inaccessible to most traffic (except service vehicles), although it is not a place where permanent residents live in the same way as KJV. For more information see:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret_Island

3) An example which is worth looking at in terms of mix of activities and the way in which these have been effectively packaged and marketed is **Lindisfarne** (Holy Island) which is off the North-

East coast of England and accessed by a tidal causeway. Visitor services include great gospel exhibitions, gospel garden and shop but the island exudes a unique atmosphere that touches even those who are not deeply religious. Interpretation is ecumenical, representing Christians including Roman Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, Anglicans etc. Although the website is not the most attractive (less so than KJV's), the Lindisfarne site is particularly good in terms of **linking together** all of the things that can be done there and giving the visitor an idea of the **diversity** of the offering.

<http://www.lindisfarne.org.uk/>

The site is easy to navigate and mediaeval pilgrimage tourism provides a strong theme. The site is also linked to that of a commercial company from which people can purchase Lindisfarne Mead merchandise <http://www.lindisfarne-mead.co.uk/> which exploits the monastic theme.

4) The **Ness Islands** in the middle of the River Ness in Inverness have similarities to Margaret Island in the Danube. Again inaccessible to vehicles, these islands are again a place to *"Slow down in the urban area"*.

<http://www.walkingworld.com/results/walksummary.asp?method=thirdpartyid&wkno=2127>

The real lesson to be drawn from the Ness Islands however is the importance of ensuring that the ongoing maintenance of the grounds at KJV in the future is arranged in advance of the Navy ceasing to perform this function. The upkeep of the Ness Islands had been less than perfect for several years, they lost their attractiveness as a place for people to go and the Council have had to spend many years and much money trying to return them to their former standing.

<http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/news/newsreleases/2006/February/240000investment.htm>

5) As the **Fort** at KJV is still held by the Navy and inaccessible to the public, it may be possible to try persuading the Navy to open it to them (for short periods of time only) as part of the programme of **European Heritage Days** that is sponsored by the Council of Europe in conjunction with the EU.

<http://www.ehd.coe.int/sdx/jep/index.xsp>

There is Norwegian involvement in the European Heritage Days programme, but as this initiative was originally started in Scotland it is best-developed there and it is worth looking at the website below for a fuller sense of what is done there.

<http://www.doorsopendays.org.uk/opendays/>

6) Finally, the **Stirling Forthside development** may also be an interesting example for the development of KJV. A large former military site, on a peninsula in the River Forth and close to the City Centre, this area was inaccessible to the public for over 100 years and is now subject to a major redevelopment of the historic military buildings and also involves the creation of offices, a cinema, a limited amount of housing, a hotel, places to eat and nature trails. There will only be very limited access to vehicles and much of the site will be pedestrianised. This is a good example of a long-term plan to produce a mixed sustainable development that will be both a place of work, a place to live and a place to visit. For more information please see:

www.stirling.gov.uk/forthside-2.pdf

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made to the KJV development partners, led by Horten Kommune:

1) Organisation and decision-making:

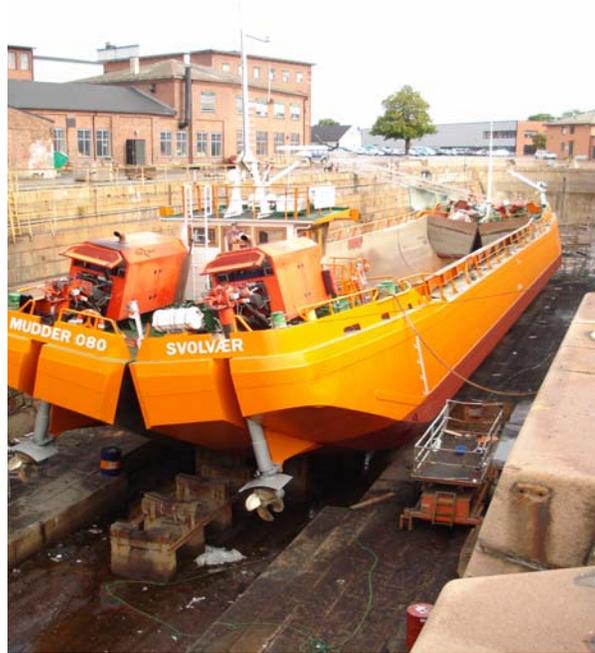
- The project needs further engagement from the political leadership in terms of **implementation** – it is one thing to set the vision, another to achieve it. Officials have achieved a great deal whilst working within significant constraints, but cannot do it all themselves.
- The idea of creating a democratic local co-ordination forum proposed by the team is an ideal way of engaging political leaders and the large number of disparate actors with a stake in KJV's future.
- **This forum should however be complemented by a small executive body that acts on behalf of the forum and which contains representation from all the key parties.** Of all the recommendations made here, this is the most important one.
- It will be for the partners to decide on how best to constitute such an executive body, but it may wish to give consideration to the formation of a separate legal body with charitable status that could be used as a means of prioritising and financing shared projects.

2) Information:

- The development partners' decision to prioritise an **information plan** is sensible, as is the proposal to base this on the design manual of Nasjonale Festningsverk. The plan should communicate the diversity of KJV as this, together with its location, is its greatest strength.
- The idea of creating a separate information centre is unlikely to produce any increase in visitor numbers or much economic activity. There is already an existing centre in close proximity to KJV. It is therefore proposed that such an information function would be better-provided either within an existing building (e.g. the local history archive) or within a new development (e.g. KJV would benefit from a general store to serve its local population and visitors and this would be an ideal location for information).
- Many individuals now get their information about places to visit from the internet. The provision of multi-lingual information on the website should be a priority if larger numbers of tourists are to be attracted to visit and this site should be well-linked into websites that tourists use.
- Finally, developing a programme to install multi-lingual signage to enable visitors to find their way around the peninsula more effectively would greatly improve the quality of visitor experience.

3) Traffic and parking:

Unlike many of the examples given in the 'benchmarks' section, KJV has an industrial estate and a shipyard that need to be serviced and permanent residents who need to get to and from their homes. As a result, a complete ban on traffic is unlikely to be workable without causing significant damage to business and to people's lives.



It is therefore most likely that restrictions rather than a ban should be imposed on traffic to maximise the sense of quiet on the peninsula without imposing a heavy burden on residents and business.

A successful traffic management strategy may involve some or all of the following:

- EITHER restricting access to the entire peninsula to permit holders only (e.g. residents, workers, disabled, delivery drivers) OR allowing open access as far as the main car park only (for an example of a similar restricted plan see the Stirling Forthside benchmark). This latter option would keep nearly all traffic confined to the southern and western parts of the peninsula;
- Restricting hours of access for heavy vehicle deliveries to business (e.g. early mornings only);
- Complete closure to traffic (except for residents and disabled) at the time of major events;
- In order to enable access to the whole site (e.g. carrying equipment to beaches, people with disabilities) it would be possible to run a minibus on a circular route during peak periods (such as Easter and summer). As these are also times that schools are on holiday it may be possible to use vehicles normally engaged on servicing schools. Novelty vehicles should be avoided as these cannot easily be redeployed outwith the summer months;
- Restrictions need not be applied uniformly at all times – it may be appropriate to have more stringent restrictions e.g. at weekends and in peak holiday periods.

4) Buildings etc:

One of the main issues in relation to the sustainable development of the KJV site is of course the number of historic buildings that are being sold by the Navy, which have conservation constraints on their use and which are selling for high prices. The following ideas are recommended:

- Purchasing no more buildings in the meantime, until all existing projects are being progressed satisfactorily;
- Consider working in partnership with private property owners and the Navy towards hosting a 'Doors Open Day' on the peninsula, which will help to raise the profile of the area with local people and allow access to places which are normally closed;
- The school is clearly best-suited to educational use, and if it were financially viable to use it for the marine engineering department of the University College this would be highly desirable. The building was, after all, designed as a place for maritime training. A possible alternative for historic schools is re-use as a business incubator unit, with classrooms providing small, flexible spaces that can be used for small business start-ups without the need to radically alter the fabric of the building. Schools are usually unsuited to conversion into residential use, especially where there are conservation concerns.
- The U-shaped building in the Gamle Horten area (former barracks, stables and House of the Stable Master) will be developed in accordance with the Kommune's judgement of concepts submitted by developers. In setting a brief however, the ground floor of the southern and eastern wings may be suited to hosting retail units, with the upper floors possibly being suitable for visitor accommodation, given the small number of rooms available in the hotel.



- The western wing (former stables) may be suitable for use as craft workshops / artist studios and/or as an overspill space for the Preus Photography Museum (possibly as a home for temporary exhibits, assuming that appropriate climate control and security can be ensured). If visitors were to purchase a ticket at this (accessible) location it may encourage more of them to visit the existing galleries.



- The former military canteen (Officers' Mess Hall) in the Gamle Horten area may be best-suited to re-development as a food outlet, keeping it close to its original use, which in turn helps conserve the heritage of the area.



- Although there is no desire for KJV to become a residential 'desert', it was reported that there may be scope to develop some further new housing in shipyard areas which are no longer in use (beside the frigate's mooring). This would be an attractive site for development, would generate economic activity and would enhance rather than detract from the attractiveness of KJV as a whole.

- The fact that the frigate has been gifted and was actually built at KJV makes it an asset that could very usefully complement the existing attractions at KJV. Ensuring the frigate is made ready to receive visitors should be a priority for all partners, not just the KNM Narvik Foundation.



5) Other recommendations:

- KJV is successfully used for major outdoor events. It may be possible to host more of these in the course of the year, with the caveat that too many would be disruptive to the normal life of residents and existing business.
- Museum opening times obviously reflect resourcing, but at present they are limited and limiting. Opening the attractions for more hours is highly desirable in terms of increasing visitation.
- Extending the timescale of the project beyond 2008 is essential, given the scale of the task in hand.
- Finally, if it is of interest, it may be worthwhile considering arranging a short, separate and focused Learning Journey to look at some of the sites mentioned as benchmarks.

7 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, KJV has an excellent resource base for attracting people into the area and creating a vibrant, sustainable, community. It has all the basic attributes of a place that can be developed in keeping with the Government's policy to create value through the cultural heritage. The main issues faced by the development partners relate to issues of policy, decision-making, management and finance, which are of course very difficult for them to tackle on an individual basis, hence the recommendation for closer partnership working, possibly through a new, independent organisation. The keywords are **integration**, **co-ordination** and **co-funding**.