Revitalization of Douglas town centre moved a stage closer after the Chief Minister’s regeneration steering group approved the preliminary proposals for the project and invited the Douglas local regeneration committee to prepare detailed designs for the first phase of the ‘Destination Douglas’ scheme.

The invitation followed proposals presented to the steering group on September 27 by Douglas Development Partnership’s manager Chris Pycroft, responsible for overseeing the scheme.

The initial phase will target Duke Street, (north), Strand Street, Regent Street, John Street, Nelson Street, (west), Howard Street and Granville Street.

Mr Pycroft said: ‘This is a most exciting development in what promises to herald a momentous new era for Douglas. My presentation reflected the findings from public “Destination Douglas” consultations the Partnership held earlier in the year. Although the invitation does not constitute a budget allocation from the Town and Village Centre regeneration fund it does, however, bring us to a position where we can begin the detailed design process by consulting with retailers and other town centre stakeholders.

‘We’ll be looking at specific components of the scheme, such as paving, drainage, street furniture, street and architectural lighting, waymarking and tourist information provision. We’ll also be liaising with property owners to develop proposals for improving building façades in the area.’

Mr Pycroft added: ‘The committee welcomes the decision made by the Chief Minister’s regeneration steering group. I am cautiously optimistic that all parties...’
involved will recognise that a reinvigorated Douglas town centre is crucial to ensuring the capital’s long-term ability to attract inbound investment, residents and visitors and to securing Douglas’s economic, social and cultural future wellbeing.’

Douglas Borough Council Leader David Christian said: ‘The work involved to reach this stage is a compelling demonstration of successful public/private sector partnership and community involvement. Early outline design proposals have indicated the exciting opportunities that exist to draw on Douglas’s wealth of maritime and trading heritage and create a unique town centre that will attract new businesses, investment and visitors. I am therefore pleased that this shared vision of a revitalised Douglas is moving a step closer to becoming a reality.’

Community, Culture and Leisure Minister and chairman of the Douglas local regeneration committee David Cretney MHK said: ‘The Douglas regeneration proposals represent a positive step forward in our efforts to create a more vibrant, attractive and welcoming capital. Douglas is the main gateway to the Isle of Man, as well as its commercial heart and economic hub, so it is in all our interests to ensure a bright, prosperous and sustainable future for the town. I am confident that everybody will work together so that we can get on with the detailed designs; we want especially to involve the retailers so that we can get their thoughts on what will work to improve our major retail centre.’

Isle of Man Chamber of Commerce chief executive Mike Hennessy said: ‘The regeneration of Douglas centre is a long-stated priority of Chamber. We are an international class Island in many ways and are deserving of our capital reflecting such. Clearly we are delighted that progress appears imminent.’

Design proposals for Douglas town centre can be viewed at www.ddp.org.im