

# Beaches plan is approved

WORK began on Monday to enhance the famous Tunnels Beaches in Ilfracombe after planners gave the green light to develop the popular attraction.

Owner Jamie McLintock had applied to North Devon District Council for permission to create a new building housing toilets, changing facilities, showers and a café, together with one unit of holiday accommodation.

Following a site visit which included viewing the beach from a boat and a great deal of local support, plus a 1,300-signature petition, planning committee councillors voted to approve the scheme.

The beach-side development will begin during the winter of 2008, after the next tourist season, but in the meantime Mr McLintock has begun work on an indoor children's soft play centre, toilets and café bar courtyard which already had planning permission.

"It's brilliant news for us and means we can start immediately on the café development," he said.

"But that all depended on

us being able to move the toilets and this means as of next season we will be able to open throughout the winter.

"We are still open now, too, and will be until the end of October."

The initial recommendation for the Tunnels scheme was one of refusal, because planners felt it would have too much impact on the character and appearance of the coastline.

But following much discussion and a great deal of support from Ilfracombe Town Councillors, the Ilfracombe Tourism Association and North Devon Marketing Bureau among others, the plans were passed, subject to negotiation on building materials to be used.

Councillors decided: The site was within the town development boundary; it provided a much-needed unit of holiday accommodation and met with planning policy regarding conservation areas.

"We'd like to say thank you for the all support shown by local people, businesses and councillors at the meeting," said Mr McLintock.