

Right royale race to win casino bid

At least six developers and operators have joined the race to bring Las Vegas-style gaming to Yarmouth seafront, it emerged last night.

It has been revealed that casino schemes being considered for the site of the resort's ageing Marina Centre would be on the staggering scale of up to GBP 50m. And the proposals being brought forward include everything from four-star hotels and 1000-seat conference halls to quality restaurants and even an outdoor swimming pool.

Borough council economic director Mark Barrow, who is examining the merits of the different schemes with senior councillors, said: „Any such development would probably be the biggest in the town in living memory.“

The town's business and political leaders see a new-style large casino – expected to draw up to 10,000 visitors a week – as an ace card in building on their vision of turning Yarmouth into a „resort for all seasons“.

And Yarmouth is seen as a national front-runner to land one of eight large casino licences to be announced by the government in January as part of its gambling legislation shake-up.

If it is successful, the council will have to choose between schemes for the Marina Centre site and an alternative multi-million pound casino development being championed by Pleasure Beach managing-director Albert Jones, next to his theme park.

Mr Barrow said Yarmouth was already achieving tangible success in extending its holiday season – for example through such heritage attractions as the Time and Tide Museum – but it was vital to create even more employment through

the winter months.

James Steward, curator of Time and Tide, said Yarmouth's growing tourist season had already led to the museum extending its winter hours.

He said: „Our visitor figures for October and November have been very good. With the town's heritage provision now gaining a regional and even national profile, it can only boost Yarmouth's move to become a resort for all seasons.“

Linda Dyble, a partner in the Kensington Hotel, on North Beach, hailed the new plans for the seafront and said the town's multi-million pound regeneration scheme, allied to its growing heritage attractions, had already led to a „remarkable“ extension of the season for her.

„We have had nearly full occupancy from March through to the end of October,“ she said.