

## News

## Park up for tourism gong

A SOUTH-DEVON holiday complex is through to the finals in the national tourism awards for England.

Cotton Country Holidays is one of just four finalists from Devon in this year's national VisitEngland awards.

They are among 16 south west finalists, making it the top region for the third year running and reinforcing its position as the country's top destination.

The award-winning, four-star rated park, set within 60 acres near Dawlish, Cotton Country Holidays has been a family-run holiday park for nearly 40 years.

The 75 finalists have been invited to the VisitEngland awards night in Newcastle on May 11.

Chairman of the south west judging panel, Alison Handyside, says: "We are absolutely delighted the south west has come out as the top region at the VisitEngland national awards."

## Help plan your neighbourhood

TOTNES Town Council has recruited a new co-ordinator and chairman to work with the community to design a new Neighbourhood Plan.

New co-ordinator, Theresa Platt is urging people to get involved and help decide the town's future.

She said: "Planning shapes the places where people live and work. Planning should be good for everyone, not just developers. That's why we want to involve local people."

Neighbourhood Plans give opportunities for local people to have a say on what new buildings should look like, and in some cases grant planning permission for new buildings they want to see go ahead.

For more information email [info@totnesneighbourhoodplan.org](mailto:info@totnesneighbourhoodplan.org) or visit the website [totnesneighbourhoodplan.org](http://totnesneighbourhoodplan.org)

# College won't be laurels as UTC rises

By **TINA CROWSON**

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THR accolades have been pouring in for South Devon College.

The recent praise it received in a report from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education for its university centre is the latest in a long line of laurels.

The college also recently won a prestigious Association of Colleges' Beacon Award for Health and Wellbeing.

But the college is not known for resting on its laurels.

And that is clear from the number of new facilities it has opened in recent years, not just at its Long Road campus in Paignton, but also the new £10million University Technical College which is rapidly coming out of the ground in Newton Abbot and opens in September.

The area's first UTC will offer a new way of learning for up to 600 young people aged 14 to 18. It will recruit from across the region including Teignbridge, Torbay, Exeter, Plymouth and the South Hams.

The modern facilities are a world away from the college's old Torre site in Torquay which Stephen Criddle joined, together with past principal Heather Maxwell, in 2003. Together they headed a team which pulled the college out of a time of 'difficulty'. At that time it had a £12million annual turnover and £2million annual deficit.

"It seemed like a good challenge to be involved with," says Mr Criddle, now principal. His five years as principal have gone 'incredibly' quickly, he said.

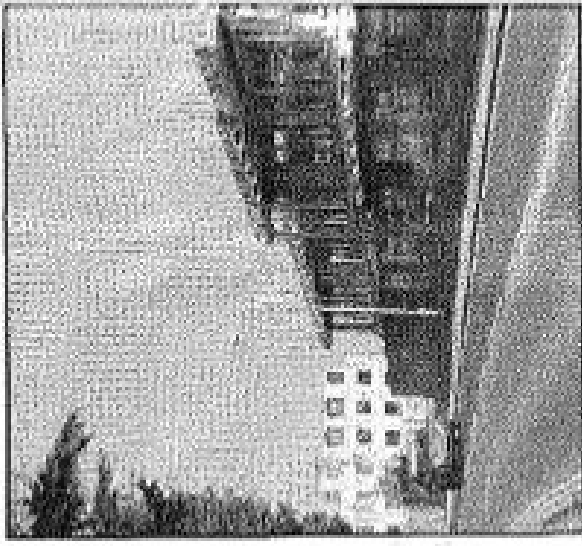
He puts the continued success down to 'the people and the team work'.

"We are now a large college with 700 staff and an annual turnover and expenditure of around £20million, and we are serving a lot of different ages, different educational agendas and different government departments."

He also paid tribute to the role of governors including former chairman Vince Flower and current chairman Kevin Mowat with their business skills who act as a 'critical friend'.

Another of the college's strengths which it has developed over the years is the sheer range of qualifications which can be taken by students of all abilities and all ages.

"There is real opportunity, not just purely the straight university academic



**WORK IN PROGRESS:** The old Blacklers Gate new University Technical College



**TALENTED PEOPLE:** Stephen Criddle

route as we do have a very strong higher education provision which we want to increase and also technical qualifications and apprenticeships," said Mr Criddle.

The college supports some 1,000 apprentices each year with up to 600 businesses, from micro firms to the largest local employer.

The college increasingly sees its roles as a matchmaker between students of all ages and ability and employers, and also bridging the gap between the skills which businesses say they need and the skills learnt by students, from basic