

Meeting: Overview and Scrutiny Board

Date: 14 January 2026

Wards affected: All wards

Report Title: Annual Review of the Events Strategy as aligned with Destination Management Plan

When does the decision need to be implemented? N/A

Cabinet Member Contact Details: [Councillor Jackie Thomas, Cabinet Member for Tourism, Culture & Events and Corporate Services. Email Jackie.Thomas@torbay.gov.uk](#)

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To review the delivery of the Torbay Council English Riviera (Outdoor) Events Strategy 2021 – 2027 and English Riviera Destination Management Plan 2022 – 2030 to ensure that delivery of the Strategy and Plan remain achievable, arising from Events, Culture and Tourism Review.

2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

- 2.1. The proposals in this report help us to deliver our vision of a healthy, happy, and prosperous Torbay by the Events Team providing and supporting a range of events year-round for the benefit and wellbeing of residents in accordance with the updated Events Strategy and supporting the Destination Management Plan in attracting day and staying visitors to the area.
- 2.2. The reasons for the proposal, and need for the decision are to ensure that the Events Team is fulfilling the requirements set out in the Events Strategy and the requirements set out by the Overview and Scrutiny Board Task and Finish Group at the end of 2024, and that this is in line with the Destination Management Plan.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

- 3.1. That Overview and Scrutiny Board considers this report and makes any recommendation it considers appropriate to Cabinet.

4. Appendices

Appendix 1: English Riviera (outdoor) Events Strategy 2021 – 2027 updated May 2024

Appendix 2: Progress matrix for English Riviera (outdoor) Events Strategy 2021 – 2027 updated December 2025.

Appendix 3: Destination Management Plan Matrix Growth Theme 4 Culture and Events

5. Background Documents

- The Destination Management Plan can be found here: [English Riviera Destination Management Plan - Torbay Council](#)
The Destination Management Plan is currently under review ahead of a new iteration scheduled to be developed and presented to cabinet on 14 July 2026.

Supporting Information

6. Introduction

- 6.1. The English Riviera (outdoor) Events Strategy has been in place since 2021 and runs until 2027 however it was updated in May 2024 as a result of recommendations to Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Board following a Task and Finish Group enquiry at the end of 2024.
- 6.2. The Events Team element of Culture and Events was increased to 3.6FTE in May 2024 following the 2024/25 budget setting process, and a further 1 FTE joined the team at the start of September 2025. It's anticipated that this level of personnel will just about allow for the management of the existing workload with some limited time available for growth of certain elements such as income generation to meet the income target. Income streams, such as commercial events on council land, will continue to be a focus for the team. However, due to a member of staff leaving and sickness within the team, the team is yet to realise a full complement.
- 6.3. The team has made some good progress in delivering the Events Strategy and also the recommendations set out by the Overview and Scrutiny Board, however due to the English Riviera Airshow now being delivered inhouse, and the limited staffing available until recently, as well as staff leaving and sickness, there are some areas that need to be progressed further in the following quarter.
- 6.4. The Progress matrix for English Riviera (Outdoor) Events Strategy 2021 – 2027 updated December 2025, appendix 2, shows progress. This progress is in addition to the team's work on key events English Riviera Airshow, Bay of Lights Illumination Trail, Electric Bay which are very significant in terms of the team's time resource, as well as organising income generation areas such as the big wheel, fairs, circus, and also civic events including Remembrance Sunday and supporting approximately 90 applications on council land each year.
- 6.5. The benefit of key events to the local economy such as English Riviera Airshow, Bay of Lights Illumination Trail, Electric Bay and Brixham Pirate Festival are significant. A 2023 economic impact study showed the significant benefit of the airshow to the hospitality and accommodation sectors of £5m, but also, a recent economic impact study for Electric Bay showed that it was worth £1.75M to the local economy in 2024, in addition to offering contracts and employment for local businesses and people. It was notable that there was wave after wave of people coming from harbour hospitality businesses ahead of the Fat Boy Slim gig with reports of premises running out of beer and feedback of them having their "best trading day ever". Although Electric Bay will not take place in 2026, it will return in 2027. Bay of Lights Illumination Trail 2025 attracted significant numbers in excess of 2024's 1.25M people. And there was good feedback from traders in the hospitality sector. Here's an example "We loved being down on the seafront for The Bay of Lights launch night, it was brilliant to see so many people out enjoying the trail and all the events going on. Our venues have been packed with families and trail visitors ever since, so it's been great to feel the buzz across the Bay again this year."

- 6.6. It should also be noted that Torbay Council on behalf of the Destination Management Group have just commissioned a review and refresh of the English Riviera Destination Management Plan 2022–2030. This aims to align the strategy with evolving market needs and interests, and to futureproof its delivery. This review process will incorporate input from various stakeholders including the Events and Culture Team to ensure the refreshed strategy is aligned with the existing and future strategies and activity, and enables a cohesive, place-based approach.
- 6.7. The team works collaboratively with the English Riviera BID Company (ERBID) on many events, mutually supporting events financially, with Torbay Council also providing event and project knowledge and ERBID providing national marketing support. A Memorandum of Understanding between Torbay Council and ERBID has been in place for a four year term for a number of events that both organisations support, running to the end of ERBID2. For instance, ERBID puts in circa £20,000 plus significant national marketing time and support towards the English Riviera Airshow. ERBID puts in a similar level of support of the Bay of Lights Illumination Trail. The Council jointly funds the ERBID organised England's Seafood Feast and the English Riviera Walking Festival events. Both organisations have also contributed towards the Agatha Christie Festival the SUP Championships and SUP World Cup and Brixham Pirate Festival. Both organisations support other events such as Torbay Pride in various ways. There are regular discussions about these and potential future events.
- 6.8. The next iteration of the English Riviera Business Improvement District (ERBID3) is currently in development. The current BID ERBID2 will conclude on 31 December 2026 and the English Riviera BID Company is now preparing for a new ballot to secure a third five-year term, ERBID3, beginning in January 2027. In addition to other vital components such as destination marketing, the focus on key event support and development is vital. It is very important that a positive ERBID3 ballot is secured in June 2026 to allow for continued partnership working between the ERBID Company and the Council and a further £500k (£100k pa) invested in key Events from 2027-2031.
- 6.9. Event costs have risen significantly since the pandemic, especially in areas such as infrastructure and security, the Events Team has worked hard over the past three years to keep events costs at an affordable level, whilst providing the best possible content for the English Riviera Airshow and the Bay of Lights Illumination Trail. In fact, a whole new element was added to the airshow in 2025, with a Friday night opening event including pyro-planes and fireworks which was successful, attracting good numbers. The English Riviera Airshow 2025 cost a total of £338,500 with £133,000 coming from the Council's Events budget. A £20,000 contribution came from ERBID who also provided national marketing support in-kind, and the rest of the costs came from trader, sponsorship and car parking income.
- 6.10. The council's other main event The Bay of Lights Illumination Trail cost circa £480,000, subject to reinstatement costs (currently estimated). This is broken down as £190,000 for the light trail and supporting infrastructure including £100,000 on the actual lights, £53,000 on security costs and the rest on infrastructure. This does sound a lot, but other resort spend on similar lighting "events" can easily be upwards of seven figures. The cost of providing the Christmas Market was £59,000 including staffing, power and infrastructure.

Marketing costs were £3,750. Video mapping was £54,000. Opening night entertainment and fireworks was £9,000. The ice-rink cost £165,000. This was all funded by £177,000 that comes from the Council's Events budget, £20,000 from ERBID who also provide national marketing support in-kind, and the rest of the costs are covered by bar income, trader income, and a small amount of sponsorship income. There was also a contingency towards the ice-rink of £40,000 (which may not all be required due to good sales).

6.11. New legal implications such as Martyn's Law are likely to have a significant impact on how events will be run in future and there is already a growing expectation from regional Police and Government Home Office for increased levels of Counter Terrorism and Hostile Vehicle Mitigation being in place for larger and significant events, all of which comes at significant cost. For instance, one unit of H-Stop which is "rated" Hostile Vehicle Mitigation barrier and is now expected as the "norm" cost £2,500 to hire for the entirety of Bay of Lights Christmas Market. We would need upwards of 60 units for the airshow. At the moment we rely on Swisco refuse vehicles which aren't officially rated as Hostile Vehicle Mitigation, don't add to the event in terms of look and feel, and add significant cost to the event as they require a constant staffing presence at weekend rates of pay.

6.12. The Events Strategy sets out six key actions as follows:

- **Strategic Focus** - Shift the strategic focus to achieving more with the limited resources available.
- **Events Charter** - Develop an Events Charter to set clear expectations from organisers and to cement the actions that are important to local communities in event planning.
- **Capacity Building** - Build capacity in the sector to make the English Riviera a centre of events excellence across the spectrum of event types and sizes.
- **Events Infrastructure** - Review investment into events infrastructure in order to develop key sites and promote them so that the English Riviera is welcoming and able to meet the needs of regionally and nationally significant events, with an ambition to support UK renowned and world class events.
- **Event skills development** - Support the development of local event organisers, producers and promoters to create high-impact events and enable job skills and job creation.
- **Events marketing** - Ensure the events offer of the English Riviera is promoted far and wide as a welcoming and vibrant destination that has a diverse range of appeal.

6.13. Details of progress against these actions can be found as Appendix 2. Progress matrix for English Riviera (outdoor) Events Strategy 2021 – 2027 updated December 2025.

6.14. The English Riviera Destination Management Plan Matrix Growth Theme 4 Culture and Events can be found as Appendix 3

7. Options under consideration

7.1. In addition to the key actions in the revised Events Strategy, further actions set out by the Overview and Scrutiny Board Task and Finish Group at the end of 2024 have been included in the matrix – Appendix 2. Progress matrix for English Riviera (Outdoor) Events Strategy 2021 – 2027 updated September 2025.

8. Financial Opportunities and Implications

- 8.1. The Events Team, in line with the Events Strategy, uses the resources currently available in the team and externally in order to reduce the cost to the council and increase income.
- 8.2. Costs are currently managed within the available events budget, however the cost borne by the Council is significant compared to investment from consumers, sponsors and commercial clients, and this is not sustainable. For these significant events to be sustainable in the short-term or longer term, there needs to be more of an awareness of event costs and more significant contributions from the various sectors and beneficiaries of these events taking place.
- 8.3. For instance, the English Riviera Airshow costs £318,500. Of which Torbay Council directly invested £131,500 (41%) as well as significant staff resources. £92,400 (29%) was income from traders. £53,000 (17%) was ticketing – car parking, seating and programmes. ERBID direct funding at £20,000 (6.5%) as well as significant marketing support worth £5,000. Sponsorship was £17,000 (5.5%). Donations was £2,900 (less than 1%). Merchandise income was £1,800 (less than 0.5%).
- 8.4. For the Bay of Lights Illumination Trail and associated activity. The income has not been finalised from ice-rink sales and bar income, and reinstatement costs are not yet known, but it seems likely that the council will have invested £210,000 (44%), with ERBID directly funding £20,000 (4.3%) this is specifically for the illumination trail (and represents a 10.5% towards that cost) as well as significant marketing support worth £5,000. Other sponsorship £9,500 (less than 2%). The rest of the costs were covered by trader income, bar sales and ice-rink sales.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. All events must meet a minimum standard of competence in the management and delivery thereof. Events should be in compliance with health and safety legislation (where reasonably practicable). The council is liable for all activity on council land. Events should also be in align with Purple Book Guidance. Most events will be assessed by the area's Public Safety Advisory Group who will apply legal principles to any event management plans received.

10. Engagement and Consultation

- 10.1. Stakeholders were consulted in the development of the Events Strategy and subsequently with the update where possible.

11. Procurement Implications

- 11.1. All events that are tendered by the Council are done so in line with Procurement legislation and with guidance and support from the Council's Procurement Team.

12. Protecting our naturally inspiring Bay and tackling Climate Change

- 12.1. Reducing the carbon footprint of events is one of the key considerations in the development and delivery of events run by the Council's Events Team. Equally this is a significant factor when considering Event Management Plans submitted to the Council by event organisers.

13. Associated Risks

- 13.1. The Events Strategy plays a key part in the development of strong cultural experiences for our community and in attracting visitors to the area. Events are also significant in supporting local businesses within the area, such as equipment suppliers, hospitality and accommodation sector. Any curtailment to the events strategy puts all of the above at risk.

14. Equality Impact Assessment

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act and groups with increased vulnerability	Data and insight	Equality considerations (including any adverse impacts)	Mitigation activities	Responsible department and timeframe for implementing mitigation activities
Age	18 per cent of Torbay residents are under 18 years old. 55 per cent of Torbay residents are aged between 18 to 64 years old. 27 per cent of Torbay residents are aged 65 and older.	The teams works to ensure that there is a broad range of events in a year-round programme that appeals to a wide range of ages.	An analysis of events and their appeal.	Current
Carers	At the time of the 2021 census there were 14,900 unpaid carers in Torbay. 5,185 of these provided 50 hours or more of care.	A good number of events in the area are free of charge and therefore accessible to all. The team also encourages event and activity promoters to allow reduced price or free access for carers. There was a specialist ice-skating session for cared for children.	Continued encouragement of events that involve carers and special events	current
Disability	In the 2021 Census, 23.8% of Torbay residents answered that their day-to-day activities	Key events will have an element of support for those with Disabilities. i.e. Airshow has disabled viewing areas with	Continue to review and advise new events	current

	were limited a little or a lot by a physical or mental health condition or illness.	appropriate seating, Electric Bay has a disability viewing area, Bay of lights is designed to be as accessible as possible with flat pathways between features.		
Gender reassignment	In the 2021 Census, 0.4% of Torbay's community answered that their gender identity was not the same as their sex registered at birth. This proportion is similar to the Southwest and is lower than England.	Key events are welcoming to all regardless of gender. Work closely with Pride event	Continue to review and advise new events	current
Marriage and civil partnership	Of those Torbay residents aged 16 and over at the time of 2021 Census, 44.2% of people were married or in a registered civil partnership.	Key events are welcoming to all.	Continue to review and advise new events	current
Pregnancy and maternity	Over the period 2010 to 2021, the rate of live births (as a proportion of females aged 15 to 44) has been slightly but significantly higher in Torbay (average of 63.7 per 1,000) than England (60.2) and the South West (58.4). There has been a notable fall in the numbers of live births since the middle of the last decade across all geographical areas.	Private spaces for breast feeding are available on request at key events – airshow and Electric Bay.	Continue to review and advise new events	current

Race	In the 2021 Census, 96.1% of Torbay residents described their ethnicity as white. This is a higher proportion than the South West and England. Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals are more likely to live in areas of Torbay classified as being amongst the 20% most deprived areas in England.	Key events are welcoming to all regardless of race.	Continue to review and advise new events	current
Religion and belief	64.8% of Torbay residents who stated that they have a religion in the 2021 census.	Key events are welcoming to all regardless of religion or beliefs.	Continue to review and advise new events	current
Sex	51.3% of Torbay's population are female and 48.7% are male	Key events are welcoming to all regardless of their sex. The events team is 50% female. Events activities are programmed with a mixed sex audience in mind.	Continue to review and advise new events	current
Sexual orientation	In the 2021 Census, 3.4% of those in Torbay aged over 16 identified their sexuality as either Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or, used another term to describe their sexual orientation.	Key events are welcoming to all regardless of their sexual orientation. The events team supports the annual Pride event.	Continue to review and advise new events	current
Armed Forces Community	In 2021, 3.8% of residents in England reported that they	The team works with the armed forces community to private Remembrance	Continue to review and advise new events	current

	had previously served in the UK armed forces. In Torbay, 5.9 per cent of the population have previously served in the UK armed forces.	Sunday events as well as other activities such as the recent opening of Rifles Garden and affirmation of the freedom of the borough event. The team works closely with organisers on Armed Forces Day		
Additional considerations				
Socio-economic impacts (Including impacts on child poverty and deprivation)	The team acknowledges that significant numbers of local residents are in the 10% most deprived in the UK (according to the 2019 indices of multiple deprivation.	The team ensures there is a good mix of free entry events in the area and also encourages promoters of paid for events to provide discounted or free access to certain sectors of the community.	Review for all key events within our control. Advise new events	current
Public Health impacts (Including impacts on the general health of the population of Torbay)	The team work closely with public health due to events pulling large crowds together.	The team worked with Public Health following the pandemic to ensure safeguards against the covid virus were in place at events. Also at the recent airshow significant additional measures were put in place to safeguard against secondary spread of the crypto virus by visitors to the event from Brixham.	Regular communication with the Public Health team.	current
Human Rights impacts				
Child Friendly	Torbay Council is a Child Friendly Council, and all staff and Councillors are Corporate Parents and have a responsibility towards cared	The events team works with the CYP teams to support looked after children at key events, and offers some form of unique opportunity.	Continue to review and advise new events	current

	for and care experienced children and young people.			
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15. Cumulative Council Impact

15.1. None.

16. Cumulative Community Impacts

16.1. None.