

# English Riviera (Outdoor) Events Strategy

2021 - 2027

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## Foreword

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Our cultural offer, including events, is seen as a critical contributor to the area's success, making Torbay, the English Riviera, an attractive proposition to live in, work in and visit. There are opportunities to level-up and improve our events sector in order to better support the experience had and perception of visiting the English Riviera – the premier UK resort. This is of particular significance in the minds of influencers who are now central in shaping the held opinions of whether a place is great to visit, and as such these individuals can play a significant part in an area's success.

Equally important is the opportunity for local people to contribute to the development of an authentic cultural offer and promote the area's identity as influenced by its physical environment, our rich heritage, world class UNESCO Global Geopark designation, and the exceptional quality of life.

This strategy is a starting point, and it aims to address these issues, build capacity and deliver a strong and vibrant events sector that will have a positive effect on the local economy and enrich the lives of local residents as well as visitors to the area by achieving **a multi-layered, year-round, area-wide events offer.**

**Councillor Mike Morey**

**Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, Environment and Culture**

# Introduction

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The Covid-19 pandemic has put a spotlight on events in the area as part of the wider offer to visitors and our community and there is a clear need to look at how we operate in a more strategic way. Events in 2020 were decimated. All key events were cancelled and there is a clear need to proceed with caution to prevent further spikes of the virus in this area and keep residents and visitors safe in the future whilst we move forward with a post vaccination society. Events will find it difficult to operate in the way they used to and will have to re-think how they do things. However, even before the Covid-19 pandemic arrived there was a clear need to review and reposition the events offer of the area.

We need to do things differently, to think smarter and plan our events offer to enhance the wider tourism offer of the English Riviera, with a more long-term focus, so that we're not struggling to fund and produce even a minimal level of headline, feature and supporting events. To meet our vision of being the premier resort in the country, we need a plan that provides our local community with activities and events that enrich their lives and supports their development and well-being. That said, it may be at least 12 months (from publication of this report), or so, before the recovery is such that we are able to fully contemplate developing and staging major quality headline events on the English Riviera due to safety and financial reasons, although a lesser level of activity is necessary to sustain and support tourism business in the interim.

In brief terms, in our community we have event organisers, producers and event specialists who can work together to support the delivery of a multi-layered, year-round, area-wide events offer and look to work collaboratively with commercial event organisers nationally and internationally to bring high quality events to the area. It is acknowledged that one of the key challenges is drawing together the difference in working cultures and viewpoints of the various stakeholders including volunteer/community, local authority and professional large scale organisations. The council, through this strategy aims to support all of the above activity.

Torbay, also known as the English Riviera, is a unique and special place. Through working with groups such as Torbay Together, input from Torbay Culture and the clear focus of the English Riviera BID, as well as recent work and development of strategies such as the Destination Management Plan, Cultural Strategy and other local plans, we have started to align the different opinions of organisations and groups about how our unique distinctiveness should be evolved to provide significant opportunities both for residents and visitors to the area. We have also looked to align with The Arts Council Strategy and emerging Sport England Strategy, where relevant, to ensure links to the national aims for culture and events.

Torbay Council has a stated objective of Torbay being the premier resort in the country, and good quality events should form part of this vision. This strategy aims to draw together views about events from across the community and will be used to move forward options and opportunities; it forms the basis of a plan for the next six years, with a view on a longer-term strategy. Further

information on alignment with Torbay/English Riviera strategies can be found in the background document *English Riviera Events Strategy – Evidence base*.

## Scope

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This strategy has a focus on **outdoor events** in the area which include various genres - cultural, creative, traditional, innovative and on-trend activity and certainly includes music events, sporting events and more; and the support that is given to ensuring that events happen in a safe way especially on Council land by the Torbay Council Events Team. Whilst the focus is on outdoor events there are clear links to indoor events and other activity in the area and these will also be taken into consideration and investigated further when resources allow. It is hoped that in due course an addendum to this document, linking to and focussing on indoor events will be developed.

This strategy acknowledges the strength and depth of volunteer coordinators and their support for events in the area. Without these exceptional people many events just wouldn't happen. Events aren't easy to stage, they can be a slog and take a lot of grit and determination to make happen. The strategy seeks to support, develop and encourage such volunteers to strengthen their skills and abilities should they want such support, and seeks to make links across the sector, including commercial events operators, so that a wider support network can be developed. It also aims to be the launching point in trying to make it easier for events to take place in a safe way, and with expert support available where needed.

This strategy also recognises the work that other organisations play in ensuring the continuance of an annual events programme and supporting events to come to take place in a safe way most notably Brixham Town Council, Torbay Harbour Authority, Torbay Culture and the Paignton Green Events Group which is now known as the English Riviera Events Group.

Although not directly referenced, the strategy acknowledges the strength of the area in hosting local high quality independently produced performances by performing arts groups such as town bands, musical groups, choirs and family entertainers, and the commitment and work of these groups and individuals in delivering high quality entertainment that contributes to the well-being of local people and visitors to the area, and certainly add a dimension to the multi-layered emphasis of this strategy. It is acknowledged that these groups require good quality performance areas with appropriate amenities.

## Context

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In its simplest form, the English Riviera is a traditional seaside resort reaching ahead to provide the best possible 21st Century offer, set against a challenging landscape of limited public finances and extraordinary budgetary demands and pressures. The recent Covid-19 outbreak has only served to exacerbate how fragile the local economy and the events programme is, and proven the need for a more coordinated events strategy and how it would benefit the locality as it moves into a recovery and repositioning phase.

Sitting on the South Devon Coast, neighbouring Dartmoor National Park, the English Riviera is a UNESCO Global Geopark and home to a wealth of natural assets such as its natural coastal beauty, it is also known as England's Seafood Coast and the birthplace of Agatha Christie. It hosts a number of leisure, heritage and cultural assets such as Kents Cavern, Torre Abbey, the Princess Theatre and the Riviera International Conference Centre. The area has multiple Blue Flag and Seaside Awards for its beaches and Green Flag awards for excellent parks and gardens, as well as the only UK destination to have held the Purple Flag award for seven consecutive years. The recently adopted strap-line of Torbay Together and the English Riviera BID – *Naturally Inspiring* – sums it up extremely well.

The area is well known for its coastal and maritime links with a good-sized yachting community in Torquay and Brixham. Tor Bay has an international reputation as a sailing and championship venue. Brixham is the largest fishing port in England, by value of catch, and Paignton has a sea-facing events space and pier. The area is marketed as a year-round destination using outdoor and adventure activities as a reason to visit, such as kayaking, paddle-boarding, coaststeering, caving, abseiling, wild swimming and sailing.

In 2019, there were more than 100 outdoor events, either small, medium or large-scale that took place on Torbay Council land including several that took place within the realms of the Tor Bay Harbour Authority; as well as a small number of key events that took place on private land. Further information can be found in the background document *English Riviera Events Strategy – Evidence base*.

Events and festivals are acknowledged as fundamental in improving the quality of life of a local population. They provide opportunities for expressing collective belonging to a group or a place; create occasions for drawing on shared histories, cultural practices and ideals. They are also an important element in the marketing and development of tourism and valuably important in extending the season. The importance of events taking place in developing the offer in the 'shoulder months' is recognised. If the area is to be an all year round destination, the right events will play a key part. Many towns and cities use events and festivals as vehicles for regeneration projects and tourism promotion, all vital to the local economy.

Events can be critical in enabling successful regeneration funding bids (as has happened in Liverpool, Bournemouth, Brighton and Hull), giving one area an edge over a competitor as well as

showing local distinctiveness. They provide an additional reason for tourists to visit a particular location and can also be a key factor in a tourist's decision to choose one destination over another. They provide enjoyable things to do for visitors, allow informal and rewarding contact with the local community, local environment and provide new cultural experiences for visitors. All of these things, with the right type of events, can bring money into the visitor economy, supporting local jobs and local businesses. Many of the considerations for staging events are set out on the following page.

The legacy of the Covid-19 global pandemic is likely to be felt in the events sector for the duration of this strategy. This strategy and the related Event Policies may need to adapt to ongoing changes in government legislation and public health advice.

## Reasons for Staging Events

### Social

- Opportunities to participate in community events
- Improve the health and wellbeing of residents
- Encourage community cohesion, celebrating diversity, creating a strong sense of community (and often a “feel-good factor” amongst the community)
- Promote inclusivity and equality

### Cultural

- Contribute to a sense of community, local pride and cultural identity
- Create community identity and cohesiveness
- Celebration of cultural heritage
- Introduce new and challenging cultural ideas
- Fostering a culture of innovation and imagination
- Support and showcase art forms

### Economic

- Attract visitors from beyond the region
- Extending the season into the shoulder months. The right types of events in the off-season will attract more visitors when the local economy needs them
- Contribute to the growth of overnight stays and day visitors
- Enhance national profile, generating significant media coverage
- Provide employment opportunities
- Support local businesses and act as a catalyst for regeneration and renewal
- Maximise income generation to invest in community events

### Skills

- Develop capabilities of communities and organisers to take greater responsibility for events
- Build skills training and career pathways into the events sector (including volunteers and existing volunteer event organisers)
- Present opportunities for volunteering with community groups and those running events, to upskill and develop confidence
- Continue to build capacity and expertise across the area's events sector



## Sustainability

- Motivate event organisers and suppliers to adopt high sustainability standards in event delivery. Continue to improve, review and evolve the environmental criteria that organisers are expected to meet.
- Improve on-site infrastructure and facilities that supports positive sustainable behaviour and reduces the impact on the environment
- Make best use of green infrastructure
- Explore potential for sharing of equipment, infrastructure and resources between events
- Offer experiences that supports the local natural environment and promotes a local scientific and other designation such as the UNESCO Global Geopark designation. For instance, Tor Bay boasts some of the finest sailing waters in the world

Many destinations have increasingly recognised these benefits and have developed extensive events programmes. The last fifteen years or so have seen a remarkable rise in the number of events and cultural festivals in towns and cities throughout the UK, Europe and elsewhere. Evidence shows that a properly resourced and mature events programme, with a distinctive creative vision, and staged in an interesting and accessible location, can generate significant profile, attract new visitors and deliver substantial economic benefit.

Such an approach will have significant economic benefits to the locality. It will draw in different target audiences to different activity all of whom will spend money on car parking, food and accommodation, in shops and at other visitor attractions whilst they are in the area. To build the necessary capacity in the area and develop a year-round season-based rhythm of cultural events is not cheap to do, but by pursuing match funding and re-directing income generated by the Events Team as and when capacity has sufficiently grown to do so and with the provision of “seed funding” which would be administered by officers in discussion with an advisory Events Steering Group, there is potential to secure the variety and capacity desired whilst building wider economic impact and indirect benefit to the Council.

Unlike permanent attractions, stadiums and museums, festivals and events can be more fleet of foot; they're able to switch venues and upscale programming if necessary (depending on the scale and what facilities are available). They're also much more inclusive. Many events are free to the public, utilising existing public spaces and cultural assets, spark interactions among community members and nurture a positive image of urban areas. However, many events are susceptible to poor weather, with strong winds being a particular issue for coastal events. Equally, very good weather can also create logistical issues with increased pressures relating to larger than expected crowds.

Successful events destinations offer festivals and events, which are connected to the place, inspired by its location, history, heritage, people and living culture. They deliver authentic, high quality events, which for the most part can only be found and experienced in that way in that particular place. Places that nurture this approach – such as Brighton, Bournemouth or even Liverpool - even for those events that are *brought-in* rather than home-grown – tend to be more

successful and sustainable. Not only as a tourism destination but also a place to live, work, study and invest in. Further information to support the need for action can be found in the background document *English Riviera Events Strategy – Evidence base*.

The English Riviera hosts many events throughout the year. Many of these target a local audience, although visitors might go to them when visiting and are therefore limited in economic potential; some are more commercial touring events that attract a regional audience because the Bay is the most convenient location to experience the event (such as shows at Princess Theatre and Palace Theatre, Circus on Paignton Green or touring exhibitions at Torre Abbey); and a few are headline events that are unique to the English Riviera and high profile, with the ability to attract visitors to the area and shape the reputation of the Bay. There is currently very little resource for product development.

Whilst many events were cancelled in 2020, the Covid pandemic also showed us how resilient certain sectors in the Torbay area could be, with, as you would imagine, the creative sector at the forefront. It was surprising how much organisations were still able to deliver during such a challenging time. Such delivery included Create to Recover, English Riviera Film Festival, Devon Open Studios Launch, Online Virtual Art Exhibitions. In addition, the pandemic has brought cultural organisations and freelancers together via *What Next* and there is now a real opportunity to build on and create better collaborations and partnership working.

Some of the most noteworthy events currently or recently staged on the English Riviera include (this is a flavour and not a complete list):

- English Riviera Airshow
- International Agatha Christie Festival (takes place at multiple venues)
- Bike Festival (although BMAD appears to have folded)
- Brixham Pirate Festival
- BrixFest
- Fishstock
- Geopark Festival
- Eyeview projects such as Wavelength (a one-off project with potential to develop as a regular event Oct-Dec)
- English Riviera Triathlon
- Rowcroft Sleepwalk
- Torbay Half Marathon
- Children’s week
- Into the Mix
- Paignton Festival
- Paignton Regatta
- Seafood FEAST
- English Riviera Film Festival
- Torbay Steam Fair
- Various Sailing events at all levels including major international and national sailing events

Further information about current events and current sports events in the area can be found in the background document *English Riviera Events Strategy – Evidence base*.

## Future Direction

Torbay Council is relooking at the area’s future, its priorities, approach and the delivery structures needed to reposition and to realise its potential. This Events Strategy has been developed in

response to the Council's Corporate Plan, to align with the Destination Management Plan, Cultural Strategy and Heritage Strategy, and also to act as a recovery plan for events in the area following the Covid-19 pandemic and as an events repositioning plan. In addition to the plans outlined above, it is designed to sit alongside the Economic Strategy, Neighbourhood Plans (3), the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the UNESCO Geopark Management Plan, Torbay Council's Black Lives Matter/Diversity report and inform the vision for the English Riviera until 2027 with a view beyond this point.

The English Riviera has the ambition to build the range and scope of medium and large scale (Headline and Feature) events staged in the area to deliver a year-round programme (with a focus on the shoulder seasons) of high quality, distinctive events which will appeal to visitors and residents, have a positive impact on the local environment and support the promotion of the Bay across all its agendas. Currently, relatively few of these events are of regional significance, something that needs to be addressed as part of the outcomes of this strategy. New events need to be sustainable, more regionally distinctive, work in the off-season and have a greater impact.

Event organisers may also wish to consider virtual and digital programming as a way of promoting the area, increasing event revenues and expand participation through online platforms and social media, although this is not a focus of this strategy which is more about enabling physical events.

# Vision, Objectives and Actions

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Events play a key role in the area's wider economic development and social agenda and this strategy outlines a future in which they can play a much stronger role in supporting community wellbeing, the area's profile, reputation and economic growth, in support of the area's recovery from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and repositioning as a significant destination for events.

Although the delivery of this document starts immediately, the core activity will focus on reinvigorating and repositioning events from 2022 and the strategy is about being in a position to move events forward for the **2022 season** onwards. This will allow time to get things in place whilst the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic on the events industry are fully absorbed and responded to.

Events help to make the English Riviera a more vibrant and interesting place to live, visit, work and study in. They bring people together and shape a strong sense of identity. They provide opportunities to stimulate tourism and economic growth.

Events also have wide cultural and social benefits for our community. They strengthen identity and pride, impact positively on health and wellbeing, and enhance educational outcomes and economic opportunities as well as encourage a greater appreciation of the area's unique natural environment. A related example of this is Oldway Garden Volunteers and volunteers at Torre Abbey both in the house and in the garden. There is scope for up-skilling retired but active residents and this could be transformative on many levels.

## Vision

Our vision represents what needs to be achieved between now and 2027. It recognises the breadth of impact and benefit that a well-run events programme can deliver. It centres on achieving a greater focus on **quality, distinctiveness and impact**. It will also support a greater emphasis on quality events to support the area, by making it more attractive to visitors following the impact of the corona virus pandemic.

This question of authenticity is key: if Torbay has ambition to be a truly leading destination of choice, then a better mix of originated content (whether from local or national suppliers) and toured in (visiting) events needs to be nurtured. The question of balancing risk with ambition is to be explored: The Airshow is a flagship event, but there are questions about its long-term environmental and economy sustainability and several events as anchor points would be stronger, and may help future proof the events offer.

Together we will deliver events that create distinctive experiences for residents and visitors and that support our image as a future thinking, creative and quality year-round destination with a growing reputation for professionally delivered high quality events.

We will think more about impact and seasonality, and our events will grow sustainably with the economic and social benefits felt by our residents and businesses without having a detrimental impact on the environment.

Where this is not possible (for example the English Riviera Airshow) we will mitigate against environmental impact as much as possible and put in

measures that will off-set the environmental impact of such events in a structured way whilst maintaining the social and economic benefits of the event for the area.

The events offer will be managed in a way that not only supports the area to recover from the Covid-19 crisis but also to help it to be Naturally Inspiring, repositioned to thrive and compete long-term with other coastal destinations.

## Objectives

In setting these objectives for events on the English Riviera, we recognise that there should be a balanced approach – where events are not the end in themselves but rather a vehicle through which other area-wide needs are met:

Events on the English Riviera will:

- Enhance the national and international profile and reputation of the area (including maximising the profile of UNESCO Global Geopark designation, Agatha Christie birthplace and legacy etc.)
- Be high quality and professionally delivered
- Be delivered safely, and delivered to address any justifiable concerns raised by partners
- Attract more visitors to the area (day and overnight) year-round and align with the Destination Management Plan
- Deliver measurable benefits for local businesses
- Encourage civic pride and community cohesion
- Be sustainable and encourage job creation and volunteering opportunities
- Develop capacity and capabilities in the area's events sector
- Consider diversity, look to address racism and be welcoming to all
- Increase the positive impact of environmental protection measures where possible. Where not feasible, ensure that events are as close to being environmentally neutral as possible and mitigate against environmental impact as much as possible
- Provide opportunities for the area's young people to reach their potential through participation in events and via work experience opportunities

In addition, the Council and partner organisations will:

- Achieve an even spread of Headline events (seasonal anchor points) interspersed with good quality Feature, Area and Community events
- Seek additional third party funding and use existing finances (S106 and CIL) to support and match fund opportunities to create strong event spaces as well as good quality events in Brixham, Paignton and Torquay.

## Strategic action plan

Identified below is the strategic action plan to deliver the vision and objectives and which are discussed in greater detail in Appendix 1 - **Strategic Action Plan**.

1. **Shift the strategic focus** to achieving more with the limited resources available. And seek out funding and match funding opportunities.
2. **Development of an Events Charter** to set clear expectations from organisers and to cement the actions that are important to local communities in event planning.
3. **Build capacity** in the sector to make the English Riviera a centre of events excellence across the spectrum of event types and sizes.
4. **Investment in events** in order to develop key sites that meet the needs of quality event organisers that manage events that will have a UK wide audience.
5. **Support the development of local event organisers, producers and promoters** to create high-impact events and enable job skills and job creation.
6. **Support Marketing promotions with partner groups and organisations** to 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.

## Conclusion

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This strategy recognises that the English Riviera has significant work to do to improve its viability as a host for quality, attractive events, developing a multi-layered, year-round, area-wide, events offer and attracting and developing viable and professional event organisers in order to deliver meaningful benefits to the community and the local economy and which attract visitors.

The ambition is to start progress towards achieving more with the existing limited resources but finding ways to draw in income to cover such events. It won't be an easy task but having a strategy it is a start that all stakeholders can acknowledge and work with together. The strategy advocates four specific actions that we believe can help achieve this by a greater focus on 'quality', 'distinctiveness' and 'impact' and which will help achieve our vision.

# Appendix 1 - Strategic Action Plan

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This is the strategic action plan which outlines the actions that need to be undertaken at a strategic level. A more detailed delivery action plan will follow on from the adoption of this Strategy including Key Performance Indicators. The delivery action plan will detail a pathway to delivering the specifics of the strategic action plan, looking at issues such as specific events, timings, resource required etc.

## Action 1 - Strategic Focus

**We will shift the strategic focus to achieving more with the limited resources available.**

To build a multi-layered, year-round, area-wide portfolio of events that deliver distinctive experiences for visitors and residents and also supports economic development and profile building priorities. There will be a mixture of established successful events, community (local) events, new events which can be developed and national/international events which we will try to attract to the area. In most instances the Council will act in a strategic coordinating role, working in partnership with various organisations to support the delivery of these events. This may mean doing fewer events of greater benefit.

## Key Aims

The aims of this approach are to:

- Differentiate the English Riviera in a competitive and overcrowded market for event audiences.
- Ensure Headline events' profile, attendance and impacts are not diluted by an excess of similar events. It is recognised that local community events would very rarely impact on these larger events.
- Develop new opportunities that fill gaps outside the core summer months in the annual calendar, and ensure the correct type of events that draw in visitors fill the summer months.
- Go out to the market to see what is possible to achieve the above in terms of Headline and Feature events.

## Event Classification

To support these key aims it is propose that the area's events are classified in a framework of four distinct groups:

### Headline Events

These will be grown to three (and then potentially to five as capacities increase) big impact annual cultural and sporting highlights which showcase the area. The aspiration should be for events that can be classified as **English Riviera: Naturally Inspiring** that display high quality strong ambition; deliver significant economic impact; attract large audiences; achieve significant media coverage; and generates more overnight stays in the area.



## **Headline Events - Potential Development**

Suggestions for further potential Headline or Feature events (to be considered by the advisory Events Steering Group) include a light and sound based event (potentially building on Torbay Culture's Wavelength project), a Food Festival, an Outdoor Adventure Exhibition, a Walking Festival, a Music event if resources allow, a significant sporting event, a Christmas related event, a Pride Event (will need to be evolved with the LGBT+ community), a cycling event, a sailing event or a significant cultural creative event. Further information and specific ideas can be found in the background document *English Riviera Events Strategy – Evidence base*.

## **Feature Events**

Established, growing or one-off events that contribute to the vibrancy, profile and tourism appeal of the area. They will be able to demonstrate how they can deliver quality and high levels of ambition, achieve greater public profile, deliver economic impact and attract visitors to the area from Exeter, Bristol, Plymouth and the wider sub-region, as well as some from further afield. Seafood Feast is an example of a significant Feature event but is not an outdoor event (as yet).

## **Feature Events - Potential Development**

A significant vacuum exists during the winter months leading up to Christmas and New Year. The potential exists to build the Winter Riviera brand. A distinctive, authentic and creative, promotional 'umbrella' branding that creates the opportunity to promote the English Riviera as a winter visitor destination, which reaches beyond Christmas markets and is not just about "Tinsel and Turkey" packages with limited benefit to the local economy.

Other business operators in the area have also suggested a summer music season as a feature event. A series of music offerings on a stage on Torre Abbey Meadows. This would offer an eclectic mix of shows from popular music, rock music through to jazz and classical music on stage over a series of nights, each night attracting a different audience. The impact would be very visible and would be a high-profile offering. The event would need to be fenced off and would only work with a suitable promoter. The Council would need to support the development of such an event and give the land and land re-instatement for an agreed period of time (say three years). Other suggestions for music events include a multi-site, multi-venue festival. Further information and specific ideas can be found in the background document *English Riviera Events Strategy – Evidence base*.

## **Area Events**

These are events delivered at area level that although of a recognised quality are predominantly aimed at residents. They will have limited impact or attraction to visiting audiences beyond the south Devon sub region but contribute to the year-round ambience of the area as a happening place. Paignton Festival, Paignton Regatta, Torbay Carnival,

Children's Week, THHN City to Sea Marathon currently fit this category. We would group touring tented circus, fairs and light entertainment shows as area level events. However, these events are unlikely to achieve more than modest growth in visitor impacts or engagement beyond local audiences. They should however be well-managed exemplars of sustainable events, adding to the distinctiveness and uniqueness of the area and its neighbourhood and making the most of opportunities to support local suppliers.

### Community Events

These are small-scale community or community of interest organised festivals and events taking place across the area. They have a capacity of 999 or less. The Council provides advice and guidance and could run a grant scheme through a new advisory Events Steering Group (with appropriate accountability measures in place) so that eligible organisations can apply for project funding.

While these events have real value to local communities and should be welcomed, the limited resources of the Council should be targeted at events which deliver a wider set of impacts and many of these events will continue to look after themselves. Nonetheless the Council should support the permissions required and offer guidance and advice on best practice delivery.

Such small community events, up to 999 attendees because of their nature, currently require limited support and Health and Safety monitoring and this will be encouraged moving forward to free up the Council's Events Team to support delivery of the wider strategy. Any bespoke concerns will be flagged up with relevant partners agencies, or via PSAG, and for those selling alcohol or providing entertainment, will also need a licence, which will address any relevant concerns.

### Sports Events

There is huge potential for the development sporting events to take place within the area. Whilst this is not specifically covered within this strategy, it is explored within the background document *English Riviera Events Strategy – Evidence base* along with suggested ideas for development and is a theme that will be picked up between this strategy and the impending sport strategy that is currently being developed. As such the potential of sports events will be considered as part of the categorisation process detailed above. Most will be Area Events but as these grow in stature they will become Feature events or even Headline events. Some significant sports events can be classed as Feature events because of their wider draw. Significant music events like Boardmasters have grown out of sporting activity and niche events. Research into the potential to link outdoor adventure and especially sea-based activity should be explored.

## Summary of opportunities

- Focus efforts on making the most of events with the greatest potential to deliver economic impacts

- Equally focus on events that deliver on well-being and social impact for our community
- Encourage actions to increase the direct impact on the local economy by Headline Events
- Support bids for occasional international events e.g. sporting events or Geopark related programmes
- Develop a seasonal year-round programme of events (with key anchor points) and packaging to present a coherent offer
- Encourage the use of local suppliers and the distinctiveness of all events that take place in the English Riviera

## **Specific recommendations**

- Develop an advisory Events Steering Group to include stakeholders to support and advise officers on the key strategic actions and to support the development of the delivery action plan for English Riviera events. The group will be made up of local people and professionals with an interest in creating a successful year-round events offer. Care will need to be taken to ensure transparency, honesty, integrity and authenticity. This will be an independent group from various sectors of our community that will support officers to shape and develop the Action Plan that will follow the adoption of this strategy. The group will need to be community orientated and politically independent. The Council's Events Team will work closely with the group. The group will advise on plans for seed funding new events, taking into account accountabilities and specific terms associated with the funding from the Council and any other partner funding bodies.

It is suggested that the following groups are represented; English Riviera Events Group, Torbay Culture Board, ERBID Board, representative for local infrastructure suppliers, representative for independent event managers. There may also be scope for a well-connected event ambassador.

- To use seed funding from the Council specifically towards starting up and sustaining Headline and Feature events, this sum to be made available each year and increasing where budgets permit from 2022 to 2027. No event to be funded for more than three years, and funding would be on a sliding scale.
- A firm commitment should also be given to supporting existing Area and Community events with help and advice. A one-off funding pot that events can apply to, to support their development, if necessary, whilst income from Headline and Feature events is grown sufficiently to partly be used to support the development of Area and Community events over the longer term, as well as infrastructure development on key sites.
- To go out to the market of national commercial events organisers using existing resources to ascertain what Headline and Feature events might work in the area, who is interested and what leverage may be required to bring appropriate events to the area.
- Research and progress themes already outlined in the previous section with the advisory Events Steering Group.

## Action 2 - Events Charter

**We will develop an Events Charter to set clear expectations from organisers and to cement the actions that are important to local communities in event planning.**

We will create a simple Events Charter for any events on Council land (or more widely if other landowners wish to adopt it) as a public statement about what the Council and organisers are trying to achieve through events and how they are going about it. It is intended to help organisers understand what is expected from them and to which they publicly commit themselves. It will also be a tool to use with local communities who may be impacted by events, to show what collectively is trying to be achieved, to highlight the approach to quality and well-managed events and to build better relationships between those delivering events and those impacted by them.

### Key Aims

The Charter acknowledges that the Council will:

- Provide a welcoming and supportive location for events
- Promote events that enhances the reputation and image of the area
- Provide resources to assist the planning and delivery of priority events as well as financial support to community events
- Encourage and enable events organisers to work together in a respectful and collaborative way

Organisers will:

- Positively contribute to the quality of life for local communities
- Maximise the economic contribution from events to the area economy
- Work together in a respectful and collaborative way
- Deliver innovative and imaginative programming
- Make the most of creative partnerships and collaboration that supports locally based event producers and suppliers and strengthens capacity building
- Promote health and wellbeing while minimising any disruption to local health and social care services (events should not impact too much on necessary day to day services)
- Deliver the most sustainable events that help protect the environment as far as possible
- Minimise disruption to residents and businesses
- Support opportunities for young people especially care-leavers
- Consider use, where appropriate, of *Changing Places* facilities

### Specific recommendations

- That the Council commits to a single point of contact for all event enquiries drawing upon extensive experience gained in managing and regulating events and help to facilitate end-to-end multi-agency support in the planning and delivery of events including support across the different departments and responsibilities of the Council such as waste provision through the newly established Swisco.

- That the Council will simplify the events application process by upgrading the digital process in order to reduce paperwork and increase efficiency using a system such as the Council's new CRM system or similar.
- The Council will embed infrastructure in key events locations as a priority, as part of new development levies and payments (S106 and CIL), which will help provide environmentally sustainable event spaces in the future. Other spaces should be developed and brought on-line as funding permits after the key spaces are at the required level.
- All event organisers above a certain threshold (999+ attendees) will be required to sign up to the Charter. A suggested draft can be found in the background document *English Riviera Events Strategy – Evidence base*.

## Action 3 - Capacity Building

**We will build capacity in the sector to make the English Riviera a centre of events excellence across the spectrum of event types and sizes.**

To ensure that the Events Team are focussed on the area of greatest opportunity with the tools and resources to help them. We will develop a portfolio package (PDF or via the event application system) that can be sent to interested parties detailing location, amenities and capacities etc.

We will shift our resources towards events that can help the area have a bigger and better impact. We recognise that, as it stands, a large proportion of time and resource is spent facilitating the permissions of smaller and community events that have limited economic impact. This will ensure that the Events Team are focused on the areas of greatest opportunity with the tools and resources to help them.

The Council currently processes event plans (necessary for health and safety reasons) and approves approximately 110 events a year on key council owned event sites (and does not approve a small number which is equally, if not more, time-consuming), which necessitates a significant workload and time spent by the Events Team processing applications, facilitating consultations and supervising event preparations to ensure well-managed, safe events that mitigate negative impacts on local communities linking in with the area Public Safety Advisory Group, H&S and safety officers, Licensing team, Environmental Health, Highways, Natural Environment team and others. The SAG 'Torbay Guide for Organisers' document provides advice around event safety to all organiser's and is extremely well written and helpful, it is acknowledged this will need updating to ensure it is in line with this Event Strategy.

The sector and organisers can help the Council achieve what it wants but often are unclear exactly what that is. So, it is recommended to bring them on board to help find solutions to the challenges faced by events – whether that is programming outside of peak periods; sharing best practice in sustainable delivery; or innovating and driving out distinctiveness. Much was learnt about from offering a more dynamic service to a number of event organisers during the Covid 19 pandemic, and relationship building is key to successful interaction.

## Managing Applications

The existing process and supporting system for managing events applications needs to be reviewed. Either upgrading the existing system or investing in a new system. Options and ideas can be found in the background document *English Riviera Events Strategy – Evidence base*

### Programme Development

The Council's Events Team will act as an enabler, facilitator (and occasional commissioner) rather than a direct deliverer of events. The programme would be developed and advanced through a process of stakeholder engagement and collaborative working to create and shape a high-quality annual calendar of activity. Opportunities should be taken to enable communication among event organisers, encourage use of public spaces and manage any diary clashes for the area. The Events Team will provide supervision for the area's events programme. They will be responsible for advising, supporting and in some instances investing in the area's Headline, Feature, Area and Community portfolio of events.

Using clear criteria, the Events Team would engage with local, national and international external organisations and agencies to identify and bid for one-off Headline sporting and cultural events. An essential criteria would be that an external local lead or co-partner(s) is secured. The criteria are a guideline and not all potential Headline Events will meet every element. Options and ideas including criteria, development of the sector operational roles and site hire charges can be found in the background document *English Riviera Events Strategy – Evidence base*.

## Specific recommendations

- Explore digital tools that can help with event applications to improve efficiency. We need to enhance the existing online process which is clunky and not at all user friendly for event applicants or end users (officers). Linking in with the Council's new CRM system or similar.
- Use existing digital platforms (e.g. social media groups) to connect the various organisers to support each other and use best practice from the English Riviera Events Group and other similar groups in other localities.
- The Council considers supporting a new part-time role in programme development using clear criteria (from existing resources).
- Fostering the capacity and capabilities of the local sector and engaging them in the area's challenges. Support local event managers and promoters with opportunities for training and skills development including volunteer event coordinators.
- Retain support from other operational teams at the Council to deliver this strategy and maintain the reputation as an attractive destination to deliver events, and where necessary support these teams' resources where there is a significant increase in work.
- The Council will maintain a stable and sufficiently resourced and funded Events Team to support events, especially those on council land, working collaboratively with the newly formed advisory Events Steering Group.
- Charging. The above will necessitate a charge for the use of event spaces and bonds in place for land reconstitution to some extent (mainly commercial, Headline and Feature events in due



course). This will support the cost of the events officers to enable events and future planning, it may even support maintenance of events spaces (hopefully linking in with S106 funding opportunities), and in due course may support seed funding for Headline and Feature events (in collaboration with the advisory Events Steering Group), and support grants for important community events that meet specific criteria. Alternative mechanisms to fund events will also need to be pursued (i.e. ERBID expansion and other grant funding). There will be regular reviews of hire fees and charges and it is suggested that not for profit Community and Area events will largely be exempt from event fees, although reinstatement fees will still need to remain in place. From consultation, many organisations have expressed concerns about road closure fees for community events, and this will need to be investigated further to see whether there is a cost benefit of no fee for such road closures being incurred, although the main cost here is for enacting and lifting road closures which the fee from the likes of Amberon Ltd or SWISCo Ltd which the Council cannot bear.

## Action 4 - Events Infrastructure

**We will need to invest in 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.**

The English Riviera benefits from a limited number of open spaces. However, the area's principal spaces are not equipped to support major events, and substantial infrastructure has to be brought in. This is not a major problem and saves on issues with storage but with consideration to environmental issues a stable power supply rather than bought-in diesel generators is preferable. More importantly, the surface of key even spaces needs consideration. If we are to achieve a year-round events programme we will need more durable key events spaces otherwise we'll struggle with dust bowls and muddy areas. Water points are also important as is protecting event sites against traveller encampments.

Paignton Green and Torre Abbey Meadows are the area's principle event spaces although not formally designated as such. However, they need to be developed as dedicated events ready spaces capable of hosting a range of events and entertainments. This means investing in built-in infrastructure in the public realm with outdoor performance in mind either funded through grant funding, S106 funding or through hire fees. This is necessary to fulfill the objectives set out in Section 2 of this report namely to 'Enhance our national and international profile and reputation; Encourage civic pride and community cohesion; and develop capacity and capabilities in the area's events sector. A detailed analysis of needs of these key spaces will be undertaken once this strategy is adopted, although the key elements are already known. Other event spaces will be developed in due course once funding permits. The new space at Princess Gardens is an example of this. The site has had some investment but more is required to develop it as a versatile year-round events space. Such spaces can be used by various community and commercial organisations and would be an ideal location for outdoor theatre and other uses. Torre Abbey grounds are also a good space for events.

There is a need to provide the following on the principle event spaces:

- Better “clean” power provision, water supply and high speed Comms (especially at Paignton Green).
- Provision of “almost” off the shelf Traffic Management plans to guide organisers about what is and isn’t possible for specific sites and why

With recent developments such as the space at Princess Gardens and proposed development of the area adjacent to the clocktower “The Strand” in Torquay as part of the Town Improvement Plan and also the town centre development in Paignton as part of the Future High Street Fund works there are already plans to ensure that these developments provide for the existing and future needs of events and event organisers. Introducing surfaces that can accommodate events, dropped kerbs for vehicle access, electricity and water points, data points for high speed comms, are all examples of improvements that are needed for modern events. There is also a need to look at dedicated event spaces in Brixham.

There has been recent government discussions about making events spaces more resilient in response to terrorist attacks which may require significant investment. This is yet to be developed into full policy and needs to be looked at in any detail. The process was held up by the Covid-19 crisis but should also be taken into consideration when the full information comes forward.

Direct funding for capital improvements to support events may be unlikely to be forthcoming in the current climate. But the needs of events and event organisers should be considered as part of the early thinking and planning for major projects (public and private) that are taking place in and around the main event locations.

## **Future development requirements**

The main requirements that future development should consider would include:

- Provision of flat, open space
- No street furniture or public art that cannot be easily moved (not including murals)
- Provision of electricity power supply (preferably from renewable sources), data (high speed comms), water points (including drinking water) and drainage at appropriate underground points
- Vehicle access for unloading
- Performer parking
- Security and site safety designed in
- The establishment of event ready infrastructure will also critically assist reducing environmental impacts managing energy and water more efficiently, reducing waste and carbon emissions.

## **Specific recommendations**

- Seek out funding options to upgrade existing event spaces including reviewing S106 and CIL funding
- Work with TDA to develop event space opportunities



- Engage with ERBID to develop marketing opportunities and support for new and evolving events, and to act as a critical friend

## Action 5 - 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.**

The team will explore options and opportunities to support the development of event organisers, producers and promoters (including volunteer event coordinators) where possible through training and skills development (where funding is available), through coming together to discuss opportunities and through a potential conference as detailed in 3.6. This will build a highly skilled and resilient events sector that are willing to work together, share ideas and best practice and build the level of capacity and quality that is required in the area.

Support for volunteering programmes will also be given, linking in with wider initiatives such as those already developed by Torbay Culture and the CDT. Links with South Devon College should be further explored to enable work experience, employment opportunities and volunteering opportunities for students.

### **Specific recommendations**

- The events team will support the development of new opportunities and seek out funding opportunities to support the development of events organisers, producers and promoters.
- The proposed advisory Event Steering Group will act as enabler to drive and support opportunities within the sector, especially for young people
- Volunteering programmes will be developed with stakeholders and event organisers and producers will be encouraged to offer opportunities.

## Action 6 - 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.**

Event marketing promotions are crucial to promote the English Riviera is welcoming and able to meet the needs of regionally and nationally significant events, with an ambition to support world class events. From a council perspective a dedicated annual marketing plan will be developed and delivered by the Culture and Events Marketing Coordinator to support key events, but there is a need to work with the community to share the load in terms of wider community events.

ERBID currently do a fantastic job in supporting the marketing promotions of events in the area and providing positive constructive advice in the development of new and evolving events, on behalf of their stakeholders (accommodation providers and other tourism sector provision), and it would be useful to involve, where possible, their input in the development of new events, either as part of the proposed advisory Events Steering Group or as a critical friend. Likewise, linking in with the Destination Management Group. There is much discussion within groups such as What Next about collaboration and joined up event marketing promotions that needs to be supported.

## **Specific recommendations**

- Support other opportunities for joined up marketing promotions to promote all events – as per What Next Torbay initiative and The Shorely. Including smaller events that do not have the national appeal that ERBID focusses on. Look at opportunities for joined up promotions.
- Focus on Social Media amongst other media but also to investigate Influencer Marketing; Influencers, Bloggers, Travel Brands and Partners
- Link in with ERBID and the Destination Management Group for specific feedback on events.

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For more information please contact **\*\*insert your team email or phone no  
here\*\***

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