

## Review of Events, Culture and Tourism Task and finish group

### Responses to Key Lines of Enquiry - – Cultural Assets

#### 1) Task and Finish Group – 20 November 2023 and 6 December 2023 2pm to 4pm

- To consider how we use our cultural assets (e.g. English Riviera Global UNESCO Geopark, Agatha Christie and Torre Abbey etc.) to help them become self-sustaining in the future and ensure they being maximised for our tourism and culture offer.
- To consider how the Council uses data to inform decision in relation to use of cultural assets.

### Information required

- Cultural Strategy [This was provided previously. Attached here for completeness – follow this link... MISSION & STRATEGY — TORBAY CULTURE](#)
- List of cultural assets. [Provided in terms of what the Culture and Events Team has a remit for and also the wider heritage strategy. See attachment as Cultural assets currently within the remit of the Culture and Events team](#)
- Details of any promotion of our cultural assets. [Promotional plans for Torre Abbey and Geopark provided. See attached.](#)
- Details of the data used to inform decision making in relation to cultural assets. [Data provided in terms of Torre Abbey income, footfall and KPIs. We have a document we send annually to UNESCO who lead our call for data \(annual return document\) for the Geopark.](#)

### Key issues arising

- What is the direction of travel for the revised Cultural Strategy – Martin Thomas, Executive Director for Torbay Culture to be invited to give a presentation on this. – [this was covered previously – please see Martin’s presentation attached – Mthomas presentation for committee 20 Nov 2023](#)
- What are our cultural assets? [This was covered in the note I provided \(attached as - Cultural assets currently within the remit of the Culture and Events team\) and the heritage strategy provided. The link to the heritage strategy is here: Torbay Heritage Strategy - Torbay Council](#)
- Which ones are promoted and which ones are not? [Torre Abbey and UNESCO Global Geopark are the assets directed promoted by the team/the Council. Other assets are promoted by other organisations. Details of the team’s marketing plans and strategies are attached. The council works with English Riviera BID Company \(ERBID\) to promote Torre Abbey and the Geopark which are also our only directly managed and promoted facilities. The other facilities in the bay are also directed promoted by ERBID. Attached are copies of the marketing plans we have for the various areas in culture and events. Including Geopark and Torre Abbey.](#)

- What is the Council currently doing to support the financial sustainability of our cultural assets?

In terms of Torre Abbey. The business plan outlines this in some detail. Torbay Council currently underwrite Torre Abbey costs as per the budget. And we have a long-term programme to reduce the burden on the council.

In terms of Torre Abbey's offer. We are currently, looking to increase visitor numbers and associated secondary spend through a changing exhibition programme (Paddington, Vikings) and special events such as WinterFest and Halloween Trail. We also draw in an income through wedding hire, although this has been difficult since the pandemic.

The current restoration (capital) project will help to engage with new and diverse visitors and volunteers, and ensure that the building and the collection within it is kept in good order for the foreseeable future. (Project total £1.8m, of which £468,993 from MEND (DCMS funding administered by Arts Council England), £363,747 from National Heritage Memorial Fund, £43,658 from Friends of Torre Abbey).

Future plans include the establishment of a Development Foundation for Torre Abbey which will be an independent charity working to raise funds to support the work of the Abbey (Torre Abbey will remain a wholly council owned and run asset the charity is a fundraising arm only).

Further capital works are being planned for the next phase after the current restoration phase. This includes, potentially investing in ground source heating the barn so that it can be used year-round, as well as a new hanging system for artwork in the barn to allow us to facilitate larger exhibitions. Plans for a new visitor welcome building outside of the pay barrier that will also include retail and can be used as an events hub for events on Torre Abbey meadows, to increase audience engagement with wider site users. And also, re-landscaping Torre Abbey Meadows to unlock the largest public green space in Torquay, ensure its suitability for selected largescale events and enable community activity such as waymarked trails and trim-trails.

In terms of the Geopark. There are plans in progress to put in a resilience bid to the Heritage Lottery and as part of this there will be feasibility studies to look at other ways of generating income and development of the product in line with the UNESCO designation.

The Council also currently fund other assets such as Torquay Museum (£37,000 in 2023/24), Brixham Museum (£13,000 in 2023/24) and Princess Theatre (£89,400 in 2023/24) small amount provided to Swim Torquay and Brixham Swimming Pool (£12,000 each in 2023/24) to support rising fuel costs.

- How do we priorities our resources to ensure that the assets with the greatest strategic importance which contribute most towards the identity, reputation and brand of Torbay.

In terms of heritage assets the Heritage strategy goes a long way in prioritising the need. Current focus is on Torre Abbey which has been progressing through

various stages of development for a number of years, but other assets are being looked at including the Old Picture House, these have benefited significantly from the team's work in terms of capital investment from MEND and other funding, and the development year of Heritage Places (as explained by Martin) will also look at priorities and need in the wider community.

Other assets are considered at various stages of development i.e. Torquay Leisure Centre and Riviera International Centre when their contract was reviewed in the past 5 years, we supported these with investment to refurbish and develop facilities in accordance with their business plan (Parkwood Leisure /Lex Leisure). We also support these and our community pool with grant applications for funding their facilities as and when grant funding schemes become available from the government or Sport England.

Other council assets are discussed by senior leadership team and cabinet as and when required. For instance, Torre Abbey was prioritised ahead of Oldway and other assets as a result of the Heritage Strategy a few years ago which enabled funding applications to be submitted and considered.

- How and what data is used to inform decision making in relation to cultural assets?

We use customer data for Torre Abbey to shape and adjust our offer accordingly. We have signed up members (1196 club) as well as visitors for exhibition, events and general visitors to the Abbey. We also have a strong schools programme where we encourage school visits and use the data about those that have and haven't visited in line with the national curriculum.

Torre abbey – KPI data, visitor number data and income data. We also use the Spirit of Place document as our guiding principle, and there is a project board for the current restoration project.

Various decisions are made by the Torre Abbey leadership team in relation to the running of Torre Abbey and any key developments, and this will be in consultation with the Service Manager, Divisional Director, Director, SLT and/or Cabinet in line with usual council protocol.

### **Additional requests from 20 November meeting**

- Include details of budgets of cultural assets within control of Council or grants funded. Attached for information. Geopark 3 year budgets. Torre Abbey 3 year budgets. Torre Abbey Restoration Project budget
- Detail on how critical funding is for UNESCO Geopark, why it is critical and what is the gap. Answered on paper ERUGGp-ReviewEventsCultureTourism attached.

## Documents provided

**Note:** Due to the sensitive commercial and financial data contained within the appendices they are exempt from publication in the public domain (except Appendices 1, 13 and 14).

- Appendix 1 - Cultural assets currently within the remit of the Culture and Events team
- Appendix 2 - Torre Abbey 2021-2025 business plan reviewed Jan 2022 (Exempt)
- Appendix 3 - Torre Abbey 3 year budgets - for 2021/22 2022/23 2023/24 (Exempt)
- Appendix 4 - Torre Abbey restoration budget (Exempt)
- Appendix 5 - Monthly KPi report Torre Abbey (Exempt)
- Appendix 6 -Marketing spend Torre Abbey 23-24 (Exempt)
- Appendix 7 - Geopark marketing strategy 23-24 (Exempt)
- Appendix 8 - Geopark 3 year budgets - for 2021/22 2022/23 2023/24 (Exempt)
- Appendix 9 - ERUGGp\_27.11.23\_ReviewEventsCultureTourism. Responds to the point “Detail on how critical funding is for UNESCO Geopark, why it is critical and what is the gap.” (Exempt)
- Appendix 10 - Overview marketing plan 2023-24 – a plan of all marketing activity within the department (Exempt)
- Appendix 11 - Social media data – data from various social media campaigns across the department including Geopark and Torre Abbey (Exempt)
- Appendix 12 - Marketing activity 2023 (Exempt)
- Appendix 13 - MThomas presentation for committee 20 Nov 2023 – Martin’s presentation from last Task and Finish Group meeting
- Appendix 14 – Geopark Annual Report 2022