

Evaluation Report: Local Government
Reorganisation (LGR)
Torbay Council’s Public and Stakeholder
Engagement (July – October 2025)

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Executive Summary

Engagement on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) took place between 1 July and 31 October 2025. Between 1 July and Tuesday 2 September 2025, residents, businesses and stakeholders had the opportunity to complete and submit a survey asking what they think about LGR. There were several ways that the community could find out about the questionnaire and share their views:

- Online via the council's engagement website: www.torbay.gov.uk/lgr/
- Visiting any of the four local libraries in Torbay to complete a paper copy survey.
- By attending one of three in-person engagement events (Sunday 10 August, Tuesday 12 August, Wednesday 20 August).

The questionnaire sought to determine whether respondents were in favour of Torbay Council remaining as it is, and if not, what their preferred choice was. 1430 responses were received. The survey was promoted via numerous internal and external engagement channels, including the Council's social media channels, and responses to those posts have been collated and included within the analysis in this report.

During this period, a range of stakeholders were invited to online meetings to share their views and provide feedback on what LGR would mean for their sectors. This included local stakeholders from the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector, Business Representative Organisations, Housing Developers and Registered Providers, and Local Businesses. Statutory stakeholders were also engaged with throughout the process. This group comprised key figures from Higher Education institutions, Health sector organisations, and emergency services including the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Fire and Rescue Authority.

The LGR questionnaire revealed that 64% of respondents support Torbay Council remaining as it is, while 36% favour change. Among alternative options for unitary local government in Devon, Option 2 (for an enlarged Torbay covering the area of the Local Care Partnership) emerged as the most preferred after maintaining the current structure.

When asked about the most important aspects of local government, participants highlighted a strong understanding of local issues, efficient services offering value for money, and transparent decision-making. As for priorities in shaping Devon's future governance, the top concerns were maintaining local amenities (such as libraries and parks), ensuring safe and well-kept infrastructure (like roads and pavements), and protecting the environment.

The key themes from our engagement with our stakeholders is summarised as follows:

- **Local Identity & Representation:** Strong emphasis on preserving Torbay's distinct identity and ensuring decisions remain locally accountable.
- **Preserving momentum:** A desire to ensure that the current momentum Torbay has in its regeneration programme is not lost.
- **Concerns About Larger Structures:** Worries that merging into a wider Devon authority could dilute local focus, increase bureaucracy, and reduce access to councillors.
- **Support for Current Structure:** Many stakeholders, especially smaller VCSE organisations and local businesses, favoured Torbay remaining as it is due to effective partnerships and manageable scale.
- **Opportunities for Collaboration:** Some saw potential benefits in aligning with NHS and education boundaries, improving SEND services, and unlocking funding.

- **Risks of Reorganisation:** Concerns included financial costs, disruption to services, and loss of democratic engagement.
- **Housing & Inequality:** Highlighted as critical issues, with poor housing linked to health outcomes and inequality across coastal and rural areas.

Introduction

The purpose of the engagement was to give insight into what outcomes stakeholders, including residents and businesses, would most like to see from local government reorganisation (LGR).

This phase of engagement built on the early public engagement which took place at the Princess Theatre in Torquay on 11 March 2025 as part of the Council's preparation of its Interim Plan for local government reorganisation (which was submitted to Government at the end of March 2025).

Ahead of the official launch on 1 July and the wider engagement activities planned across Torbay in August; engagement happened at the English Riviera Airshow from 30 May to 1 June.

Attendance at the English Riviera Airshow was considered the ideal opportunity to take advantage of the high footfall and increased numbers. The weekend event offered the opportunity to meet a diverse sample of the local population.

Local Government Reorganisation was a core element on the stand with interactive panels and an opportunity to gather information. Colleagues from the Engagement and Communications Team at Torbay Council attended across the weekend. LGR information was displayed across the panels and on the tabletops. Printed comment forms were made available allowing people to make comments and complaints, as necessary. Other topics included: Paignton and Preston Sea defence scheme, One Torbay, Night Bus, and the My Bay scheme.

Several meaningful conversations took place with members of the public. Officers engaged with approximately 200 unique visitors, in addition to an estimated 50 individuals who approached the stand for event-specific information or directions but were not formally recorded. It's important to note that these interactions were not exclusive to LGR but spanned a broad range of topics.

Visitors also browsed the information on the boards and took away leaflets and copies of the One Torbay flyers.

To build momentum ahead of the event, a series of scheduled social media posts were launched alongside early promotional efforts through One Torbay. The Airshow went on to secure a place among the top three most engaging posts across Torbay Council's social media platforms during May and June 2025. LGR's presence at one of Torbay's flagship events marked a significant and strategic beginning to the wider engagement process.

A key part of the engagement was an online survey which was publicised on a dedicated LGR web page on the Council's website, through internal communications, and through social media. It was open between 1 July 2025 and 2 September 2025.

The survey was originally due to close on Sunday 10 August, however this was extended to Sunday 31 August to attract a larger number of responses and to enable further engagement at events across Torbay in August. An additional extension to Tuesday 2 September was given when there was a technical error with the survey, which was identified and rectified on the afternoon of 31 August. This decision, made on 1 September, aimed to ensure that anyone affected by the error had sufficient time to submit their responses and share their views.

During the consultation, the Council received 1403 responses directly to the online survey. There were also 27 paper copy forms completed.

An additional 5 paper forms in a shorter format were completed from an engagement event in Paignton, and there were 2 responses as emails or letters which have been included in the appendix.

Alongside the public engagement, a wide range of stakeholders were actively invited to participate in a series of online meetings. These sessions were designed to gather insights, perspectives, and constructive feedback on the potential implications of LGR for their sectors. The engagement process sought to reach a diverse array of local stakeholders in Torbay. These included representatives from the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector, Business Representative Organisations, Housing Developers, Registered Providers, and Local Businesses. Each session successfully brought forward unique concerns, priorities, and aspirations, with key themes emerging from each.

In addition to local voices, statutory stakeholders from across Devon were also consulted throughout the period to ensure that essential public services and institutional perspectives were also represented. This group comprised key figures from Higher Education institutions, Health sector organisations, and emergency services including Police and Fire authorities. Their participation was instrumental in identifying cross-sectoral impacts, operational challenges, and opportunities for collaboration under any potential proposed changes. The feedback collected during these engagements played a crucial role in shaping the broader dialogue around LGR, helping to inform decision-makers and ensure that the reorganisation process remains responsive to the needs of all affected parties. Some of these conversations took place with colleagues from South Hams District Council, Teignbridge District Council and West Devon Borough Council.

This report provides summaries of the feedback to the engagement questionnaire, the short form survey and from the engagement with stakeholders.

In terms of the engagement questionnaire, given the varied nature of the responses, ranging from Yes/No answers to detailed free-text comments and ranked priority selections, the results have been organised into distinct sections for ease of interpretation. The results are a summary of the 1430 responses:

- **Section One** examines the Yes/No responses.
- **Section Two** explores recurring themes identified within the free-text submissions.
- **Section Three** presents the findings from questions where participants selected their top priorities from a predefined list.
- **Section Four** provides an overview of respondent demographics.

Microsoft Copilot was used to assist in the analysis and summarisation of community feedback. Copilot, an AI-powered tool, reviewed the free text comments from the provided dataset, identifying key themes to inform the findings presented.

Engagement survey responses

Overall, 1403 online responses to the consultation were received and 27 paper copies which were added to the online survey, to make the overall total of 1430 responses. The average time for completion was 19 minutes and 52 seconds. The summary below is of the 1430 responses.

Section One – Yes/No responses

The only Yes/No question included in this survey asked respondents if they supported Torbay Council remaining as it is.

Question: Based on the information provided, are you in support of Torbay Council remaining as it is?

- **Yes** 915 (64%)
- **No** 516 (36%)

Section Two – Recurring themes

This leads onto looking at the themes of people's comments that occurred within the free box questions.

Question: What alternative option(s) for unitary local government in Devon would you prefer?

In our interim plan we set out three options:

1. Torbay Council remaining as it is
2. A new unitary council covering Torbay, approximately half of South Hams and most of Teignbridge
3. A new unitary council covering the areas of Torbay, South Hams, Teignbridge, and West Devon

Option 2 is the most frequently cited as the favourable alternative to Torbay Council remaining as it is, often linked to merging Torbay with parts of South Hams and Teignbridge.

Option Referenced	Number of Mentions	Common Terminology Used
Option 2	87	"Option 2", "South Devon Unitary", "Torbay + South Hams + Teignbridge"
Option 3	61	"Option 3", "South Devon with West Devon", "Torbay + South Hams + Teignbridge + West Devon"

In addition to direct mentions, many responses described preferences that align with Option 2's structure—a new unitary authority combining Torbay, South Hams, and Teignbridge—even if they did not use the label "Option 2." This further strengthens its popularity.

Interpretation:

- **Option 2** is the more frequently cited of the two, often preferred for its alignment with existing service footprint perceived manageability.
- **Option 3** appeals to those wanting broader geographic coverage, but some respondents flagged concerns about scale and cohesion.

Why Option 2 Was Popular

- It reflects the South Devon NHS Trust footprint, which many respondents saw as logical and efficient.
- It avoids merging with Plymouth or Exeter, which some viewed as too large or disconnected.
- It was seen as a balanced compromise—larger than the current Torbay Council, but not as sweeping as a full Devon-wide authority.

References to a Single Devon Unitary Authority: 26

Based on the document, only 26 respondents explicitly referenced a preference for a single Devon-wide unitary authority.

Question: Please explain your main reason(s) for your choice.

Key findings & themes

Confidence in Current Structure

- Dominant sentiment: Torbay Council is functioning well and should remain unchanged.
- Many cite financial stability, local responsiveness, and regeneration success.
- Staff and residents express concern about disruption, cost, and loss of control.

Local Identity and Unique Needs

- Strong emphasis on Torbay's distinctiveness as a coastal, three-town tourist area.
- Unique demographics: aging population, deprivation, seasonal economy.
- Concerns that merging would dilute local focus and reduce tailored service delivery.
- Desire to protect Torbay's identity, culture, and place-based governance.

Financial Management and Sustainability

- Mixed views on financial viability and cost-effectiveness.
- Many praise Torbay's budgeting, grant success, and lack of deficit.
- Others argue Torbay is too small to be cost-effective and would benefit from economies of scale.
- Concerns about implementation costs, unclear savings, and increased taxation.

Strategic Integration and Regional Alignment

- Minority support for merging with neighbouring authorities to:
- Align with NHS, care boundaries, and transport infrastructure.
- Improve commissioning, funding access, and regional voice.
- Enable joined-up planning for environment, education, and tourism.

Governance and Democratic Representation

- Strong belief that local democracy is best served close to the people.
- Concerns about decision-making shifting to Exeter or Plymouth.
- Fear of losing local engagement and accountability.
- Others argue larger councils dilute representation and increase bureaucracy.

Criticism of Council Performance

- Polarised views on Torbay Council’s effectiveness.
- Specific concerns include neglect of Brixham, poor youth services, lack of scrutiny, and ineffective leadership.
- These views support arguments for structural change or merging.

Summary of Themes

Theme	Description
Support for Current Structure	Strong belief that Torbay Council is functioning well and should remain unchanged.
Local Identity & Unique Needs	Emphasis on Torbay’s distinctiveness as a coastal, tourism-driven area with unique demographics.
Financial Management & Viability	Mixed views on cost-effectiveness, council tax, and funding—some praise stability, others cite limits.
Strategic Integration & Alignment	Views on merging with neighbouring areas to align with NHS, transport, and planning boundaries.
Governance & Representation	Desire for local control, accountability, and proximity to decision-makers.
Criticism of Council Performance	Concerns about service quality, leadership, transparency, and treatment of vulnerable groups.

Residents

Question: Where do you consider to be your ‘local area’?

When asked about local identity and where respondents considered their ‘local area,’ 32.8% answered Torbay, 23% Paignton, 19% Torquay, 14% Brixham, 5.2% South Devon, with numerous Torquay areas receiving small percentages and then 1% answering Newton Abbot.

Key Themes & Findings

- **Strong Shared Identity:** Most respondents define their local area as *Torbay* or “*the Bay*,” reflecting a unified sense of place across Torquay, Paignton, and Brixham.
- **Town & Neighbourhood Attachment:** High frequency of town-level responses (Torquay, Paignton, Brixham), often paired with specific neighbourhoods like Wellswood, Chelston, Preston, and St Marychurch—indicating deep local familiarity.
- **Regional Extensions:** Many extend their local area to include *South Devon*, *Teignbridge*, *South Hams*, or *Devon* more broadly.

Grouped Mentions:

- “Torbay” alone: 472
- “Torquay, Paignton, Brixham” together: 138
- “The Bay” / “English Riviera”: 42
- Total Bay Identity Mentions: 652

This suggests a strong regional identity that transcends town boundaries, especially for those who travel or work across the area.

Question: Where is your work or education based?

Key Findings

- **Torquay Dominates:** Torquay is by far the most frequently mentioned location, with 384 direct mentions. It appears across a wide range of contexts—active employment,

volunteering, retirement, and remote work—indicating its vital role in the local economy and identity.

- **Strong Local Concentration:** Most responses are clustered within Torbay, including Paignton (123 mentions) and Brixham (54 mentions). This suggests that most respondents live and work within a tight geographic radius, reinforcing the area's self-contained nature.
- **Remote and Home-Based Work Is Significant:** There are 58 mentions of working from home or remote arrangements. These include phrases like “home,” “WFH,” “remote,” and “home-based,” reflecting a shift in work patterns, especially among professionals and semi-retired individuals.
- **High Retirement Rate:** A substantial portion of responses are variations of “retired,” “not applicable,” or “N/A.” This points to a large, retired population in the area, many of whom still identify with their former workplaces or contribute through volunteering.
- **Regional and National Reach:** While most responses are locally focused, a minority mention broader geographies such as Exeter (66 mentions), London (3 mentions), and even national/international roles. These outliers often reflect remote work, consultancy, or past careers.
- **Multi-location and Flexible Roles:** Several entries combine locations (e.g., “Torquay and Newton Abbot,” “Paignton and Global”), indicating flexible or mobile work arrangements. This is especially common among self-employed individuals and those in regional service roles.

Emerging Themes

- **Local Identity and Pride:** Even among retired or remote workers, many still cite Torquay or Torbay as their base, suggesting strong local affiliation.
- **Workforce Transition:** The mix of retired, semi-retired, and remote workers points to a community in transition, with traditional employment giving way to flexible, post-career engagement.
- **Service Sector Anchors:** Mentions of hospitals, councils, and schools (e.g., Torbay Hospital, South Devon College) highlight the public sector as a major employer.
- **Volunteerism and Civic Engagement:** Numerous retired respondents mention volunteering, especially in Torquay, indicating a prominent level of community involvement.

Summary of Priorities

Category	Key Issue
Torquay Dominates	Central hub for work, education, retirement, and volunteering (384 mentions).
Strong Local Concentration	Most respondents are based within Torbay, reinforcing a tight local footprint.
Remote/Home-Based Work	58 mentions show a shift toward flexible, non-traditional work arrangements.
High Retirement Rate	Large, retired population still engaged locally through identity and volunteering.
Regional/National Reach	Minority work beyond Torbay, including Exeter, London, and remote roles.
Flexible/Multi-location Roles	Many combine locations, reflecting mobile and hybrid work patterns.
Local Identity and Pride	Strong place-based affiliation, even among retired and remote respondents.
Workforce Transition	Traditional employment giving way to flexible, post-career engagement.
Service Sector Anchors	Public sector institutions are major employment and identity drivers.
Civic Engagement	High volunteerism, especially among retired residents in Torquay.

Question: Which area do you do most of your shopping?

Key Themes from Shopping Area Mentions

- **Dominance of Paignton and Torquay:** These two towns are the clear shopping hubs, frequently mentioned either individually or together, indicating strong local reliance on their retail offerings.
- **Retail Parks as Preferred Destinations:** The Willows stands out as a popular choice, suggesting that large-format stores and easy parking are major draws for residents.
- **Online Shopping as a Growing Alternative:** With 84 mentions, online shopping is as popular as Exeter, reflecting a shift toward convenience and dissatisfaction with local options.
- **Out-of-Town Shopping for Variety:** Locations like Exeter, Plymouth, and Totnes are cited for broader retail needs, implying that residents often travel for more diverse or specialized shopping.
- **Fragmentation Within Torbay:** Mentions of “Torbay” alongside individual towns like Paignton, Torquay, and Brixham suggest overlapping identities and shopping patterns within the area.
- **Local Identity and Loyalty:** Smaller areas like St Marychurch, Wellswood, and Plainmoor appear in the data, showing that some respondents shop hyper-locally and value neighbourhood-level retail.
- **Negative Sentiment Toward Town Centres:** Many comments in the dataset express frustration with parking, store closures, and lack of variety, driving people toward retail parks or online options.
- **Functional vs. Experiential Shopping:** The data hints at a divide between utilitarian shopping (groceries, essentials) and more experiential or discretionary shopping, often done out of town or online.

Summary Table of Shopping Area Mentions

Theme	Summary
Dominance of Paignton and Torquay	Most frequently mentioned areas, showing their vital role in local retail.
Retail Parks as Preferred Destinations	The Willows is highly popular, valued for convenience and parking.
Online Shopping as a Growing Alternative	Strong presence in responses, reflecting a shift toward digital retail.
Out-of-Town Shopping for Variety	Exeter, Plymouth, and Totnes are cited for broader shopping options.
Fragmentation Within Torbay	Mixed mentions of “Torbay” and individual towns suggest overlapping habits.
Local Identity and Loyalty	Smaller areas like St Marychurch and Wellswood show neighbourhood-level loyalty.
Negative Sentiment Toward Town Centres	Frustrations with parking and store closures push shoppers elsewhere.
Functional vs. Experiential Shopping	Clear divide between essential shopping and leisure-driven retail trips.

Question: Which area do you spend most time socialising and taking part in cultural activities?

Key Findings

- **Torquay is the dominant location**, with 342 mentions—frequently cited for its harbour, town centre, and surrounding neighbourhoods like Wellswood, St Marychurch, and Babbacombe.
- **Paignton and Torbay follow closely**, with 228 and 213 mentions, respectively. Paignton is often linked to beachside areas like Goodrington and Preston, while “Torbay” is used as a catch-all for the three main towns.
- **Brixham holds strong appeal**, with 162 mentions, especially among those who prefer quieter or scenic settings. Galmpton and Churston are often included.
- **Exeter and Plymouth are top out-of-area destinations**, cited for cultural events, shopping, and festivals (54 and 26 mentions respectively).
- **South Hams and Teignbridge are notable regional alternatives**, with 38 and 27 mentions. Totnes and Dartmouth are especially popular within South Hams.
- **Sub-areas matter**: Places like Babbacombe (19), St Marychurch (18), and Wellswood (10) show that respondents often think in terms of neighbourhoods, not just towns.
- **General terms like “Torbay” or “Devon” reflect regional identity**, with 213 and 17 mentions respectively suggesting some respondents view their social life as spread across multiple towns.

Key Themes

- **Coastal and Harbour Appeal**: Seafronts, harbours, and promenades are consistently popular—especially in Torquay, Paignton, and Brixham.
- **Multi-Town Socialising**: Many respondents referenced combinations like “Torquay and Paignton” or “All of Torbay,” indicating fluid movement across the bay.
- **Cultural vs. Casual**: Exeter, Totnes, and Plymouth are often mentioned for cultural events, while Torquay and Paignton dominate casual socialising.
- **Local Identity**: Neighbourhood-level references (e.g. Wellswood, Chelston) suggest strong local attachment and nuanced perceptions of place.
- **Out-of-Area Aspirations**: Some respondents prefer socialising outside Torbay, citing safety, variety, or quality of amenities.

Summary table of Themes & Findings

Key Findings	Summary
Top Mentioned Area	Torquay leads with 342 mentions
Other High Mentions	Paignton, Torbay, and Brixham are frequently cited
Out-of-Area Destinations	Exeter, Plymouth, and South Hams are popular for cultural and leisure events.
Sub-Area Popularity	Smaller zones like Babbacombe, St Marychurch, and Wellswood show strong local identity.
General Regional Terms	“Torbay” and “Devon” used broadly, reflecting regional pride or fluidity.
Combination Mentions	Many respondents referenced multiple towns, indicating cross-area socialising.
Coastal Preference	Harbours and seafronts are consistently popular for social and scenic appeal.
Cultural vs Casual Split	Exeter and Totnes for culture; Torquay and Paignton for everyday socialising.
Local Attachment	Frequent neighbourhood-level references suggest strong place-based identity.
Aspirational Mobility	Some prefer socialising outside Torbay for better amenities or safety.

Common Themes	Summary
Coastal and Harbour Appeal	Coastal settings are central to social life, especially in Torquay and Paignton.
Multi-Town Socialising	Respondents often move between towns, seeing the bay as a connected social space.
Cultural vs. Casual Activities	Cultural outings tend to happen outside Torbay; casual socialising is local.
Local Identity and Nuance	Specific neighbourhoods are named, showing detailed perceptions of place.
Out-of-Area Aspirations	Some respondents seek cultural depth or safety in places beyond Torbay.

Businesses

Question: Where are your customers generally based?

46 respondents

Torbay itself mentioned 20 times, making it the most frequently cited location. Within Torbay, Torquay appears 5 times, followed by Brixham (3 mentions) and Paignton (once). The surrounding regions also feature prominently, including South Hams (3 mentions), South Devon (2), and Devon more broadly (2). Broader geographic references include the Southwest (once), UK-wide (5 mentions), and International or global customers (3 mentions). There are also general descriptors like “locally in the Bay” and “all over the country,” which suggest a mix of local and national reach.

Question: Where are your suppliers generally based?

46 respondents

The supplier location data reveals a strong local sourcing pattern, with Torbay—including references to Torquay, Brixham, Paignton, and “the bay”—mentioned 20 times, making it the most frequently cited area. Broader regional references such as Devon (including “Devon and Cornwall”) appear 7 times, while the Southwest is mentioned 5 times, reinforcing the prominence of suppliers within the immediate geographic vicinity. Additionally, local, or locally based suppliers are noted in 5 responses, suggesting a preference for proximity even when not tied to a specific town. On a wider scale, national or UK-wide sourcing is mentioned 5 times, with regional and national coverage appearing in 2 entries. Less commonly, suppliers from the Midlands or Birmingham are cited twice, and international or EU-based suppliers also receive 2 mentions. A single response references Newton Abbot, and 3 entries indicate either no suppliers or that the question was not applicable.

Question: Where are your clients / customers / service users generally based? 13 respondents

Torbay was the most frequently mentioned location, appearing nine times in various forms such as “Over Torbay,” “Across Torbay,” and “Within the borough of Torbay.” Paignton and Torquay were jointly referenced once, while Brixham appeared once as a standalone mention. Broader regional terms like “South Devon” and “Torbay and surrounding areas” were each cited once, indicating occasional recognition of a wider service reach beyond the core Torbay area.

Question: Where are your partners generally based? 13 respondents

Torbay was the most frequently mentioned location, appearing in 10 entries. This includes varied phrasing such as “Within the borough of Torbay” and “Over Torbay,” all consolidated under a single category for clarity. Each of the following areas—South Hams, Plymouth, Exeter, Bristol, Teignbridge, Cornwall, East Devon, and Devon were mentioned just once and by one respondent, indicating a much lower level of representation. One response did not specify a location. This distribution highlights a strong geographic concentration of partners in Torbay, with only limited references to surrounding districts.

Question: What do you like about the area where you live, work, or represent?

What Residents Value About Living in Torbay

- **Natural Beauty Is Central:** The coastline, beaches, and countryside are overwhelmingly cited as the area’s greatest assets. This theme is tightly linked to quality of life and wellbeing.
- **Community Connection Matters:** Respondents value knowing their neighbours, local events, and grassroots initiatives. Brixham and St Marychurch are frequently mentioned as having strong community identities. There is a desire to preserve this local character amid broader changes.
- **Quiet and Peaceful Living:** Many respondents appreciate the calm and safety of the area. Key elements cited: low crime, slower pace of life, quiet streets, and a sense of security. Demographic nuance: This theme is especially common among older residents and families.
- **Accessibility Enhances Liveability:** Many appreciate being able to walk to shops, parks, and the seafront. Good bus and rail links are noted, especially for older residents and those without cars.
- **Local Services & Amenities:** Residents appreciate having essential services nearby. Key elements cited: local shops, schools, healthcare, libraries, and council services. Positive mentions: SWISCo, clean streets, well-maintained parks, and responsive local staff.
- **Distinct Identity:** There’s pride in Torbay’s uniqueness and cultural heritage. Key elements cited: fishing heritage, independent shops, local traditions, and sense of place. Place-specific highlights: Brixham’s working harbour and Paignton’s seaside character are often mentioned.

Challenges Highlighted by Residents

- **Economic Concerns:** Views on regeneration and investment are mixed, with both optimism and frustration expressed, including lack of job opportunities, seasonal economy, reliance on tourism, and uneven development. Regeneration is slow, superficial, or focused on the wrong areas.
- **Criticism / Neglect:** Some residents feel their area is overlooked or poorly maintained. Rundown town centres, empty shops, poor maintenance, and lack of council responsiveness. Frustrated but constructive—many respondents offer ideas or express hope for improvement.

Summary Table of Priorities

Theme	Summary
Natural Beauty Is Central	Coastline, beaches, and countryside are key assets linked to wellbeing.
Community Connection Matters	Strong local ties in areas like Brixham and St Marychurch; desire to preserve character.
Quiet and Peaceful Living	Low crime, calm streets, and safety valued—especially by older residents and families.

Accessibility Enhances Liveability	Walkability and public transport praised, especially by non-drivers and older adults.
Local Services & Amenities	Appreciation for nearby shops, schools, healthcare, and clean public spaces.
Distinct Identity	Pride in Torbay's heritage, traditions, and unique seaside character.

Challenge	Summary
Economic Concerns	Mixed views on regeneration; concerns about jobs, seasonal economy, and uneven investment.
Criticism / Neglect	Frustration over rundown areas, poor maintenance, and lack of council responsiveness.

Question: What would you like to be improved in your area?

Key findings & Themes:

Town Centre Regeneration

- Revitalize Torquay, Paignton, and Brixham town centres.
- Address derelict buildings, empty shops, and stalled projects.
- Improve retail mix, reduce parking costs, and support local businesses.
- Restore heritage sites like Oldway Mansion and the Pavilion.
- Ensure regeneration benefits residents, not just tourists.

Anti-Social Behaviour & Safety

- Tackle drug use, street drinking, vandalism, and noise.
- Increase visible policing and community patrols.
- Enforce speed limits, parking rules, and public space standards.
- Improve lighting and safety in residential and town centre areas.

Housing & Homelessness

- Expand affordable and social housing for locals.
- Prioritize brownfield redevelopment over greenfield sprawl.
- Improve housing quality and hold landlords accountable.
- Provide compassionate support for homeless residents and vulnerable groups.

Roads & Transport

- Repair potholes, resurface roads, and improve signage.
- Expand bus routes and Sunday services, especially for non-drivers.
- Improve cycling infrastructure and pedestrian access.
- Address congestion, parking pressures, and poor connectivity—especially in Brixham.

Council Services & Governance

- Improve transparency, accountability, and resident engagement.
- Reduce bureaucracy and political infighting.
- Ensure fair planning decisions and better use of community assets.
- Strengthen local representation and consider restructuring Brixham Town Council.

Healthcare & Public Services

- Increase access to NHS dentists, GPs, and hospital services.
- Reopen Paignton Hospital with A&E and diagnostics.
- Improve mental health, social care, and SEND support.
- Address infrastructure gaps tied to housing growth.

Children, Youth & Community

- Invest in youth clubs, play parks, and low-cost activities.
- Improve SEND services and intergenerational engagement.

- Create safe, inclusive spaces for young people across the Bay.

Economy & Employment

- Attract year-round, well-paid jobs beyond tourism.
- Support small businesses, independent shops, and local enterprise.
- Encourage tech, blue economy, and remote work sectors.
- Reform developer contributions to support community infrastructure.

Cleanliness & Environment

- Increase street cleaning, weed removal, and bin provision.
- Improve recycling systems and reduce visual clutter.
- Protect green spaces, seagrass beds, and wildlife areas.
- Address sewerage spills, flooding, and environmental neglect.

Accessibility & Public Realm

- Improve disability access across pavements, beaches, and transport.
- Maintain communal areas, parks, and street furniture.
- Ensure inclusive design and compliance with the Equality Act.
- Restore pride in the Bay's appearance—from gateways to green spaces.

Community Priorities Summary Table

Theme	Main Points
Town Centre Regeneration	Revitalize Torquay, Paignton, and Brixham centres; address derelict buildings; support local shops; complete stalled projects; restore heritage sites.
Anti-Social Behaviour & Safety	Tackle drug use, street drinking, vandalism, and noise; increase visible policing; enforce speed limits and parking rules; improve safety in public spaces.
Housing & Homelessness	Expand affordable housing; prioritize brownfield sites; improve housing quality; support homeless residents; stop overdevelopment on greenfield land.
Roads & Transport	Repair potholes and resurface roads; improve bus services (especially Sundays); enhance cycling and walking infrastructure; address congestion and parking.
Council Services & Governance	Improve transparency and accountability; reduce bureaucracy; ensure fair planning; engage residents in decision-making; restructure Brixham Town Council.
Healthcare & Public Services	Increase access to GPs, dentists, and hospital services; reopen Paignton Hospital; improve mental health and SEND support; address infrastructure gaps.
Children, Youth & Community	Invest in youth clubs, play parks, and low-cost activities; improve SEND services; create inclusive spaces; support intergenerational engagement.
Economy & Employment	Attract year-round, well-paid jobs; support small businesses; encourage tech and remote work sectors; reform developer contributions; diversify local economy.
Cleanliness & Environment	Increase street cleaning and weed removal; improve bin systems; protect green spaces and wildlife; address flooding and sewerage spills; enforce litter rules.
Accessibility & Public Realm	Improve disability access across pavements, beaches, and transport; maintain communal areas; ensure inclusive design; comply with Equality Act standards.

Question: Are there any other aspects of local government that are important to you, which are not included in the previous question?

Key themes & findings:

Local Representation & Accountability

- Strong desire for councillors who live locally, understand the area, and are not bound by party politics.
- Calls for greater accountability of councillors and council staff, including transparency in decision-making and justification of expenses.
- Frustration with political infighting and lack of responsiveness to residents.

Communication & Engagement

- Repeated emphasis on meaningful consultation, feedback loops, and resident involvement in decisions.
- Requests for face-to-face contact, easier access to council departments, and less reliance on digital-only systems.
- Desire for clear communication about council activities, spending, and planning decisions.

Efficiency & Service Delivery

- Concerns about bureaucracy, slow planning processes, and wasteful spending.
- Calls for value for money, streamlined services, and better responsiveness.
- Suggestions for improved digital services, AI use, and smarter working models.

Infrastructure & Environment

- Frequent mentions of road maintenance, street cleanliness, fly tipping, and public toilets.
- Desire for preservation of green spaces, heritage buildings, and local identity.
- Criticism of vanity projects and neglect of non-tourist areas.

Social Issues & Public Safety

- Strong concern about homelessness, drug use, and anti-social behaviour, especially in town centres.
- Requests for visible policing, support for vulnerable groups, and better social care.
- Emphasis on mental health, SEND provision, and affordable housing.

Economic Development & Tourism

- Mixed views on tourism; some see it as vital, others feel it diverts resources from residents.
- Calls for support for local businesses, job creation, and balanced investment across the Bay.
- Suggestions for more events, better transport links, and revitalized town centres.

Summary table

Theme	Condensed Core Concerns & Priorities
Local Representation & Accountability	Preference for locally rooted, independent councillors; demand for transparency and responsiveness.
Communication & Engagement	Desire for genuine consultation, in-person access, and clearer, more inclusive communication.
Efficiency & Service Delivery	Frustration with bureaucracy and delays; calls for smarter systems and better value for money.
Infrastructure & Environment	Concerns over maintenance and cleanliness; support for preserving green spaces and avoiding vanity projects.
Social Issues & Public Safety	High concern about safety and vulnerability; emphasis on policing, mental health, and housing support.
Economic Development & Tourism	Mixed views on tourism; calls for balanced investment, local business support, and town centre renewal.

Question: Are there any other priorities of local government that are important to you, which are not included in the previous question?

Key Themes Identified

- **Policing & Public Safety:** Strong demand for visible policing, crime prevention, and tackling anti-social behaviour.
- **Town Centre Regeneration:** Desire for cleaner, safer, and more vibrant shopping areas and public spaces.
- **Roads & Infrastructure:** Frequent complaints about potholes, poor road conditions, and drainage issues.
- **Healthcare Access:** Concerns about NHS services, especially Torbay Hospital, mental health, and dental care.
- **Housing & Affordability:** Issues with affordable housing, second homes, and rogue landlords.
- **Youth Services & Opportunities:** Requests for youth clubs, leisure centres, and better support for young people.
- **Environmental Protection:** Interest in climate action, clean beaches, green spaces, and net zero goals.
- **Transport & Connectivity:** Need for improved public transport, cycle lanes, and integrated travel options.
- **Local Governance & Transparency:** Calls for more local decision-making, accountability, and open communication.
- **Support for Local Businesses:** Suggestions for lower rates, incentives, and revitalization of retail and tourism.
- **Social Care & Vulnerable Groups:** Support for elderly, disabled, SEND, and those facing addiction or homelessness.
- **Cleanliness & Maintenance:** Complaints about litter, weeds, public toilets, and general upkeep.
- **Community Engagement & Identity:** Emphasis on civic pride, cultural promotion, and stronger community voice.

Additional Findings

- Many respondents felt the previous question's limit of five priorities was too restrictive.
- Safety concerns were often linked to economic and social wellbeing.
- Respondents want visible, tangible improvements—not just strategic plans.
- There is a strong desire for local pride and identity to be reflected in council actions.

Question: Do you have any final comments for us to consider?

Key findings and themes:

- **Local Identity and Autonomy:** Respondents expressed strong pride in Torbay's distinct character and recent achievements. Many voiced concerns about losing local control and representation if governance structures change, emphasizing the value of maintaining a locally focused council.
- **Mixed Views on Reorganisation and Merger Opinions were divided:** some saw potential benefits in efficiency and service integration, while others feared increased bureaucracy, reduced accountability, and disruption to progress. A few suggested modest boundary changes over full-scale merger.
- **Council Performance, Trust, and Transparency:** Several comments criticized political infighting, lack of professionalism, and perceived bias in consultation processes. There were calls for clearer communication, more inclusive engagement, and stronger leadership.
- **Public Safety and Cleanliness in Town Centres:** Concerns centred on antisocial behaviour, drug use, and poor maintenance in areas like Castle Circus and Paignton.

Respondents urged more visible policing, enforcement, and investment in town centre regeneration.

- **Infrastructure and Local Services:** Feedback highlighted the need for improved roads, public toilets, parking, and transport links. Many called for practical upgrades to everyday services that directly impact residents' quality of life.
- **Youth Services, Leisure, and Employment Opportunities:** Respondents advocated for more activities and support for young people, including leisure facilities, job creation, and entertainment options. These were seen as vital for community wellbeing and retention of local talent.
- **Equitable Treatment Across Torbay Towns:** There was a perception that Torquay receives disproportionate investment compared to Paignton and Brixham. Calls were made for fairer distribution of resources and attention across all towns.
- **Local Decision-Making and Resident Engagement:** Many emphasized the importance of keeping decisions local and involving residents meaningfully. Suggestions included better consultation methods, clearer communication, and more accessible council services.
- **Concerns About Consultation Design and Bias:** A subset of respondents questioned the neutrality of the survey itself, suggesting it was designed to favour the status quo. This eroded trust and highlighted the need for more transparent engagement processes.
- **Desire for Visible Improvements and Practical Action:** Across themes, there was a consistent call for tangible, visible changes—whether in infrastructure, safety, or services. Respondents want to see real outcomes from consultations and policy decisions.

Summary Table of Priorities

Theme	Summary
Local Identity and Autonomy	Pride in Torbay; concerns over losing local control.
Reorganisation and Merger	Mixed opinions: some support, others fear disruption.
Views	
Council Performance & Transparency	Criticism of leadership; calls for clearer communication.
Town Centre Safety & Cleanliness	Issues with antisocial behaviour; need for policing and upkeep.
Infrastructure & Services	Requests for better roads, toilets, parking, and transport.
Youth, Leisure & Employment	More jobs, activities, and spaces for young people.
Fairness Across Towns	Perception of unequal investment; calls for balance.
Local Decision-Making & Engagement	Support for resident-led decisions and better consultation.
Consultation Design & Bias	Concerns about survey neutrality and trust.
Visible Improvements & Action	

Section Three – Top priorities

Question: Based on the information provided above, to what extent do you think Torbay Council remaining as it is meets the outcomes Government expects us to consider?

Criteria	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Supporting local identity	639	246	144	160	217	24

Criteria	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Sensible geography for economic and housing growth	469	311	153	197	268	32

Criteria	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Enabling stronger community engagement	657	256	156	144	202	15

Criteria	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
High quality and sustainable services	509	327	134	151	287	22

Question: Of the following, what aspects of local government are most important to you and your community? Please select at most 5 options.

Rank	Statement	References
1	Good understanding of the issues facing your local area	1131
2	Efficient services which offer value for money	951
3	Clear, open, and transparent decision-making	909
4	Decisions that impact you, being made locally	756
5	Easy access to the council services you need	749
6	Improved service delivery	640
7	Supportive and accessible local ward councillor(s)	409

8	Clarity around who is responsible for different services	407
9	Easy access to in-person support	214
10	Council offices being nearby	158
11	Council decisions being made in easy travelling distance to my local area	156

Question: What should be the top priorities when deciding the future model of local government for the whole of Devon? Please select at most 5 options.

Rank	Service Area	Reference Count
1	Local places (libraries, parks, toilets, sports centres, beaches)	795
2	Safe and maintained roads, pavements, lights, parking, bike paths	759
3	Protecting the environment and keeping it clean	754
4	Supporting the local economy and creating job opportunities	684
5	Keeping children safe from harm	676
6	Recycling, rubbish collection, and waste disposal	560
7	Care and support for older people and vulnerable adults	489
8	Education services (school admissions, transport, SEND support)	487
9	Building-related services (planning, building control, heritage, housing)	350
10	Supporting and empowering local groups	290
11	Helping people stay healthy (drug/alcohol support, health checks)	270
12	Community safety and standards (trading standards, licensing, air quality)	258
13	Support with housing needs, council tax, and benefits	195

Section Four – Respondent demographics

1324 respondents lived in Torbay. 450 worked in Torbay and 113 ran businesses in Torbay. 59 represented community organisations in Torbay. 10 respondents studied in Torbay.

The five most common postcodes of respondents were:

- TQ2 covering Torquay (304 mentions),
- TQ1 representing central Torquay (303 mentions),
- TQ4 which covers central Paignton (235 mentions),
- TQ5 represents Brixham (195 mentions), and
- TQ3 which includes parts of Paignton (174 mentions).

There were 28 postcodes from other local areas, and 192 respondents did not list a postcode.

93% responded in their capacity as a Torbay resident, 3% were businesses and 1% were voluntary sector organisations.

The **sex** of respondents:

- 47% male
- 46% female
- 6% prefer not to say

The **age** of the respondents:

- 16 to 24 years old: 1.24%
- 25 to 34 years old: 3.89%
- 35 to 44 years old: 8.36%
- 45 to 54 years old: 15.06%
- 55 to 64 years old: 24.84%
- 65 to 74 years old: 25.08%
- 75 years old or above: 14.74%
- Prefer not to say: 6.79%

The **ethnic background** of respondents:

- White: 89%
- Prefer not to say: 8%
- Other: 2%
- Mixed ethnic background: 1%
- 4 people said they were Asian or Asian British
- 1 person said they were Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African

The **employment status** of respondents:

- Retired: 39.45%
- Working full-time in Torbay: 24.15%
- Working part-time in Torbay: 7.86%
- Self-employed (full-time or part-time): 7.53%
- Working full-time elsewhere in Devon: 6.95%
- Prefer not to say: 5.13%
- Other: 3.06%
- Working part-time elsewhere in Devon: 1.41%
- Temporary / Long Term Sick: 1.82%
- Looking after family / Unpaid Carer: 1.57%
- Student 0.83%
- Unemployed: 0.25%

The **disability** status of respondents:

- No: 76%
- Yes: 17%
- Prefer not to say: 7%

Condensed engagement survey responses:

The questionnaire asked the following questions:

- Please select all that apply - I live in Torbay, I work in Torbay, I run a business in Torbay, I represent a community organisation in Torbay, I study in Torbay, Other
- What is the postcode of your home / business / organisation
- Based on the information provided, are you in support of Torbay Council remaining as it is?
- What alternative option(s) for unitary local government in Devon would you prefer
- All demographic monitoring questions: sex, age, ethnic background, employment status, disability

All participants were residents of Torbay, with three currently working in the area and two representing local community organisations. Four out of five respondents supported Torbay Council remaining as it is, while one expressed a preference for an alternative arrangement—suggesting merging with Teignbridge.

These responses further support the views of those who answered the main survey.

Among the respondents, three identified as female and two as male. Age distribution was diverse: one participant was aged 25–34, one was 55–64, two were 65–74, and one was 75 or older. All individuals identified as white. Three were employed part-time in Torbay, while the remaining two were retired. One respondent reported having a disability; the other four did not.

Stakeholder Engagement

Throughout 2025, local government reorganisation has been a standing item on the agenda for the **Torbay Place Leadership Board**. This Board includes Torbay's Members of Parliament, the Police and Crime Commissioner, Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust, South Devon College, and the English Riviera Business Improvement District Company. The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive have discussed the Government's invitation and the potential options for Torbay and the rest of Devon.

Partner views were largely around how to preserve the momentum for Torbay, of which the Torbay Place Leadership Board has been a key driver. It was felt that Torbay offers very different services compared to other areas and this is a strength. Trusted relationships, knowledge, and understanding are already in place. Questions on behalf of the hospitality and tourism sector focussed on how to enable one voice into Government.

To ensure as wide a range of views from our stakeholders, between July and October 2025, a further series of meetings were conducted to gather insights. Those participants who could not attend were given the opportunity to provide digital feedback. The contributions are summarized below.

Monday 7 July 2025 – All Community Partnerships Meeting

The Leader of the Council attended the meeting of all the Community Partnerships facilitated by Torbay Communities. He outlined that all Devon councils had received identical letters requesting new proposals for local government reorganisation based on strong public engagement and robust financial modelling. He explained that, although a 500,000-population threshold was previously suggested, the Minister had clarified there is no fixed minimum with each case will be judged individually. Torbay must demonstrate why it should remain independent. He went on to explain the options currently under consideration.

Points raised by the attendees were around the potential loss of 90% of councillors with the associated increased workloads and shift toward full-time paid roles. The need to keep Torbay's local identity was raised, especially around the VCSE partnerships and integrated care system.

The financial risks were identified including the potential for Council Tax increases and Devon County Council's perceived financial instability. There were concerns about service quality and accountability, not least in respect of maintaining improvements in Children's Services and SEND provision.

Tuesday 15 July 2025 - Torbay Inclusion Partnership

A briefing note was shared with organisations who are part of the Torbay Inclusion Partnership beforehand with a summary on LGR to give individuals the opportunity to have some background understanding prior to the meeting. During the discussion, the following organisations fed back their thoughts on LGR: Eat That Frog, Intercom Trust, and Autistic After Hours. Feedback included broader engagement and outreach of the consultation, concerns about political representation and potential shifts in council values, and that the LGR process was too complex. Notes following the meeting were shared on 23 July and all actions completed to help address concerns.

The partnership organisations were keen for demographic monitoring to be collected, which was already included in the consultation. Communication with these organisations continued and social media posts about LGR were shared with them to help distribute amongst their networks.

Wednesday 3 September – Health and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector
(held with colleagues from South Hams District Council, Teignbridge District Council and West Devon Borough Council)

Stakeholders in attendance: Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust and Torbay, Plymouth and Devon VCSE Assembly

The size of local authorities (or any organisation), whilst important, never solves all the problems; there will always be a need for specialised services and co-operation. Similarly, whilst structure is important, the processes and relationships will always be more important and there is a need for conversations at grass roots. The NHS are already working across boundaries, and the boundaries of the NHS organisations are also changing.

The creation of unitary councils will make it easier to engage with education leaders to address services for those with SEND. There are opportunities around premises and estates as the NHS look to create Health and Wellbeing Centres with integrated neighbourhood teams which could be linked to council services.

NHS organisations would want to work with local authorities to help them achieve financial sustainability including considering the degree to which efficiencies can be shared. Collaboration is required, including in managing the market for adult social care, in order to provide the best public services. The ability to deliver collectively and have greater alignment between local authorities and the NHS would be welcomed.

There is really good positive working between some of the current local authorities and the VCSE sector which have been built up during and since Covid. There needs to be more structured input and support for VCSE infrastructure organisations and this needs to be built on, rather than lost, through the transition to unitary councils. We want the efficiencies of unitaries but built on the existing strengths.

There is a need to consider inequality of access, derived from the Indices of Multiple Deprivation and which are strongly impacted by the coastal and rural dimension. There are staggering inequalities existing across quite small geographies.

Housing (e.g. rural housing, delivery of affordable housing, homes for young people, home for those with mental health issues) is one of the most transformational things you can do - there is a need to provide people with a good quality safe home. Poor housing is the biggest indicator of ill health after smoking.

Monday 8 September – Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector

Stakeholders in attendance: Torbay Communities, Citizens Advice, Healthwatch Torbay

The Leader of Torbay Council gave an overview on how the options were put together and the communication occurring across Devon with other authorities about boundaries and population sizes. He also discussed nearing the end of the process before the proposal is submitted and highlighted that more conversations are happening.

Healthwatch Torbay questioned how realistic it is to stay as we are. They said that Devon is a vast geographical area, and it could be a testing ground to try new things. However, they argued that a

smaller area is better to be innovative and supported Torbay remaining as it is. Highlighted that the Government haven't done any costings on what LGR would look like and keeping as we would reduce these costs. Their fall-back position would be to merge with Teignbridge and South Hams Citizens Advice emphasised that Torbay is approaching this in a radically different way compared to other Councils from conversations they have heard and expressed gratitude for being given the opportunity to contribute. Their biggest fear is a Torbay Unitary that won't even make it to the next stage.

Torbay Communities is fully in support of Torbay remaining as it is and said there are lots of partnerships working well for them due to Torbay's current size. They emphasised that going larger would undermine their ability to have strong relationships and build trust. From conversations, they said larger organisations are happy to stay as we are but that smaller organisations are less clear. They raised it is difficult to give an overview of the sector as there are over 800 organisations in VCSE. There is good integration between voluntary and statutory sector.

Voluntary sector partners have expressed concerns regarding future funding models, debating whether to pursue a unified Devon approach, seek additional funding, or maintain existing arrangements. Areas with high deprivation are seen as advantageous for securing funding, and there is a preference for simplified funding mechanisms, including greater involvement from parish councils. However, the absence of town councils in Paignton and Torquay is viewed as a disadvantage under a single Devon structure. The concept of forming a Mayoral Combined Authority (MSA) is seen as a strategic step toward collaboration among unitary authorities, offering enhanced powers and funding for transport, skills, and climate initiatives—without requiring structural change. Access to elected members and local democratic processes remains a concern, particularly for those in remote areas who face logistical challenges. Additionally, the importance of democratic representation, councillor workloads, and the ability to co-produce services effectively is emphasized, with concerns that larger geographic governance may hinder high-quality service design.

Tuesday 9 September – Business Representative Organisation

Stakeholders in attendance: Torbay Hi Tech Cluster and Torquay Chamber of Commerce

Torquay Chamber of Commerce raised concerns about the potential transition to a Combined County Authority, suggesting estimated costs reaching £30 million according to Devon County Council. They raised Council Tax and housing figures. They also stated if Children's Services in Torbay are improving, why would we want to merge with areas of poorer practice. Also raised was Torbay Hospital and if we lost it then it could lead to redundancies and housing pressures.

Torbay Hi Tech Cluster raised that the potential of losing the Combined County Authority if Torbay became part of a wider Devon authority would be a concern, with the risk that this would diluting Torbay's distinct identity which is having a positive impact. This is of particular concern given its ageing workforce and unique economic profile.

The importance of Torbay's Hi-Tech Cluster was highlighted and its alignment with the Industrial Strategy, with a warning that broader governance could divert investment to larger cities like Plymouth and Bristol, undermining our "Spine of Innovation".

Maintaining separate identities for Devon, Torbay, and Plymouth is seen as vital for infrastructure support and strategic clarity. Priority outcomes include preserving low Council Tax rates, continuing improvements in Children's Services, and amplifying the voices of small businesses.

Torbay's strengths in creative industries, life sciences, and health—alongside assets like its nationally ranked cardiac unit - must be highlighted to secure future government investment and reinforce its relevance in national policy.

Tuesday 16 September - Torbay Trade Unions Joint Consultative Committee

Torbay Council's Director of Corporate Services gave a briefing to the Trade Union representatives, although no specific feedback was provided.

Wednesday 17 September – Housing Developers and Registered Providers

Stakeholders in attendance: Westward Housing, Baker Estates Ltd and Sanctuary

The Leader of Torbay Council gave an overview on how the options were put together. The only option that was currently ruled out by the council was the One Devon model as it would be too big. He discussed the challenges with the singular unitary council option and how this can impact sign off on planning matters.

There was an acceptance that areas are better served by unitary councils as they are more effective at moving things forward. There is also a need to unlock funding from government to help with housing challenges.

Queries were raised concerns with long term resilience for Torbay, with a recognition that there needs to be economic opportunities in Torbay as well as a need to expand the population.

The importance of identity of the population was raised alongside how that identity attracts tourism into the area. It would be important for this to be kept. Further, there are needs within Torbay which may not align with other areas.

The current scale of Torbay was highlighted as a strength meaning that communication with councillors is good. It was felt that as councils get larger it gets more difficult to liaise/communicate with councillors.

Thursday 18 September – Local Businesses

Stakeholders in attendance: Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust, Princess Theatre and The Federation of Small Businesses

The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) highlighted that Torbay, Plymouth, and Devon are vastly different. Torbay has its own identity and is focused on tourism and leisure – the locations need to be separated based on this identity. They said that businesses across the county want equal access to support services, without the inconsistency of a postcode lottery. They're calling for streamlined processes and reduced red tape to make it easier to operate and grow. FSB said there is a strong push for local businesses to break out of their geographic silos and collaborate more widely, fostering stronger connections and unlocking new opportunities across the region.

Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust noted Plymouth's dynamic development and questioned Exeter's role, which the Leader of Torbay Council clarified and shared they have announced their position with plans to expand its population to around 300,000. The Trust said Torbay's key priorities include protecting its countryside, supporting tourism, and managing landscape pressures through strong partnership working. They state there is deep local pride in its identity, with concerns that it could be diluted under wider regional changes. However, while there is a risk of Torbay's voice being overshadowed, there is also a clear opportunity to strengthen its influence and amplify its voice through collaborative working across the Bay. There were concerns the

transition period would pose a risk due to the time it will take for changes to settle. However, a smooth and fast transition could be a significant advantage.

Princess Theatre said that from a young person's perspective, opportunities in Torbay can be limited, though the area feels stable and well-established. They said there is interest in supporting neighbouring areas like Salcombe, especially around off-season tourism and trade. Concerns were also raised about the future of cultural projects, such as theatre expansion, and the fate of council-owned buildings. In a larger authority, these issues may face delays and reduced local focus, with worries about Torbay's voice being lost and slower coordination among officers.

It was recognised that joining a larger authority could reduce focus on Torbay due to competing priorities. Some areas of Devon lack town councils, meaning Torbay might inherit wider financial burdens without local structures to devolve services. This shift could lead to greater emphasis on statutory services, potentially at the expense of local needs and initiatives.

Friday 19 September – Further education providers

(held with colleagues from South Hams District Council, Teignbridge District Council and West Devon Borough Council)

Stakeholders in attendance: Exeter College

There is a need for certainty about a future model of local government in Devon as well as joined up thinking across local government, education settings and agencies such as Homes England. There is a need for a local voice under a regional banner.

A reduced number of councils across Devon would help focus conversations, but there's a balance between economies of scale and local knowledge. Better join up between schools and further education would be welcomed, and councils can help facilitate this. There needs to be a forum where multi-agency conversations can happen, and a shared data source would be a further advantage

Friday 3 October - Torbay Association of Secondary Schools

An in-person meeting was attended by the Director of Corporate Services at Torquay Academy. The Association did not state a strong preference for any potential proposal but highlighted the risks of a wider Devon model.

Wednesday 22 October - Torbay Association of Primary Schools

An in-person meeting at Mayfield School was attended by the Director of Corporate Services. The Association noted the difficulties facing Torbay primaries arising from falling birth rates that Torbay and the wider area are experiencing. While the Association expressed a willingness to consider some expansion, they acknowledged that it carries increased risk and preferred a wider expansion if one was necessary. There was a clear message that SEND improvement must be considered carefully, especially in light of the challenges across the county.

Thursday 30 October – Statutory Stakeholder Engagement Event

Stakeholders in attendance: Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust, University of Exeter, NHS Integrated Care Board, South Devon College, Devon Partnership NHS Trust, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority, and Torbay Communities

There was a wide-ranging recognition that, whatever new structure is put in place across Devon, there is a need for collaborative working across partner organisations. From NHS partners in particular, the need to work on both a wider scale and in communities was highlighted, as was the link between council services and improving people's physical and mental health.

There was a recognition that once final proposals were submitted, councils across the county would need to come together to both plan for transition and continue to develop proposals for a Mayoral Strategic Authority.

In addition to engagement meetings listed above, the Chief Executive continues to hold regular meetings with Brixham Town Council and local government reorganisation has been discussed. Subsequently, Brixham Town Council shared the following letter on 24 July 2025:

Dear Anne-Marie,

Thank you for inviting Brixham Town Council to respond to Torbay Council's engagement on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), launched on 1st July 2025. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to this important process, and the Town Council has considered the proposals in detail.

We understand that Torbay Council's preferred option is to remain as a standalone unitary authority. While we acknowledge the strengths that underpin this position — including local service improvements, a strong health and care partnership, and current financial stability — we believe there are broader considerations that warrant reflection as part of the final proposal to Government.

We take this opportunity to raise the following key points:

- Torbay's population (approx. 139,000) falls significantly below the Government's stated preference for new unitary authorities to serve populations of around 500,000 or more.
- Remaining unchanged may hinder Torbay's long-term ability to meet its strategic planning obligations. According to a recent appeal decision, Torbay Council has only a 1.7-year housing land supply, well below the Government's five-year requirement. This has weakened Torbay's ability to defend both its Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plans, placing additional development pressure on communities.
- The English Devolution White Paper (December 2024) highlights the importance of strategic geographies, collaborative governance, and avoiding "devolution islands." These principles may have implications for the sustainability of Torbay as a standalone authority.
- We agree that larger council structures do not automatically lead to better outcomes. However, we believe there is a strong case for exploring a 5-4-1 South Devon model,

where Torbay Council, South Hams, West Devon and Teignbridge District Councils could come together to form a single, coherent unitary authority. This model may better align with Government expectations while remaining rooted in local identity. In addition, Brixham Town Council respectfully requests that Torbay Council:

- Recognise the value of broader community governance within Torbay, including the potential creation of additional town and parish councils. We note that areas such as Surrey are actively progressing the establishment of new parish councils as part of their reorganisation, which may offer useful lessons.
- Includes a review of Brixham's boundaries as part of any future Community Governance Review. Development is already being proposed on land bordering the current boundary, and it is likely that new residents will rely heavily on Brixham's services and infrastructure. It is therefore appropriate and timely to assess whether the existing boundary continues to reflect the community Brixham serves.
- Ensure any future changes in local government structure or decision-making improve local representation and help services be delivered more effectively by and for the community.
- Ensure that Brixham Town Council is actively engaged in ongoing discussions, particularly where potential service or asset devolution is concerned, so that we can reflect this appropriately in our forward planning and budgeting.

We hope our response contributes to a constructive and forward-looking dialogue as Torbay Council develops its final proposal to Government.

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hallett
Town Clerk

Appendix: Raising awareness of engagement

The engagement was widely promoted across a range of Torbay Council channels to encourage participation.

Press release

At significant milestones through the development of proposals, media releases were issued for onward sharing through online news outlets, newspapers, magazines, TV, and radio. This has been complemented by articles, interviews, and quotes from the Leader of Torbay Council, including the Leaders Columns in local newspapers.

The first press release was issued on Friday 1 July launching the consultation. A copy is published on Torbay Council's website: www.torbay.gov.uk/news/pr9238-1/

The second press release was issued on Thursday 31 July extending the consultation to 31 August. A copy is published on Torbay Council's website: www.torbay.gov.uk/news/pr9343/

Newsletters

The consultation was promoted through several council led newsletters internally and externally. Existing internal engagement channels within Torbay Council will be used to ensure that all members of staff are aware of the key milestones in the development to proposals, to seek their input as well as providing reassurance about the impact or otherwise on their existing roles. These were used to share information with residents and businesses across Torbay.

External

- From 1 July to 2 September 2025, the Local Government Reorganisation consultation was featured in the **One Torbay** residents' e-newsletter 7 times. Subscribers clicked through to the consultation webpage 638 times and to the survey directly 300 times.
- On 1 July and 1 September, there were two **One Torbay Special Edition's** sent. In the first newsletter, the Torbay interim plan link was clicked 392 times, Princess Theatre Presentation 126 times, webpage 83 times and the survey 170 times. On the second newsletter, the survey link was clicked 505 times.
- On 29 July, the Local Government Reorganisation consultation was featured in the **Business News** newsletter. The link to the LGR survey received 3 clicks.
- On 24 July, the Local Government Reorganisation consultation was featured in the **SEND newsletter**. The link to the LGR survey received 3 clicks.
- On 25 July, the Local Government Reorganisation consultation was featured in the **Carers Newsletter**.

Internal

- The consultation was featured every week in Torbay Council's weekly **Staff News** email throughout the consultation period to keep staff updated and reassured. A bulletin was circulated on 1 July when the consultation was launched. The survey was clicked 181 times and the LGR webpage 56 times.
- The consultation was also shared at an **All Colleague's Briefing** which is an open forum from the Chief Executive who provided an update on the consultation and LGR.
- The results of the feedback were shared with colleagues at an **All Colleague's Briefing** along with an overview of the timeline taking colleagues through the key decision points until 28 November.

- We also held monthly **Ask Us Anything** sessions where smaller groups of staff come together online to ask any questions of our senior leaders. LGR was a topic of discussion as all of these forums during and since the consultation period.
- **All Colleague's Briefing** was filmed and shared for those staff members who missed the Chief Executive update.
- Managers were kept up to date through a monthly **managers forum** along with frequent manager briefings and sharing information on a dedicated Teams channel.
- All colleagues were asked to give any feedback via the survey or direct through our engagement inbox.
- There were five **Members' Briefings** circulated throughout the LGR consultation. The open rate was good throughout, with 53 and 52 opens out of a possible 54 on the first two briefings, respectively.

Existing internal engagement channels within Torbay Council have been used to make sure that all colleagues are aware of the key milestones in the development of proposals. We have constantly sought their input, encouraging them to share with their peers, and providing reassurance about the impact or otherwise on their existing roles.

Website

A dedicated page on the Council's website was established (www.torbay.gov.uk/lgr/) and has included information about the development of proposals for local government reorganisation. It has also included an informative FAQ section. This has been updated on a regular basis. We have been able to signpost stakeholders to the website for more detailed information throughout the consultation and engagement period. The statistics presented below are based solely on website visitors who consented to cookie tracking upon accessing the Council website. Consequently, the data reflects only a subset of total site traffic and may not represent the full spectrum of user activity.

Traffic Acquisition Reporting: data 12 September. This highlights the sources driving website sessions to the LGR webpages, capturing insights on both new and returning visitors.

- 149 visits came from organic Google searching
- 49 visits came from organic Bing searching (likely Council staff)
- 23 visits came from the BBC website
- 16 visits came from a link shared in Teams (likely Council staff)
- 9 visits came from a link shared on Facebook while on desktop
- 8 visits came from a link shared on Facebook while on mobile
- 7 from a paid Facebook post
- 4 from organic Ecosia searching
- 3 from the Adelante app
- 3 visits to the trackable QR code on the LGR leaflet. A copy is shared after this section.

Furthermore, 169 visits came from direct / none. This means that Google Analytics does not know exactly where they came from, but this could be:

- By directly typing the URL in the browser
- Through a saved link
- Through a link from an offline document (Word or PDF)
- From a link shortener (e.g. bit.ly)
- From people using an ad blocker
- From redirects

An LGR leaflet was designed and launched on 11 August. It was distributed at engagement events held in Brixham and Paignton, at the reception area of Torquay Town Hall, and throughout all four libraries across Torbay. This encouraged participants to complete the survey when it was convenient for them. Circa 300 leaflets were distributed.



Engagement Events

Face-to-face communication and engagement are important to allow for discussion on specific topics, ensuring that feedback is captured and used to demonstrate open, transparent democratic accountability. During the consultation period for LGR, the team participated in three public engagement events across each of Torbay's towns to raise awareness and encourage community input. Senior Leadership and Council Members were present at each event, offering support and addressing political questions surrounding the potential restructure. Below are details of each of the events:

- Sunday 10 August – Babbacombe Fayre, Torquay
- Tuesday 12 August – Public Meeting at Brixham Town Hall
- Wednesday 20 August – Children's Week on Paignton Green

The Brixham event featured a comprehensive presentation on LGR, delivered by the Leader of the Council, opposition members, and the Council's Chief Executive. A total of 37 attendees were present, including 25 members of the public. Following the presentation, a short break was provided ahead of the Q&A session to give attendees time to complete the survey. Many residents had already submitted their responses prior to the event, with an additional 8 surveys completed on the night.

At the events in Torquay and Paignton the footfall was large, and the events were busy. Due to this nature, it was difficult to entice residents to discuss LGR and complete a long survey. To overcome this, printed leaflets with QR codes linking to the online survey were distributed to encourage digital participation. A shorter survey with key questions was also distributed at the event in Paignton to encourage participation. This received 5 submissions. There were 5 printed forms of the full survey completed at the event in Torquay. Social media posts were shared following each of the events, recognising community engagement.

Champions Network

On Friday 18 July, the Torbay Champions Network met at the Redcliffe Hotel in Paignton for an event with key speakers sharing updates from across the Council. A newsletter promoting the

event was sent on Friday 4 July. There was a total of 25 clicks to the dedicated LGR webpage on the Council webpage.

The Leader of the Council shared a presentation on LGR at the event. It welcomed 35 attendees, and three printed surveys were completed on-site, contributing valuable feedback.

Torbay Place Leadership Board

LGR has been a topic of discussion at Torbay Place Leadership Board meetings. Chaired by Jim Parker (Editor, Torbay Weekly), the Board brings together a diverse group of stakeholders representing sectors across both Torbay and Devon. Among its committee members are Torbay Council's Chief Executive, Anne-Marie Bond, and the Council Leader, Councillor David Thomas.

The full list of committee members is available online:

www.torbay.gov.uk/DemocraticServices/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=1988

Other communications:

- Library screens for whole of July and August
- Hot topic on council website for whole of July and August
- Article in Beach Hut for the months of July and August
- Place Leadership Board – email sent on 2 July with the link to survey and a request to share via networks
- Regular discussion at the MPs briefing meetings

Social media engagement

Brand Sentiment on social media

The consultation was promoted across the Council's corporate social media channels – Facebook, LinkedIn and Next-door. The LGR campaign reached 42.6K, with 59.9K impressions, 555 clicks, 123 comments, 164 likes and 61 shares.

The top performing posts for each channel can be seen in the following images.

Facebook top 3 by reach:

View post

torbaycouncil 
22 Aug 2025 | 17:03

 Local Government
Reorganisation (LGR)
Consultation Update

 We're currently in our consultation process on LGR, and we've been receiving a wide range of questions from our community. To help address these, we've created a series of short [read more...](#)



LIKES	26
COMMENTS	19
REACH	3.7K
ENG. RATE	1.54%

SHARES	8
CLICKS	16
IMPRESSIONS	4.7K
REACTIONS	30
SAVES	NA


3.7K
REACH

View post



torbaycouncil

14 Aug 2025 | 14:01

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

On Tuesday, our community came together for an engagement event in Brixham discussing Local Government Reorganisation. Councillor David Thomas, Leader of Torbay Council, was joined onstage by



[read more...](#)

LIKES	11
COMMENTS	8
REACH	2.9K
ENG. RATE	1.06%

SHARES	2
CLICKS	11
IMPRESSIONS	3.2K
REACTIONS	13
SAVES	NA



View post



torbaycouncil

26 Aug 2025 | 13:40

Let's Talk Council Tax – What LGR Means for Torbay

We're continuing our Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) video series to answer your top questions and help explain what these changes could mean for our community.



[read more...](#)

LIKES	9
COMMENTS	13
REACH	2.8K
ENG. RATE	1.54%

SHARES	0
CLICKS	24
IMPRESSIONS	3.5K
REACTIONS	16
SAVES	NA



LinkedIn top 3 by reach

View post



torbay-council

14 Aug 2025 | 14:02

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

On Tuesday evening, we hosted an engagement event in Brixham focused on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Leaders, residents, and stakeholders gathered to explore LGR and what it means for



[read more...](#)

LIKES	6
COMMENTS	1
REACH	536
ENG. RATE	1.03%

SHARES	0
CLICKS	1
IMPRESSIONS	780
REACTIONS	6
SAVES	NA



2
352
REACH

3
310
REACH

Next-door top 3 by clicks (reach not available):

1
14
CLICKS

[View post](#)

Torbay Council 

21 Aug 2025 | 20:36

🌟 Thank You, Paignton!

We had a fantastic time meeting residents on Paignton Green during Children's Week. It was great to chat with so many of you about Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and what it will mean for Torbay's future. Don [read more...](#)




LIKES	0
COMMENTS	4
REACH	0
ENG. RATE	1.02%

SHARES	0
CLICKS	6
IMPRESSIONS	979
REACTIONS	0
SAVES	NA



[View post](#)

Torbay Council 

30 Aug 2025 | 11:01

🔔 Final Reminder: Have Your Say on Torbay's Future! Thanks so much to everyone who's already shared their views on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Your feedback is helping shape the proposal we'll submit to the government by 28 Nov

[read more...](#)




LIKES	0
COMMENTS	0
REACH	0
ENG. RATE	0.9%

SHARES	0
CLICKS	6
IMPRESSIONS	663
REACTIONS	0
SAVES	NA



The Communications Team have evaluated various aspects of the reception of the proposals on different social media platforms, and these results are summarised in this section. Our social media channels have many subscribers/users. Specific templates for social media posts relating to local government reorganisation have been developed (see section on branding). Posts have signposted stakeholders to events and engagement activity as well as being a means to collect views.

As seen above, there was far more engagement on Facebook than on other social media channels which demonstrates that this is the preferred channel of information for a lot of our residents.

Throughout the consultation period on **Torbay Council's Facebook** page (1 July – 2 September), across 16 Facebook posts, there was a total reach of 31,300, with 120 comments, 40 shares, 154 likes, and 46,500 impressions. Torbay Council's Facebook page currently has 17,828 followers with 83.4% living in Torbay and the rest locally, extending to Exeter and Plymouth.

Mixed feedback was received on the social media posts, particularly on Facebook. Time was spent responding to individual comments on the comments where genuine questions were asked, resulting in positive feedback and promptness of replies. In most cases, answers to questions were available on the FAQ section of the consultation webpage.

Social media paid advert

A paid social media ad was live from 14 August to 31 August. This included posts, stories and reels on Facebook and Instagram. It received a total of 3,723 clicks and helped to further engage with social media users.

YouTube Campaign

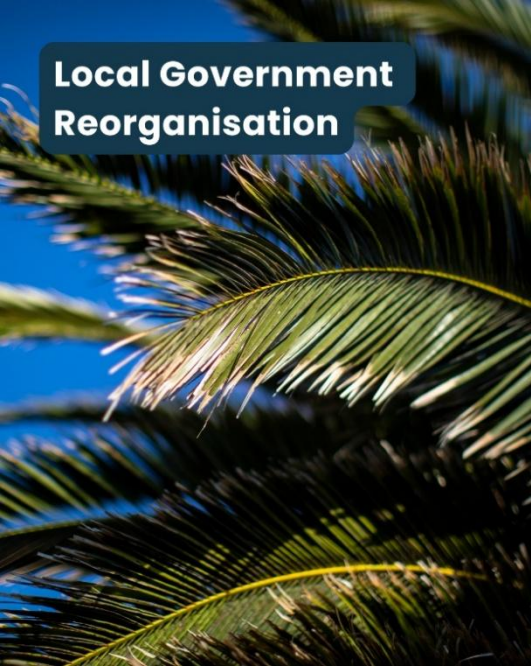
A YouTube film of the Leader of Torbay Council was shared, answering some of the most frequently asked questions by residents. The film had 164 views on Torbay Council's YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/watch?v= tn6md00wu0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tn6md00wu0)

Six shorter films were shared across Torbay Council's social media platforms during August, answering individual questions. The films received mixed responses, with positive and negative interactions from the public. These films received 1,552 views. Time was taken to answer genuine questions.

Branding

LGR digital branding was created and used across internal and external channels. Examples in different sizing is shown below:





Local Government Reorganisation

Acknowledgements

The author of this report acknowledges the assistance of Microsoft Copilot in the analysis and summarisation of community feedback. Copilot's capabilities in natural language process and data synthesis were instrumental in efficiently extracting and summarising key insights from the dataset.