Torbay Creates: Culture & Community

A Revised DRAFT Cultural Strategy for Torbay 2027–2036

Vision

Torbay: a connected coastal and maritime place where culture, heritage and creativity strengthen communities, improve wellbeing, grow pride in place, unlock opportunity, support regeneration, and attract long-term investment.

Building on the previous Torbay Cultural Strategy, *Enjoy, Talk, Do, Be*, and informed by the 2025 *Torbay Culture & Heritage Review* undertaken by independent consultants, Genecon, this refreshed strategy sets out an evolving strategic framework for culture-led transformation in Torbay. It aligns cultural ambition with the emerging Place Partnership programme, *Torbay Creates: Culture, Community and Opportunity*, and positions culture as a practical mechanism for strengthening communities, improving wellbeing, supporting regeneration, growing pride in place, developing skills and attracting investment.

Why Refresh the Strategy?

This strategy should be read alongside Torbay Council's Corporate Plan, the Torbay Story, the Destination Management Plan, the Genecon Culture and Heritage Review, Torbay Heritage Place, Pride in Place, Culture Priority Place status and the emerging Place Partnership programme. Together, these agenda follow a distinct direction of travel: culture is not an optional add-on or 'nice to have', but a core part of how Torbay builds confidence, opportunity, identity and inclusive economic growth across its three towns.

Torbay has significant cultural strengths:

- UNESCO English Riviera Global Geopark
- Internationally recognised cultural and natural heritage assets
- A growing Creative Industries sector
- Strong community and voluntary action programmes
- Expanding culture and heritage-led regeneration programme
- New long-term investment through Torbay Heritage Place, the Pride in Place programme, and recently announced by the Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) as a Culture Priority Place.

The 2025 Review found that while cultural activity in Torbay is vibrant, delivery remains fragmented, with insufficient coordination, advocacy, shared evidence, capacity-building, and strategic leadership. This strategy responds to those findings by setting out a more connected cultural system: one that can align partners, build organisational resilience,

support community participation, develop investment-ready projects and demonstrate the contribution of culture to wider place outcomes.

Aims:

- More people, across all communities, experience and shape high-quality cultural and creative opportunities throughout the year. Culture creates stronger connections and shared understanding across all communities and sectors, leading to fruitful collaborations that attract significant inward investment
- Residents, communities, and organisations actively create, shape, and lead cultural activity
- Torbay expresses its distinct cultural identity, celebrates and conserves its internationally significant heritage, and creates opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds, to participate, develop skills, build confidence, and contribute to Torbay's future.

Strategic Principles 2026–2036

1. Partnership First

Culture succeeds when organisations work together rather than compete. ACE, NLHF, HE and Torbay Council will work together to support Torbay's cultural sector to develop integrated and complementary programmes of work and to facilitate necessary funding.

2. Community Ownership

Residents help to shape priorities, programmes, and investment - feel ownership and support the Council with delivery

3. Culture for Everyone

Culture must be accessible, inclusive, and relevant across all communities

4. Creativity Drives Growth

Creative industries, cultural tourism, and digital innovation contribute directly to Torbay's prosperity, through increased economic benefit and rewarding jobs.

5. Heritage Shapes the Future

Natural, built, and cultural heritage are central to placemaking and regeneration – Torbay's internationally significant heritage is what makes it unique.

6. Health and Wellbeing Matter

Culture and heritage contribute directly to healthier, happier, and better-connected communities – creating beautiful, peaceful and fun places to live, work, and play.

7. One Torbay, Three Distinct Towns

The Torbay Story will be revised to include a chapter dedicated to Torbay's unique culture and heritage. Torquay, Paignton, and Brixham each have distinct identities, assets, and community strengths. The strategy supports a shared Torbay-wide cultural system while allowing each town to develop a role that reflects its own heritage identity, communities, visitor economy, and regeneration priorities.

Paignton will be the principal demonstration place for culture-led regeneration in the first phase of this strategy. It brings together significant heritage assets, active cultural organisations, regeneration priorities, community need,and Pride in Place investment opportunities. Paignton Picture House, Palace Theatre, Doorstep Arts, Sound Communities and wider regeneration activity create a practical test bed for showing how culture can build participation, confidence, skills, pride, and local economic benefit. Learning from Paignton will inform work in Torquay, Brixham, and Torbay as a whole.

Strategic Aim 1

Increase Participation, Inclusion and Wellbeing Through Culture

Objectives

1.1 Broaden Cultural Participation

- Increase cultural participation across the three towns; enable greater engagement among underrepresented communities
- Reduce financial, social, and physical barriers to cultural participation
- Support local cultural leadership across Torbay

1.2 Support Creative Learning and Talent Development

- Strengthen cultural education pathways to rewarding creative jobs
- Build links between schools, colleges, creative employers, and cultural organisations to improve access to cultural skills training
- Support young people in developing creative careers through Culture & Creativity , apprenticeships, work experience opportunities

1.3 Embed Culture in Health and Wellbeing

- Expand creative health and alternative provision initiatives
- Promote social prescribing and cultural prescribing e.g. expand and deliver more programmes similar to Torre Abbey's successful foster carer model
- Develop partnerships with health, care, and the voluntary & community sector

What would success look like?

- Increased participation rates across all demographics and the whole of Torbay
- Greater engagement from young and deprived people
- Improved health & wellbeing outcomes
- Increased volunteering and community involvement in culture, creativity & the arts

Strategic Aim 2

Maximise Torbay's Cultural, Heritage, and Environmental Assets

Objectives

2.1 Activate Heritage Assets

- Support sustainable use of historic buildings and natural heritage assets
- Encourage year-round cultural activity in underused spaces
- Strengthen links between heritage, regeneration, and community development

2.2 Create a Year-Round Cultural Place for residents and visitors

- Develop Torbay as a year-round cultural place where residents can take part in, shape and benefit from cultural activity throughout the year. This will strengthen local participation, support community-led culture, animate town centres, connect major events with local heritage and creative programming, and contribute to a visitor economy that reflects Torbay's distinctive identity.
- Support year-round cultural activity that residents can access, shape, and enjoy
- Connect major events with community-led culture, local heritage, and creative programming
- Extend visitor activity beyond peak summer months to year-round
- Strengthen Torbay's cultural tourism offer & market effectively

2.3 Strengthen Place Identity

- Celebrate Torbay's local stories, maritime identity, coastal heritage, UNESCO English Riviera Global Geopark, Agatha Christie legacy, International Agatha Christie Festival, Torquay Pavilion opportunity and community-led cultural activity as assets that support participation, identity, regeneration, skills, cultural tourism and economic growth.
- Promote the UNESCO English Riviera Global Geopark as a cultural and natural heritage asset, offering diverse experiences for residents and visitors
- Improve cultural visibility across all three towns

What would success look like?

- Increased cultural and heritage tourism – diverse audiences, day and nighttime economy, year-round, longer dwell time and overnight stays
- More heritage assets in active, viable, and long-term sustainable use
- Increased town footfall across all three towns
- Stronger resident sense of belonging and Pride in Place

Strategic Aim 3

Grow the Creative and Cultural Economy

Objectives

3.1 Support Creative Businesses and Freelancers

- Support for creative businesses and freelancers will be developed in line with Torbay's wider economic development activity and based on clear evidence of need. The strategy will focus on practical interventions where culture can add distinct value: networking, skills pathways, workspace development, investment readiness, links with digital and hi-tech sectors, and stronger connections between cultural activity, employment and business growth.
- Develop creative career pathways, affordable production space and peer networks that help local creative talent stay, grow, and progress in Torbay. In Year One, we will test the evidence-based need for a creative hub or networked creative workspace model; building on existing business support rather than duplicating it. This work will connect creative practitioners with skills providers, employers, the Creative Cluster, the Hi-Tech Cluster and wider economic development activity.
- Develop creative career pathways linked to local employment, skills and progression opportunities
- Improve access to affordable production, rehearsal, studio and collaboration space where gaps are evidenced
- Connect creative talent with existing business support, investment readiness advice, mentoring and sector networks
- Combine and expand opportunities for networking and collaboration between the cultural and creative digital sectors
- Strengthen links between the Torbay Culture & Heritage Forum, the Creative Cluster, and the Hi-Tech Cluster

3.2 Retain and Attract Talent

- Develop creative career pathways by connecting local schools and colleges with employers and skills needs

- Increase the number of accessible spaces for creative production
- Support younger, more affluent people to stay or move to live and work in Torbay

3.3 Increase Investment in Culture and Heritage

- Build fundraising capability across the sector e.g. expand the grant writing capacity within and beyond the Council
- Coordinate major funding opportunities more effectively
- Increase external investment into Torbay by showcasing our offer inter/nationally

What would success look like?

- Growth in creative employment and enjoyment
- Increased cultural investment from public & private sectors
- Increased business and community participation in culture and the arts
- Improved creative sector sustainability and increased number of accessible creative work-space and studios

Strategic Aim 4

Create a Strong Cultural Partnership for Torbay

New Governance Model

Governance arrangements will be reviewed during Year One to confirm the relationship between the Torbay Place Leadership Board, the proposed Torbay Cultural Partnership, Council officer governance, Pride in Place delivery structures, Torbay Heritage Place arrangements, and any future Place Partnership programme board. The aim is for a simple model in which strategic accountability, cultural leadership, and operational delivery are clearly delineated but well connected. This will also allow the strategy to remain flexible as Local Government Reorganisation develops.

The 2025 Genecon Review recommends replacing the previous Torbay Culture Board with a more democratic, representative, dynamic, and agile structure - the Torbay Cultural Partnership.

Torbay Cultural Partnership: a strategic Board

The Torbay Cultural Partnership will provide cultural leadership, sector coordination, and constructive challenge. It will not duplicate the role of the Torbay Place Leadership Board, Council governance or existing programme boards, rather, provide culture-focused expertise that support the Council's wider socioeconomic aims. The value of the Torbay Cultural Partnership lies in its capacity to connect cultural organisations, communities,

funders, and strategic partners so that cultural activity contributes meaningfully to Torbay's wider place, regeneration, health, skills and economic priorities.

Alongside the regular strategic Board membership, we will invite senior leadership from the Council and public funding body representatives to attend, together with an Independent Critical Friend (ideally, someone from outside Torbay who has experience in developing a similar partnership in a region of the UK with similar demographic challenges).

Recruitment & Governance Principles

- Openness and transparency
- Equality of opportunity and equity of voice
- Geographic balance across Torquay, Paignton, and Brixham
- Representation of young people, diverse communities, and underrepresented groups
- The Cultural Partnership will strengthen accountability by publishing an annual impact report, setting out membership terms, using transparent recruitment processes, and reviewing its governance arrangements regularly.

Partnership Functions

The Torbay Cultural Partnership will:

- Champion culture and heritage and highlight the ways in which these contribute to the Council's wider socio-economic aims
- Coordinate sector collaboration and provide support
- Build organisational capacity
- Support fundraising and advocacy
- Influence policy and regeneration
- Measure and communicate impact e.g. gather participation data and feedback from events and activities
- Actively drive closer connections between culture, the local creative digital economy, health, education and placemaking

Funding and Resourcing the Torbay Cultural Partnership

- **Three-year rolling core funding agreement**
  Year One resourcing will be developed through a clear business plan that distinguishes core coordination costs, community engagement activity, sector capacity-building, evaluation and project development. The funding model will identify confirmed resources, potential partner contributions and future funding asks separately, so that the strategy remains

credible with Council decision-makers, Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic England, and local partners.

The funding model recommended in the 2025 Review by Genecon (unconfirmed):

Recruitment of FTE Project Co-ordinator role, including on costs & overheads £52k
Contracting of freelance cultural mobilisers £23k
Business Plan / Strategy & Action Plan Development £12k
Administration & Working Budget £10k
Sector & Community Engagement and Consultation Activities (including participation support costs, specialist support, facilitators, activity practitioners, admin, IT costs, travel) £8k
Total £105,000

- Contributions from Torbay Council, Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Heritage Places, Pride in Place and other strategic partners to be agreed during Year 1; Torbay Place Leadership Board to be mobilised in the first instance (see below).
- Core funding necessary to support a Torbay Cultural Partnership Programme Manager, Cultural Mobilisers, administration, communications, engagement and evaluation.
- Additional project funding sought through: ACE/NLHF grants, creative health commissioning and expanding alternative provision contracts, corporate sponsorship, social value investment, universities and research partnerships.
- Requirement for a three-year business plan and annual funding strategy

Relationship with Torbay Council

The Torbay Cultural Partnership should be independent in its voice and membership, while remaining strategically aligned with Torbay Council's place, regeneration, health, skills, economy and community objectives.

Torbay Council will:

- Be a strategic partner, not owner
- Provide officer and member representation
- Embed culture across regeneration, health, placemaking, and economic development
- Support investment and funding opportunities

Torbay Cultural Partnership will:

- Act as the independent voice of the cultural sector
- Provide constructive challenge, advice, and evidence
- Help to shape cultural and creative policy and delivery
- Connect communities and cultural organisations with decision-makers and vice versa

Year One will focus on creating the *conditions for success* rather than attempting to deliver every ambition immediately. Priority actions should include reviewing governance, establishing the Cultural Partnership, agreeing delivery structures, gathering baseline participation data, strengthening community engagement, developing an investment pipeline, continuing to nurture relationships with Arts Council England, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic England, and supporting organisational capacity across Torbay's cultural and heritage sector.

This strategy's ambitions need to be phased and tested against available capacity, evidence, and resources. Some activity can begin immediately through existing partnerships and programmes; other ambitions will require dedicated coordination, external investment, stronger data, and agreed governance. A phased approach will avoid the strategy becoming a 'wish list' and will give funders confidence that Torbay is committed to leadership, evidence, and the delivery capacity needed for long-term success.

Priority Programmes 2026–2029

1. Creative Torbay: Strengthening Strategic Developments for Culture & Heritage Across Torbay

- **Partnership & Governance:** strengthen the relationship between ACE, NLHF, HE, and Torbay Council through regular engagement and participation in the Torbay Place Leadership Board.
- **Strategic Approach to Culture & Heritage Development:** Acknowledging findings of the 2025 Review by Genecon, this strategy proposes a delivery plan that addresses key challenges and opportunities across Torbay's culture and heritage sector. We aim to strengthen capacity, attract investment, and deliver shared priorities over the next 2–3 years, creating strong foundations for the sector and communities across Torbay to 2036 and beyond.
- **Sector engagement and support:** ACE, NLHF, HE and Torbay Council are committed to engaging with the cultural and heritage sector and providing support through advocacy, capacity-building, and investment.

2. Strengthening Paignton's Creative Ecology

- **Paignton Picture House:** complete the capital project and support PPHT to establish a viable, sustainable operating model, with opening planned for early 2027.

- **Support for Local Organisations:** provide core funding, where possible, to local cultural organisations, to support organisational resilience and long-term sustainability, including capital.
- **Strengthen Paignton's cultural and heritage ecology:** improve the historic character and cultural ecology of the town centre by better connecting programmes such as Pride in Place, Historic England's Heritage At Risk, and Torbay Heritage Place, with the priorities for Arts Council England and Torbay Council's Community & Corporate Plan

3. Developing Torbay's Cultural & Heritage Engagement Offer

- **Enhance Torbay's existing major events** to increase cultural participation and showcase Torbay's creative talent to wider audiences. Focus first on augmenting the Agatha Christie International Festival, Torbay Airshow, Tor Vybz, and Bay of Lights, with locally produced cultural and creative work.

- **Strengthen Torbay's internationally significant museum sector** by supporting accredited museums - Torquay Museum, Torre Abbey, and Brixham Museum; to ensure sustainability, resilience, capital developments, continued relevance, and to improve Torbay's cultural visitor economy.

- **Maximise the value of the English Riviera UNESCO Global Geopark status** by recognising and demystifying its international value to residents through improved signage and inclusion across all aspects of local branding and a diverse range of Geopark experiences.

- **Highlight the Agatha Christie's legacy** to raise the cultural and heritage profile of Torbay, nationally and internationally, to boost local pride in place and vastly increase domestic and international tourism to Torbay.

4. Significant Long-Term Transformation through Culture & Heritage

- **Torquay Pavilion:** building on findings from the Options Appraisal (April 2026), continue to develop the network of stakeholders and funding necessary to identify a viable and sustainable future year-round use for the building, that includes all local communities and attracts visitors.

- **Torre Abbey:** continue to deliver exemplary restoration and enhancement projects and identify further ways to diversify its role in social prescribing and maximise commercial opportunities in ways sensitive to its designation as a scheduled ancient monument.

5. Torbay Heritage Place

- This strategy aligns closely with the updated Torbay Heritage Strategy and the aims and ambitions of the Torbay Heritage Place programme. Torbay Heritage Place is delivered by a cross-sectoral team – the Heritage & Design team and the Culture & Events team. We see the H&D team as focused on built and natural heritage and the C&E team focused on how people engage with and enjoy built and natural heritage – together, we shape and make Torbay Heritage Place.

6. Young Creators Torbay

- Supporting creative learning, career progression, and employment, through better connected creative skills development, paid work experience, and apprenticeships.

7. One Torbay Cultural Marketing Programme

- Promoting the full cultural and heritage offer through a shared identity (Torbay Story, with a new chapter on Culture & Heritage), and coordinated communications approach e.g. an easily navigated website with a clear calendar of events and booking capacity.

Measuring Success

The Torbay Cultural Partnership will publish an annual impact report covering participation and audience reach, engagement from underrepresented communities, community influence and ownership, wellbeing outcomes, volunteer involvement, external investment secured, creative career pathways, organisational resilience, partnership effectiveness, audience development, and the contribution of cultural activity to regeneration outcomes.

2036 Outcome

By 2036 Torbay will be recognised as a place where culture, heritage, creativity, and community are central to civic life and place transformation. Residents will have greater influence over cultural activity; cultural and heritage organisations will be more resilient and better connected; creative pathways will support local talent into rewarding careers, reducing the need for young people to leave Torbay; heritage and creativity will contribute to regeneration and economic prosperity; and the Torbay Cultural Partnership will provide

the leadership, coordination, evidence and advocacy needed to sustain a confident, inclusive and prosperous Torbay.