

# Task and Finish Group Report - Review of Draft Heritage Strategy

Report to the Cabinet on 22 September 2020



## Background

1. The Panel met informally on 6 and 19 August and in public on 13 August 2020 to consider the consultation draft Heritage Strategy document which was subject to a four week public consultation.
2. The Review Panel comprised of Councillors Barnby, Barrand, Brooks, Brown, Bye, Mandy Darling, Doggett, Foster, Howgate, Kennedy, Loxton and Mills – Chaired by Councillor Foster.
3. The Panel heard from Martin Thomas and Kevin Dixon (Torbay Culture), Jim Blackwell (Planning), David Edmondson (Assistant Director of Planning, Housing and Climate Emergency), Councillor Morey (Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, Environment and Culture) and Councillor Long (Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Tourism and Housing).
4. The Panel reflected and debated the information provided to them, both in writing and orally. This covered issues such as the brief given by the Council; who would take the lead of the Heritage Strategy from the Council; and feedback from the 865 responses provided at the time of the meeting.
5. Members raised concerns that no dedicated Torbay Council officer would be appointed to take this Heritage Strategy forward. They noted that one of the Planning Officers had a personal interest in Torbay Heritage but did not have capacity to take the lead in this area. All groups including the Spatial Planning Team would have responsibility towards implementing the Strategy.
6. An outline of the consultation responses was given to members, this included: the broad age range; mostly local people; a wide range of consultees; and not the usual responders. Responses from local people were very passionate about Torbay's Heritage with 25% asking for more information.
7. The Panel welcomed the development of a new Heritage Strategy for Torbay. It was acknowledged that the Heritage Strategy would be a living document and sites outside Torbay were included as they linked to connections within Torbay which brought visitors in from outside Torbay e.g. Agatha Christie.
8. Members agreed that the front of the document should show more vision, a wider scope of aspirations, plans for future and be more positive.
9. In the Vulnerability section, Members felt that Covid-19 impact should be added in. 'Social distance' measures could be in place for some time and we need to get the message out that Torbay is safe to visit.

10. Additions and amendments should be made to the draft Heritage Strategy and inaccuracies raised by Members to be 'fact checked'.
11. There was agreement from the Panel that the Heritage Strategy report should have a more focused and succinct vision, enhancing the existing offer and members noted that it did not include any targets. It failed to make the most of what Torbay has to offer, for example members felt it could have been braver in selecting a medium term vision.
12. The Panel agreed the Strategy should be a mixture of buildings and people, and represent the whole picture of what Torbay is and include what it has to offer Tourists, residents and visitors, with a wider vision as to how local people could volunteer and be involved with local Heritage projects, how business organisations could work closer with tourist sites, and how information on Torbay's prestige sites reaches tourists and holidaymakers.
13. The Panel formed the following recommendations to the Cabinet. Which were approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Board at its meeting held on 26 August 2020 (shading to be removed after that meeting).

The Panel recommends to the Cabinet that the draft Heritage Strategy be amended to include:

- (i) a clear vision for Torbay's Heritage, linked to all that Torbay has to offer tourists, residents and visitors and how people can get involved and make the most of our local offer, with targets and a medium term vision for Torbay;
- (ii) to include reference to Torbay being a safe place to visit in light of Covid-19 in the Vulnerability section;
- (iii) an historic trail around Torbay, possibly starting and/or involving Torquay and Brixham Museums;
- (iv) to undertake a fact sense check of the Strategy to ensure that all details contained within are factually correct; and
- (v) ideas that could be considered in the future include:
  - (a) information about the War Memorials in Torbay;
  - (b) more importance on the role of the Civic Mayor to promote Torbay;
  - (c) reference to visitors from abroad wanting to see 'English Heritage';
  - (d) tourist information/role of the internet/hotel notice boards/volunteers signposting and referencing that we are open all year round;
  - (e) consideration of reference to sea sports, Torbay part of 1948 Olympics and famous sport people etc;
  - (f) reference to access to heritage sites by walking, cycling and parking;

- (g) consideration of asset transfers of heritage Community Buildings to the community;
- (h) identification of film and TV programme sites which would attract Tourists (e.g. Oldway Mansion); and
- (i) reference to important historical events over the years.