

Cabinet Response to the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Board – Review of Events, Culture and Tourism

Recommendation 1:

That the Director of Pride in Place be requested to review how local businesses can become more involved to help promote cultural activity within Torbay, to ensure that local businesses feel connected into UNESCO Global Geopark Status and cultural assets.

Response/Update:

The new UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) funded Geopark Discovery Experience Project, a joint project of English Riviera Business Improvement District Company (ERBID) and English Riviera UNESCO Global Geopark (ERUGGp), is working with partners, associate partners and local business creating opportunities to engage, whilst provided resources and training opportunities to enhance the impact and overall Geopark offer on organisations and the local community.

This is to be further supported by the Geopark Resilience application to National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), to be submitted by the end of March 2024, for £250,000 to increase organisational and financial resilience, alongside public engagement activity. Greater organisational resilience and increased staff resource will support enhanced engagement with local businesses. Additionally, if successful, the funded project will include an analysis of Geopark cost/value and income generation options towards financial sustainability along with the creation of 'Our Value' advocacy tool based on financial modelling, to increase and diversify partner buy-in and leverage investment.

Partners are pledging financial and in-kind support to become involved with the Geopark initiative.

Recommendation 2:

That the Director of Pride in Place be requested to review the activities around education and raising the profile of the UNESCO Global Geopark, exploring how to maximise opportunities for education, particularly encouraging national geologists to use the Geopark and Devonian Period etc. and to include increased signage and boards with a particular focus on attracting more out of season opportunities.

Response/Update:

The Geopark Resilience bid to NLHF will address this through the following workstreams:

- A feasibility study on Interpretation Centre(s) (UNESCO recommendation) with partners and an independent advisor. Test & learn activity (intention to initiate plans by end of project)
- Development of new website with dual digital pathways accessible for general audiences and scientific community (UNESCO criteria) with associated social media and communications
- Development of an Education & Interpretation Strategy and Toolkit with a focus on youth & underserved communities; pilot delivery to stress-test assumptions
- Give & Gain analysis, resulting in route-map for sustainable volunteer engagement
- Volunteering & Skills Coordinator (final year) to embed engagement and skills development, learning from past challenges, aligning with planned Interpretation Centre(s), with target to sustain role beyond project
- Partner/ambitions development, exchanging best practice through conferences and collaborations with national/international UNESCO partners and global comparators

It is anticipated that further opportunities to increase the awareness of the UNESCO Geopark designation and how it helps Torbay's offer for residents and visitors develop will develop through the Heritage Place programme made possible with National Lottery Heritage Fund. There are also medium-term opportunities to develop across Devon and Torbay links to other UNESCO sites across the area covered by the devolution deal offered by Government.

Recommendation 3:

That the Director of Pride in Place be requested to review the resource and capacity of the Events and Culture Team, including administrative support, and to explore how the independent, voluntary, community and business sectors could contribute to ensure that there is sufficient capacity and resources to deliver:

1. the Cultural and Heritage Strategies;
2. projects where the Council has received significant external funding;
3. future ambitions of the Council and its key partners, including the continuation of the £100,000 match funding from the Council to mirror the funding that the English Riviera Business Improvement District Company (ERBID) puts towards the delivery of the Events Strategy and Destination Management Plan.

Response/Update:

The resource and capacity reflects the objective for Torbay to offer quality, distinctive events that provide a positive impact on the quality of cultural offer for residents, businesses and visitors. The team is currently leading on the delivery of signature events, supporting the use of Council spaces by third parties and supporting delivery of community events. Increasing the focus on the signature events and using third parties to bring in quality and authentic events on Council land offers a range of benefits. To do this community organisers require support in the short term to increase capacity in those organisations.

Recognising the resource risk this recommendation was also included in the Revenue and Capital Budget 2024/2025 – Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board submitted as part of the Budget consultation process.

This recommendation was subsequently put forward in budget proposals for 2024/25 which were approved on 22 February 2024. There is an approved one-off amount of £1m over four years and an additional £100,000 towards in the base staffing budget.

It was assumed that the £100,000 for events match funding will be taken from the additional £250,000 per year for four years, as set out in the 2024/25 budget proposals. The ERBID have not yet signed off their budget for 2024/25 but are due to meet on 29 February 2024 and we are awaiting confirmation that they will allocate their £100,000 match funding.

Recommendation 4:

That the Director of Pride in Place and Chief Executive of the English Riviera Business Improvement District be requested to review the communication around how to advertise events taking place in Torbay through <https://www.englishriviera.co.uk/whats-on>, including signposting approved event's organisers to the website, to ensure greater take up especially of smaller events.

Response/Update:

ERBID already promote headline/ signature and feature events through its tourism website. It is up to ERBID to determine the type of events that they will promote on the site.

The Culture and Events team promote events the team are directly responsible for (including those at Torre Abbey and Geopark events), mainly through social media and other channels where appropriate. They will also signpost the ERBID website on the event application site in future.

There is not sufficient capacity within the Events team to run an additional events “what’s on” website for all events large and small.

Recommendation 5:

That the Director of Pride in Place reviews whether the Torre Abbey pitch and putt contract remains the most appropriate use of the space to meet the Council’s cultural and heritage objectives, especially in light of the ongoing damage and annual repair costs to the roof of the Spanish Barn; how the risk of damage to the Spanish Barn can be reduced in future and explore alternative uses for the area, maximising the archaeological history of the site.

Response/Update:

A strategic business case is being developed to go to Capital and Growth Board in April and this will consider the landscaping project for the whole of the 17.8 acres of the Torre Abbey scheduled monument site. The business plan will include potential removal of the pitch and putt site (a public consultation may be required regarding the pitch and putt), conservation, repairs and upgrade (heating and facilities building to support all-year round commercial use) of the Spanish Barn and re-landscaping to enable larger events suitable for a heritage site and unlock one of the largest publicly accessible green spaces in Torquay.

Recommendation 6:

That the annual Business Plan for Torre Abbey be reviewed and presented annually to the Overview and Scrutiny Board together with details of performance against the previous plan.

Response/Update:

This has been added to the list of items for the 2024/25 Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme.

Recommendation 7:

That the Director of Pride in Place be requested to ask the Destination Management Group (DMG) to explore options for working more collaboratively with attractions across Torbay to establish how they can work together to encourage and incentivise visitors to multiple attractions to help increase footfall.

Response/Update:

The English Riviera Attractions Forum is already in place and the DMG should be requested to follow this up directly with that group.

Recommendation 8:

That Members support the proposed revisions set out in the Events Strategy Suggested Updates document which ensures that it is in line with the Destination Management Plan and consider that the Events Strategy remains relevant.

Response/Update:

A strategy update will be sent to Cabinet before the end of April.

Recommendation 9:

That a report on implementation against the Events Strategy and Destination Management Plan is submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Board to review and monitor performance on an annual basis or earlier if budgetary or capacity concerns are identified, to ensure that delivery of the Strategy and Plan remain achievable.

Response/Update:

This has been added to the list of items for the 2024/2024 Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme.

These documents (especially the DMP) are delivered in partnership and will need agreement of partners to do this.

Recommendation 10:

That the Director of Pride in Place be requested to develop and implement a criteria and application form for Headline and Feature events based on the Events Strategy and Destination Management Plan to enable the Council to assess applications against that criteria, particularly during the shoulder seasons to ensure that the events taking place on Council land are compliant with the Events Strategy.

Response/Update:

A review of the Events Application information on the Council's website and the linked information on the Apply4 system is currently being undertaken. Clarity around the criteria for Headline and Feature events will be added before the end of April 2024.

Recommendation 11:

That the Director of Pride in Place and the Events Team be requested to assess the effectiveness of the Torbay Events Advisory Panel (TEAP) and whether working with the ERBID and English Riviera Events Collective as an alternative would release capacity within the Team.

Response/Update:

TEAP has now ceased as the need for it has been superseded by the English Riviera Events Collective (EREC) and regular Events Meetings between officers and the ERBID which will be maintained going forward.

Recommendation 12:

That the Director of Pride in Place be requested to explore the costs of a feasibility study to assess whether Torbay's meadows and green spaces could be utilised as show grounds.

Response/Update:

This recommendation was also included in the Revenue and Capital Budget 2024/2025 – Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board submitted as part of the Budget consultation process.

However, the approved budget does not include an amount for this feasibility study.

Recommendation 13:

That the Director of Pride in Place be requested to review the information on the Council's website and documents relating to events such as the 'Events in Torbay A Guide for Organisers' and 'Apply to Hold an Event' to make them more accessible.

Response/Update:

A full review and update of Events information and event application information on the council website will be completed before the end of April 2024.