TORBAY REGENERATION VISION: SUMMARY

Torquay | Paignton | Brixham

TORBAY COUNCIL

WILLMOTT DIXON

Milligan leonard design

Torbay Summary Report

Torbay Summary Report Outline

Torbay is home to the vibrant towns of Torquay, Brixham, and Paignton. The Torbay Place Vision sets out a bold ambition to reposition the area for long-term success, while ensuring each town develops its own distinct identity and role within the Bay.

This forward-thinking vision aims to attract investment, drive business growth, and promote heritage and cultural activities—creating a vibrant, thriving environment for residents, businesses, and visitors.

This vision acts as a strategic tool for marketing and investment, empowering Torbay Council and its regeneration partners, Willmott Dixon and Milligan to showcase opportunities, attract funding, and deliver an ambitious portfolio of regeneration and placemaking initiatives.

Developed in collaboration with local stakeholders, the document builds on existing statutory plans, including Neighbourhood Plans and Masterplans, to provide clear direction on investment opportunities, priorities for new projects, and interventions within the town centre and supporting infrastructure.

It will be reviewed and updated annually to ensure it reflects evolving macro- and micro-level factors.

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INTRODUCTION
Torbay: The English Riveria

TORBAY
The English Riviera

Torbay, often referred to as The English Riviera, is a picturesque coastal area in South Devon, England, encompassing the towns of Torquay, Paignton, and Brixham. Known for its mild climate, sandy beaches, and palm-lined promenades, Torbay has long been a popular seaside resort. The area blends traditional charm with modern attractions, offering everything from historic sites and scenic harbours to lively entertainment and water sports. Its nickname reflects both its Mediterranean-style scenery and its enduring appeal as a holiday destination.
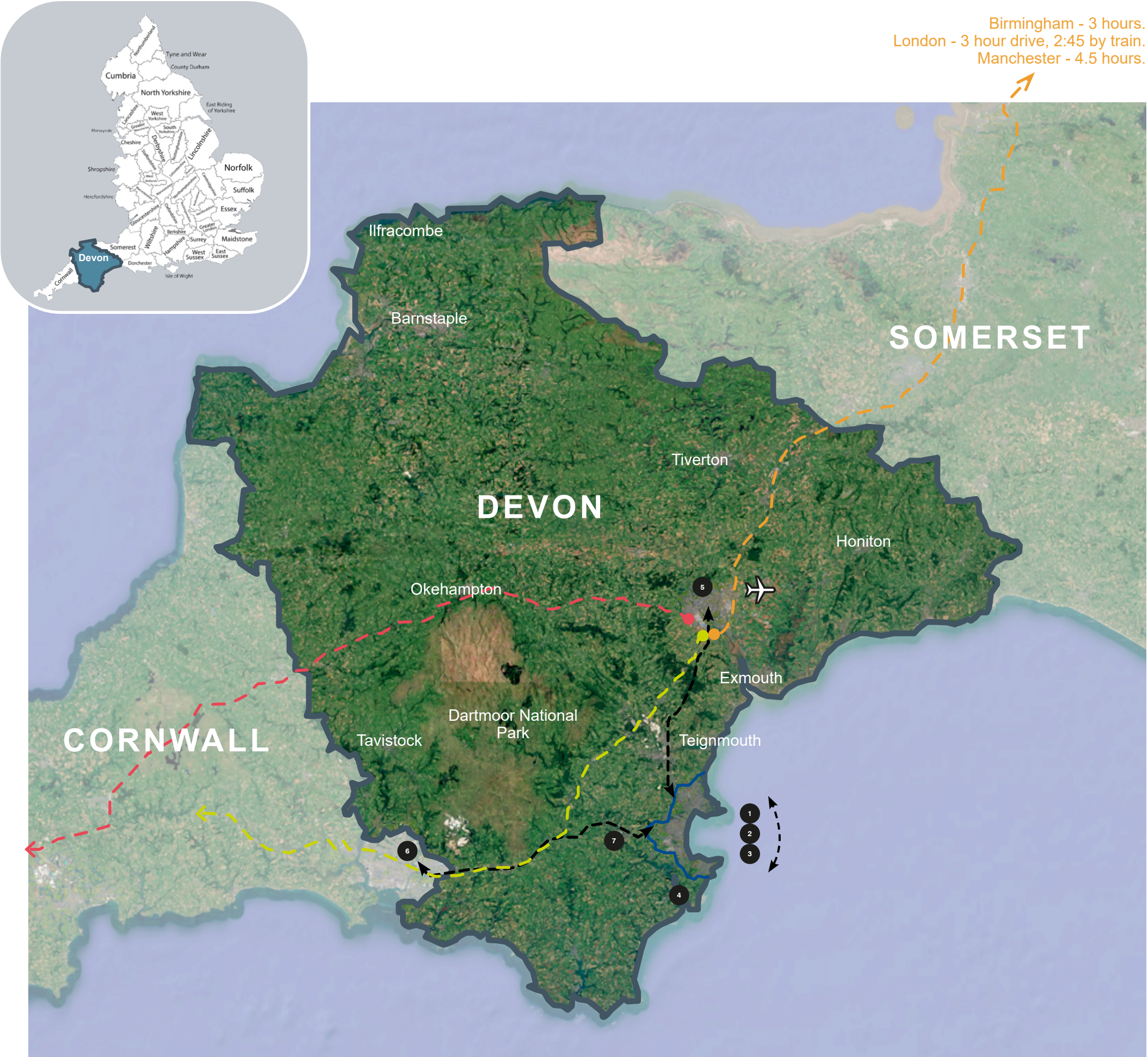
TORBAY
County Context

Torbay is a prominent coastal area in the south of Devon, often regarded as one of the county's key tourist destinations. Nestled along the English Channel, it includes the three towns of Torquay, Paignton, and Brixham, each contributing to the area's diverse character and appeal. Within the broader context of Devon, Torbay stands out for its unique microclimate, sandy beaches, and vibrant seaside culture. It plays a significant role in Devon's economy, particularly through tourism, maritime industries, and hospitality. With its blend of natural beauty, historical interest, and coastal charm, Torbay exemplifies the best of Devon's coastal living.

1 Torquay
2 Paignton
3 Brixham
4 Dartmouth
5 Exeter
6 Plymouth
7 Totnes

— · M5
— · A30
— · A38

✈ Exeter Airport

Birmingham - 3 hours.
London - 3 hour drive, 2:45 by train.
Manchester - 4.5 hours.

SOMERSET

DEVON

CORNWALL

Ilfracombe

Barnstaple

Tiverton

Honiton

Okehampton

Exmouth

Dartmoor National Park

Teignmouth

Tavistock

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TORBAY
Local Towns

1 Torquay
2 Paignton
3 Brixham
4 Dartmouth
5 Exeter
6 Plymouth
7 Totnes

– · M5
– · A30
– · A38
═══ Train Lines

✈ Exeter Airport

Torbay to Dartmouth:
- By car: ~11 miles / ~30–35 minutes (includes ferry from Kingswear)
- By public transport: ~50–70 minutes
- Typical route: Train from Torquay/Paignton to Kingswear (via Paignton), then foot ferry to Dartmouth

Torbay to Exeter:
- By car: ~25 miles / ~35–45 minutes
- By public transport: ~50–60 minutes
- Typical route: Direct train from Torquay or Paignton to Exeter St Davids or Central

Torbay to Plymouth:
- By car: ~32 miles / ~50–60 minutes
- By public transport: ~1 hour 10 minutes – 1 hour 30 minutes
- Typical route: Train from Torquay or Paignton to Plymouth (direct or via Newton Abbot)

Torbay to Totnes:
- By car: ~10 miles / ~20–25 minutes
- By public transport: ~20–30 minutes
- Typical route: Direct train from Torquay or Paignton to Totnes

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TORBAY
Complementary Local Centres

Exeter

Exeter boasts a rich cultural, architectural, and educational heritage. Known for its medieval cathedral, Roman walls, and vibrant quayside, Exeter blends history with a modern atmosphere. Home to the University of Exeter, the city has a youthful, dynamic population. Ancient landmarks like the Gothic cathedral and Guildhall, combined with contemporary amenities and green spaces, highlight Exeter's unique mix of tradition and innovation. The picturesque River Exe further enhances the city's charm.

Totnes

Totnes is renowned for its unique, eclectic character, rich history, and alternative culture. Famous for well-preserved medieval architecture like Totnes Castle and East Gate arch, it's a hub for artists, musicians, and eco-conscious individuals. The town features bustling market days, independent shops, and organic cafes, all contributing to its charm. Set on the picturesque River Dart, Totnes blends natural beauty, rich heritage, and a progressive, bohemian spirit.

Dartmouth

Dartmouth is celebrated for its rich maritime heritage and scenic coastal beauty. Known for the historic Royal Naval College and landmarks like Dartmouth Castle, the town features charming narrow streets and a bustling harbour. Dartmouth's vibrant cultural scene includes annual events like the Dartmouth Regatta and Food Festival, reflecting its lively community. Its identity is a captivating blend of history, seafaring tradition, and coastal charm, enhanced by artisanal shops and waterside eateries amidst the stunning South Devon landscape.

Plymouth

Plymouth is steeped in maritime history and known for its significant naval base. Famous for landmarks like the historic Plymouth Hoe, the Royal Citadel, and the Mayflower Steps, the city celebrates its seafaring heritage. Plymouth's identity is also shaped by its modern waterfront development, bustling cultural scene, and prestigious educational institutions like the University of Plymouth. With a mix of historical sites, contemporary amenities, and scenic coastal beauty, Plymouth embodies a dynamic blend of tradition and innovation.

Exeter
Cathedral | University | National retailers | Public Spaces | Heritage

Totnes
Market Town | Heritage | Independent retailers

Dartmouth
Naval College | Regatta | Sailing | Geographical Location

Plymouth
Naval City | Royal William Yard | Port | Retail | Heritage

TORBAY
Key Town Identities

Torquay
Natural Beauty | Historic Charm | Vibrant Marina

Torquay is renowned for its stunning beaches, vibrant marina, and mild climate. Often dubbed the "English Riviera," Torquay boasts a blend of Victorian elegance and modern attractions, including the iconic Torquay Pavilion and the Living Coasts zoo and aquarium. The town's lively waterfront, palm-lined promenades, and rich literary history as the birthplace of Agatha Christie contribute to its unique charm. Torquay's identity is a delightful mix of natural beauty, historical allure, and contemporary seaside resort appeal.

Paignton
Long Beaches | Family Entertainment | Leisure Offers

Paignton is known for its beautiful beaches, family-friendly attractions, and traditional pier. Famous for its long sandy shoreline and Paignton Zoo, the town offers a blend of natural beauty and entertainment. Paignton's colourful beach huts, bustling promenade, and scenic coastline embody a classic British seaside experience. Its identity is a vibrant mix of coastal charm, recreational fun, and community spirit, making it a beloved destination for visitors and residents alike.

Brixham
Fishing Heritage | Maritime History | Community | Vibrant Arts Scene

Brixham is celebrated for its rich maritime history and thriving fishing industry. Known for its colourful harbour-side cottages, bustling fish market, and historic replica of Sir Francis Drake's ship, the Golden Hind, Brixham has a deep connection to the sea. The town's identity is shaped by its traditional fishing heritage, maritime traditions, and welcoming community spirit. With stunning coastal views, charming narrow streets, and a vibrant arts scene, Brixham offers a blend of historical charm and coastal beauty that captivates visitors and residents alike.

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TORBAY
The Torbay Story

The Torbay Story articulates the distinctiveness, character and opportunities of the area, highlights what makes it special, what there is on offer and why it should be on peoples list to visit. The overarching story consists of themes (overleaf) that represent hat needs to be focused on for Torbay to prosper. The themes combine elements that are already important in the area, alongside the potential of the place and lesser-known ingredients of the Torbay experience. The Story highlights the distinctive character of its three towns:

TORQUAY   PAIGNTON   BRIXHAM

Torquay is...Leading on leisure and lifestyle by the sea

Torquay is the best known of the Torbay towns and as a destination brand the heart of the English Riviera and a premier experience. From the inviting blue Bay to the gardens and galleries, to the harbour side cafes and restaurants and the surrounding captivating countryside it is a place that inspires. The location is also part of the UNESCO Global Geopark which recognises outstanding landscape, and coupled with a mild micro climate the attraction is clear to see.

The marina is the epicentre of the place experience and a place to be seen just wandering around looking at the yachts and soaking in the elegant atmosphere. Whilst there is plenty to do in Torquay other possibilities are a centre for creative writing, building on the DNA of Agatha Christie and others, a home for the Geopark to tell the story of the landscape and activation of the public realm, it has a lot of stories to tell! Ultimately, Torquay is perfectly positioned to benefit from the focus on leisure and lifestyle so many are discovering, this has been its proposition for decades and it intends to retain and develop that brand quality and experience for the enjoyment of generations to come.

Paignton is...Family fun on the foreshore.

Paignton is the classic British seaside town and wants to be the best bucket and spade experience anywhere. It boasts a beautiful sandy beach, brightly coloured beach huts, a promenade and pier. Right next to the beach is family friendly fun at the Geoplay Park where young and old spend time together. The water-based activities, a special climate, along with exotic palm trees, make it feel like a real place of escape.

With the nearby Zoo, steam train, refurbishment of the famous Picture House (the oldest surviving cinema in Europe) and potential for more food and drink brands it just needs to package it all up and deliver fun and frolics by the sea.

Paignton is also...The Centre for enterprise, electronics and entrepreneurship:

Paignton is also a place that excites entrepreneurs - as seen by the cluster of technology businesses who call it home. As well as right across Torbay, here there is 'tech by the sea' epitomised by EPIC, the Electronics and Photonics Innovation Centre, a purpose-built hub with laboratories and offices, but also research and development and product development facilities. It is home to various international tech businesses who find the quality of the environment, both work and natural, to be extremely attractive.

Paignton, along with other parts of the Bay, can be a hub for tech entrepreneurs and start-up businesses with people who want to return to the area, perhaps from nearby universities or who have studied at the renowned South Devon College.

Brixham is...A creative food and fishing fusion

Brixham is a wonderful and colourful collision of creativity, craft, food and fishing; a very special place. You can enjoy the best in seafood from fish and chips to memorable restaurant meals, knowing that the provenance of the product is literally right next to you. This is a place of glorious disconnects, epitomised by enjoying the best in gourmet seafood whilst watching fish being landed in one of the busiest fishing ports in the UK; an industrially inspired, quality dining experience.

From art and craft markets to events and festivals such as Brixfest, Brixham comes together as a community, but one that welcomes others to enjoy the experience it offers. However, there are other aspects of creativity to be found in the businesses within Brixham Laboratory, a science and technology-based hub sitting right next to the sea. Here there are leading edge companies in the fields of marine, environmental, photonics and water quality. Brixham is a compelling collection of experiences.

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TORBAY
The Torbay Story

The 'big idea' for Torbay connects its businesses, leisure and tourism trade and its natural environment to utilise these assets better. Radiating influence, building confidence, cultivating and encouraging strong leadership, developing new relationships, bringing business and place together. The three overarching themes include:

Tech by the bay

Torbay is home to a myriad of amazing tech businesses scattered across the glorious natural environment; many are located here because of it.

Globally significant companies specialising in environmental services, marine engineering, green technology and water testing are headquartered in Torbay. Business in Torbay is all about knowledge. It is an economy based on ideas, innovation, thinking and ingenuity where 'small' is big and beautiful.

Torbay aims to grow its relationships with regional universities to extend these specialisms, with a particular priority of encouraging start-up businesses attracted by current clusters but also the environment to live and work in.

The hub for active adventurers

As people re-evaluate increasingly pressurised lives, there is a real focus on mental and physical health and a shift to prioritise friends, family and personal life.

The Torbay Story is about a connection with nature where you can explore the environment and yourself whilst being healthy; the options are endless. The combination of active experiences on offer provides a celebration of outdoor enjoyment for all ages and abilities.

Torbay: The premier marine and natural experience

Torbay is a place rich in texture, with a wide range of assets from craft and creativity to fishing and food. From photonics to the pier and beach. From Agatha Christie to the UNESCO Geopark. Active sport to events and festivals. Torbay's outstanding marine and natural experience is as important for attracting, retaining and growing leading edge tech businesses as it is for bringing visitors to the area and being a place where people want to live.

CONNECTIVITY
Connecting Across The Bay

TORBAY
Key Towns

Key Places & Population (Based on 2021 Census)
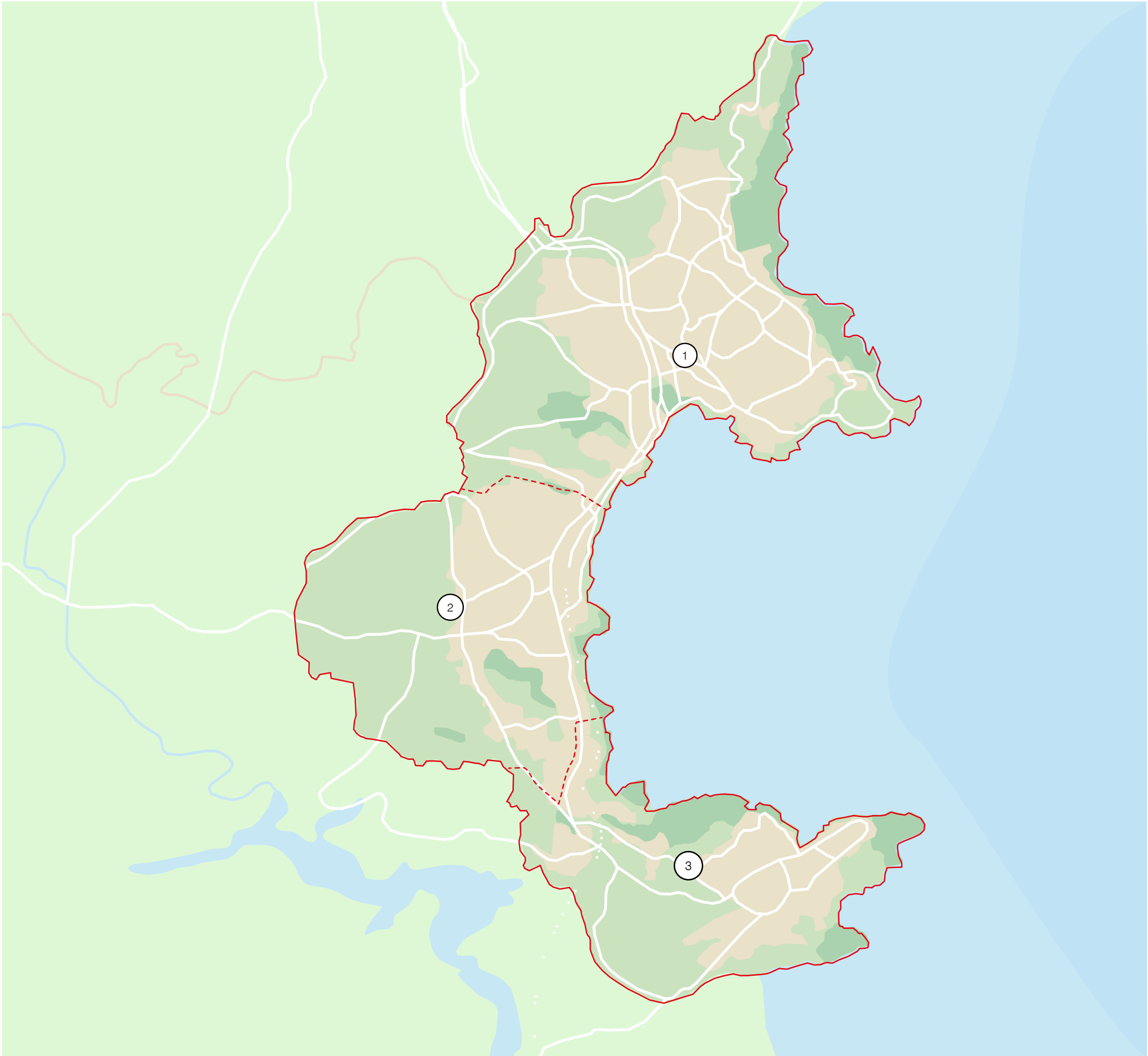
Torbay
   Population: 136,218
   Average age 44

① Torquay
   Population: 52,037
   Primarily Aged: 35 +

② Paignton
   Population: 67,488
   Primarily Aged: 35 +

③ Brixham
   Population: 17,457
   Primarily Aged: 35 +

– – Town Boundaries

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TORBAY
Desire Lines

The LCWIP outlines a number of datastreams that lead to the following desire lines:

—— Torquay Harbour to Paignton, as the top priority.

○——○ An emerging cycle network in Torquay, connecting town centre, train station, hospital, growth areas and key tourist and school destinations.

—— Paignton to Collaton St. Mary.

—— Paignton to Brixham.

- - - An additional significant desire line was identified between Tweenaway and Broadsands, however was not taken forward in the LCWIP development as there is already a generally good level of cycle provision along the route.


TORBAY COUNCIL

Bay Trails
Torbay Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)
For Consultation

Data from the Torbay LCWIP Document (Dec. 2020)
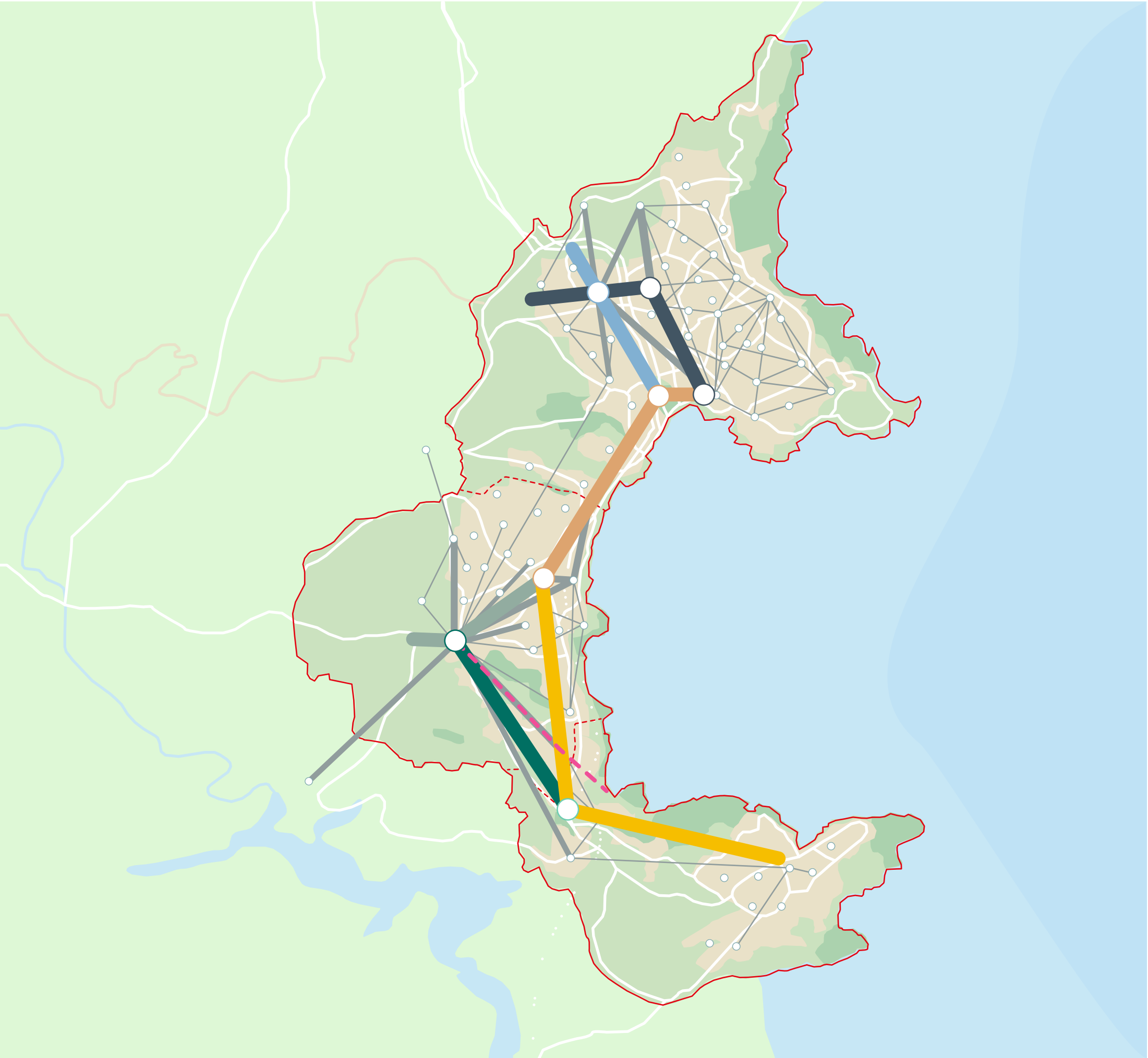
TORBAY
Vehicle Connections

Torquay, Paignton, and Brixham - the three towns that make up Torbay - are well-connected by road and public transport, making travel between them easy and convenient, however can get very congested at peak times in the summer months. Torquay and Paignton are just 3.5 miles apart, taking around 10–15 minutes by car via the A3022, and are also linked by regular train and bus services. Paignton to Brixham is approximately 6 miles, with a scenic 15–20 minute drive along the coast, while Torquay to Brixham is about 8.5 miles and takes around 20–25 minutes by road, typically via Paignton. The towns are served by the frequent Stagecoach Gold bus service (Route 12), providing reliable connections throughout the area. While Brixham does not have a railway station, both Torquay and Paignton are on the rail network, offering further transport links across South Devon

A Torquay centre
B Paignton centre
C Brixham centre

A → B 5.2KM (11 mins)

B → C 8.5KM (15 mins)

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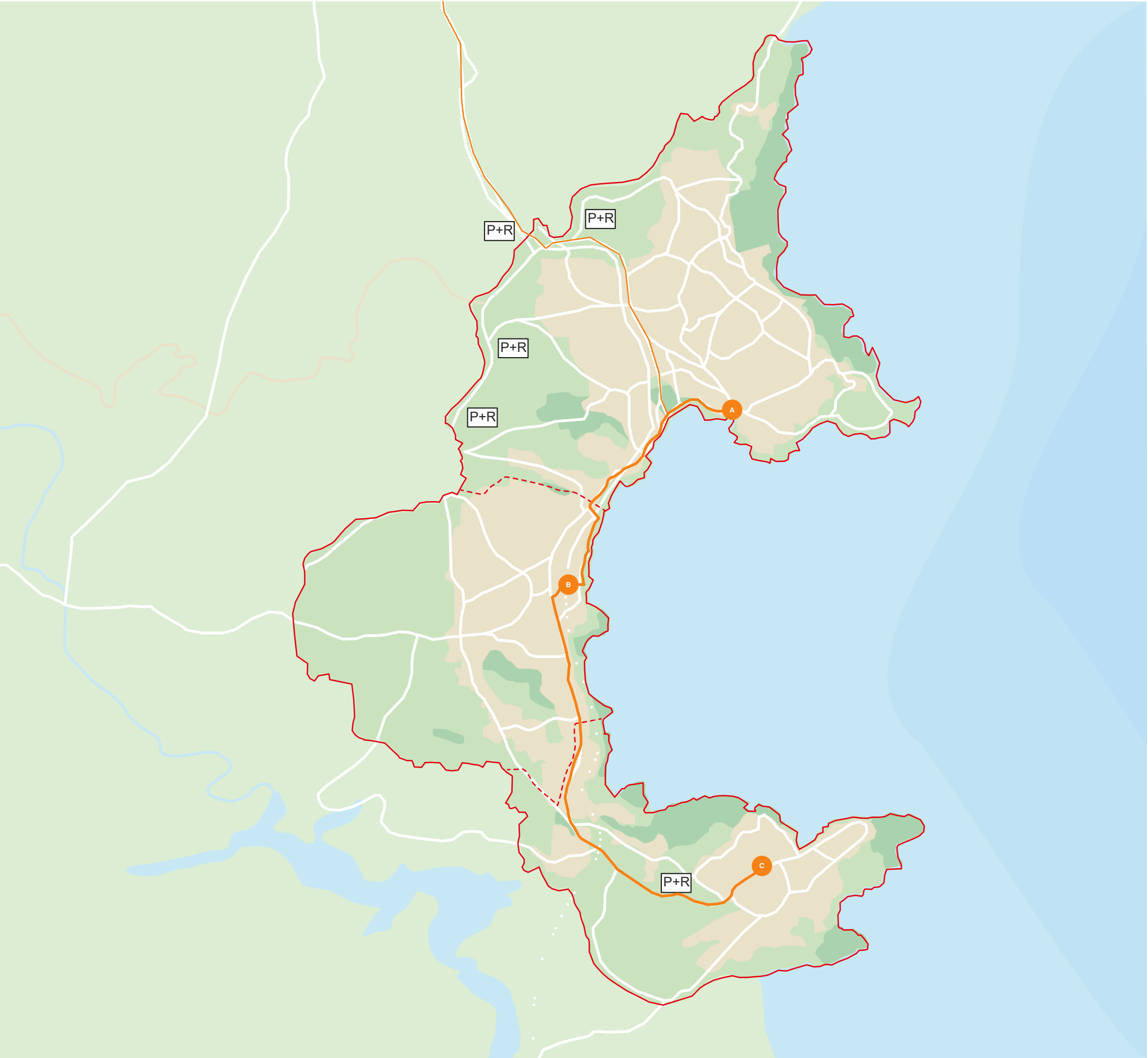
TORBAY
Pedestrian
Connections

Torquay, Paignton, and Brixham are connected by scenic sections of the South West Coast Path, offering excellent pedestrian access between the three towns. The walk from Torquay to Paignton is around 3.5 miles and takes about 1.5 hours, following a mostly level, paved path with beautiful sea views and beach stops. From Paignton to Brixham, the 6.5-mile route is more challenging, with varied terrain and coastal scenery, taking around 2.5 to 3 hours. The full walk from Torquay to Brixham covers approximately 10 miles and takes 4 to 5 hours, rewarding walkers with panoramic views, coves, and beaches along the way. These well-marked trails make Torbay an ideal area for coastal walking.

A Torquay harbour
B Paignton harbour
C Brixham harbour

— South West Coast Path
··· Break in South West Coast Path

**A** → **C** 14.2KM (3 hrs 25 mins)
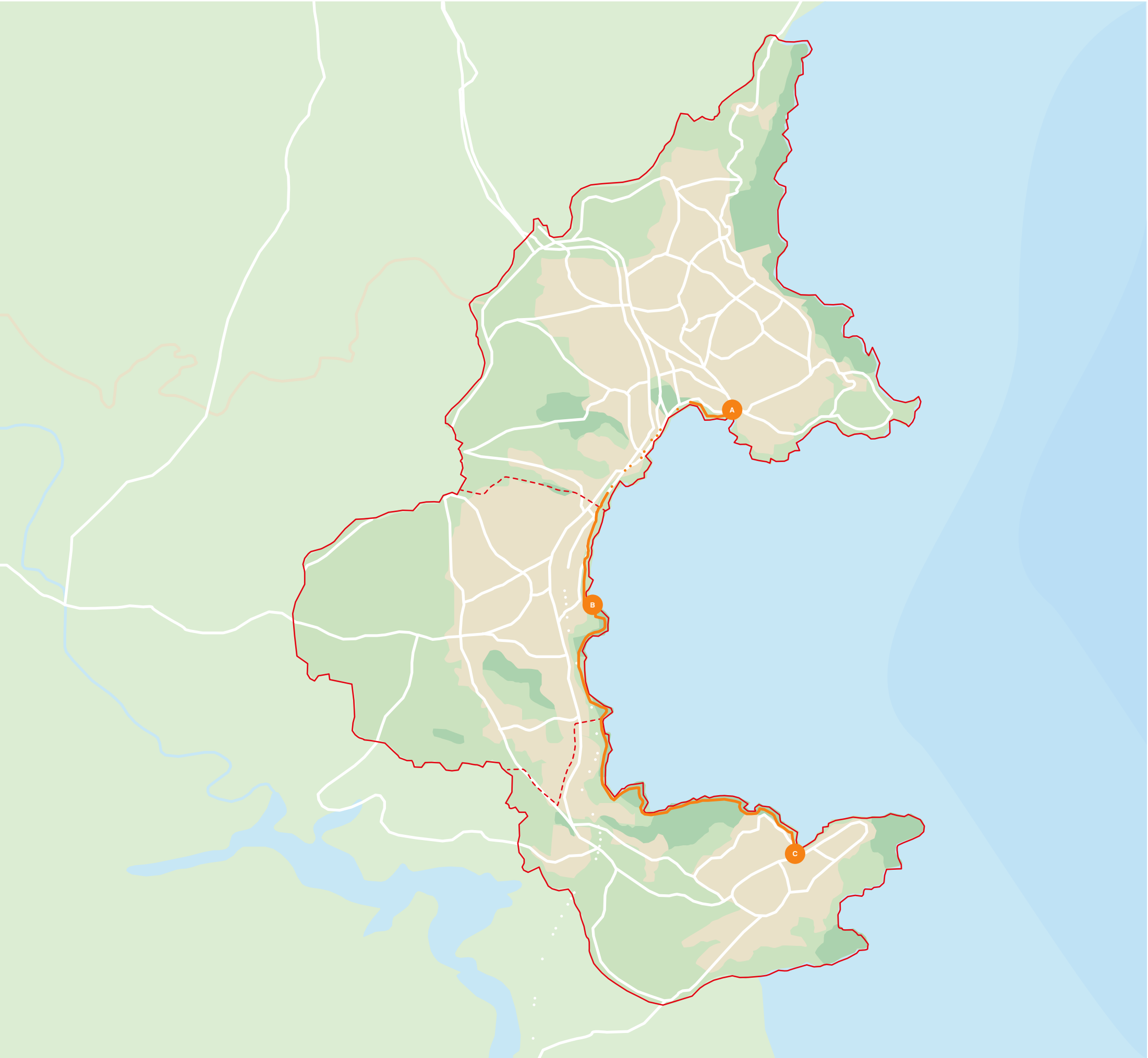
TORBAY
Ferry Connections

Ferry services connect the towns of Torquay, Paignton, and Brixham, providing a scenic and convenient way to travel across Torbay. The Western Lady Ferry offers regular sailings from Torquay to Brixham, with a journey time of about 30 minutes. Paignton Pleasure Cruises operates services between Paignton, Torquay, and Brixham, with multiple departures throughout the day. Additionally, WeFerry provides connections between Brixham, Torquay, and Paignton, offering a comfortable travel option. These services primarily operate from April to October, offering not only practical transport but also beautiful views of the bay, making them a popular choice for both locals and visitors.

A Torquay harbour
B Paignton harbour
C Brixham harbour

Torquay to Paignton (30 mins, hourly)
Paignton to Brixham (20 mins, hourly)
Torquay to Brixham (30 mins, hourly)

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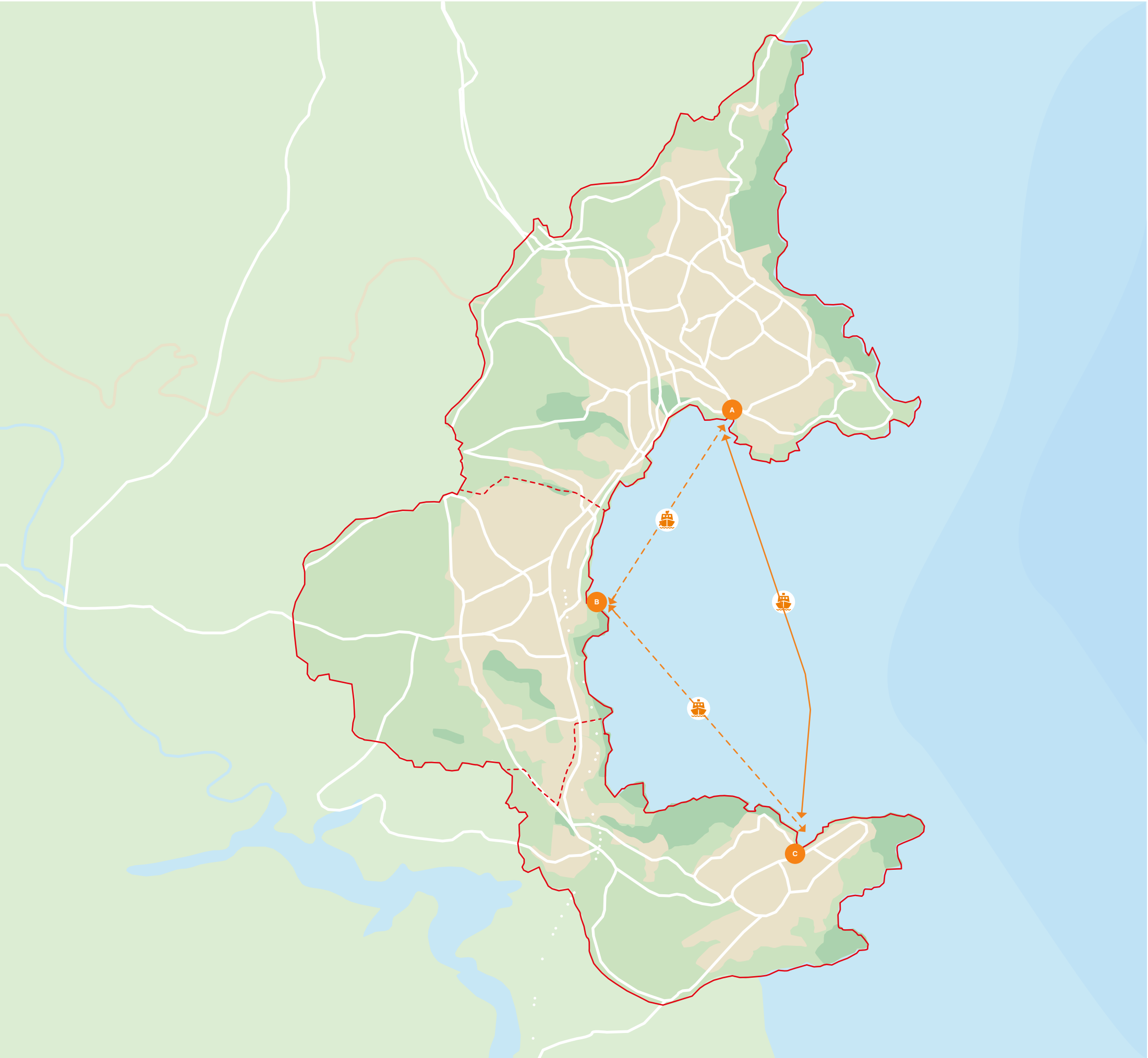
TORBAY
Cycling Connections

Cycling between Torquay, Paignton, and Brixham is a popular and scenic way to explore Torbay. The route from Torquay to Paignton is about 3.5 miles and follows the flat, dedicated Torbay to Paignton Cycle Path, taking around 15–20 minutes. Paignton to Brixham is approximately 6 miles and can be cycled along the A3022 or the more scenic South West Coast Path, taking about 25–30 minutes. For a longer ride, the route from Torquay to Brixham is 8.5 miles, with options along the A379 or the coast path, offering a more challenging but rewarding experience, typically taking 35–45 minutes. These routes offer a mix of flat paths and more hilly terrain, providing a great way to enjoy the coastal views of the area.
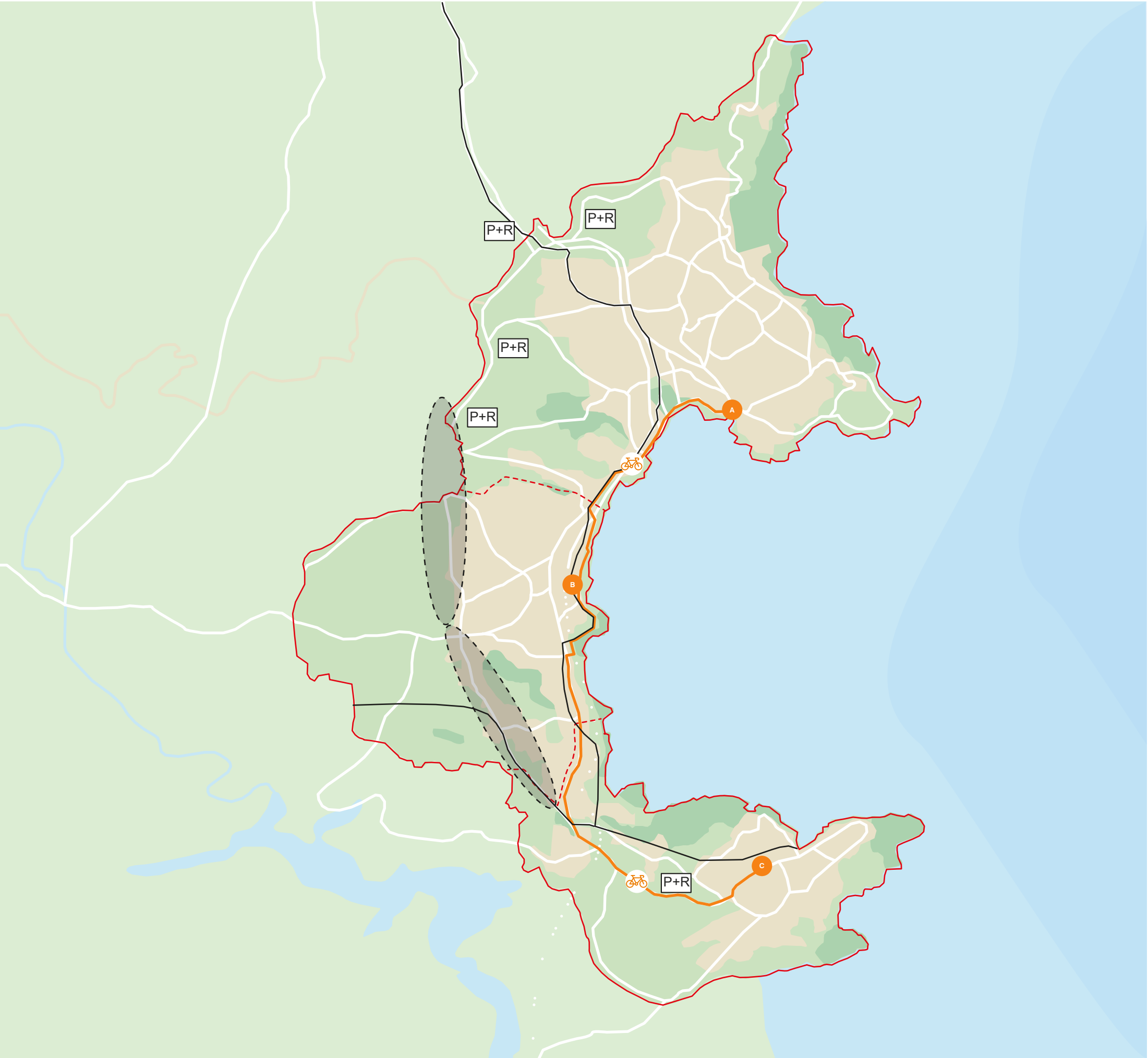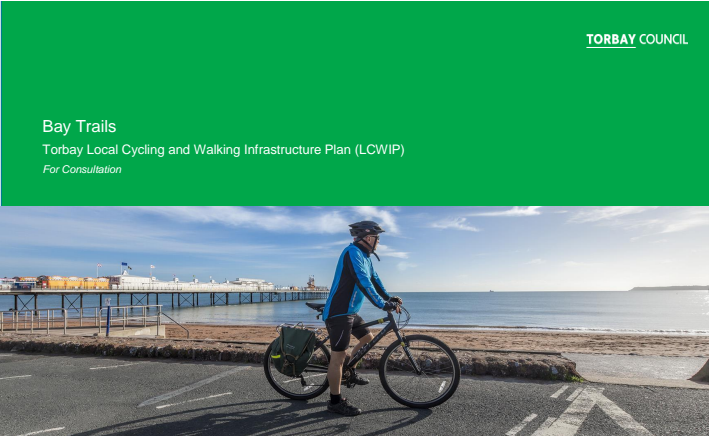
A Torquay centre
B Paignton centre
C Brixham centre

Google maps quickest route:
A → **B**   5.6 KM (20 mins)
B → **C**   8.7 KM (32 mins)

National cycle route

Western Corridor Improvements

P+R   Park & Ride possibilities

Bay Trails
Torbay Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)
For Consultation

TORBAY COUNCIL

Data from the Torbay LCWIP Document (Dec. 2020)

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TORBAY
Cycling Improvements

The proposed five trails in Torbay would transform cycling infrastructure, offering over 27km of traffic-free or low-traffic routes suitable for all ages and abilities. With widened paths and improved accessibility, including for mobility scooter users, the trails would serve as a new tourist attraction, connecting key destinations and showcasing the Bay's natural beauty. They aim to regenerate town centres, enhance commuting and school travel options, and benefit residents, particularly in central Paignton and Torquay's most deprived areas.
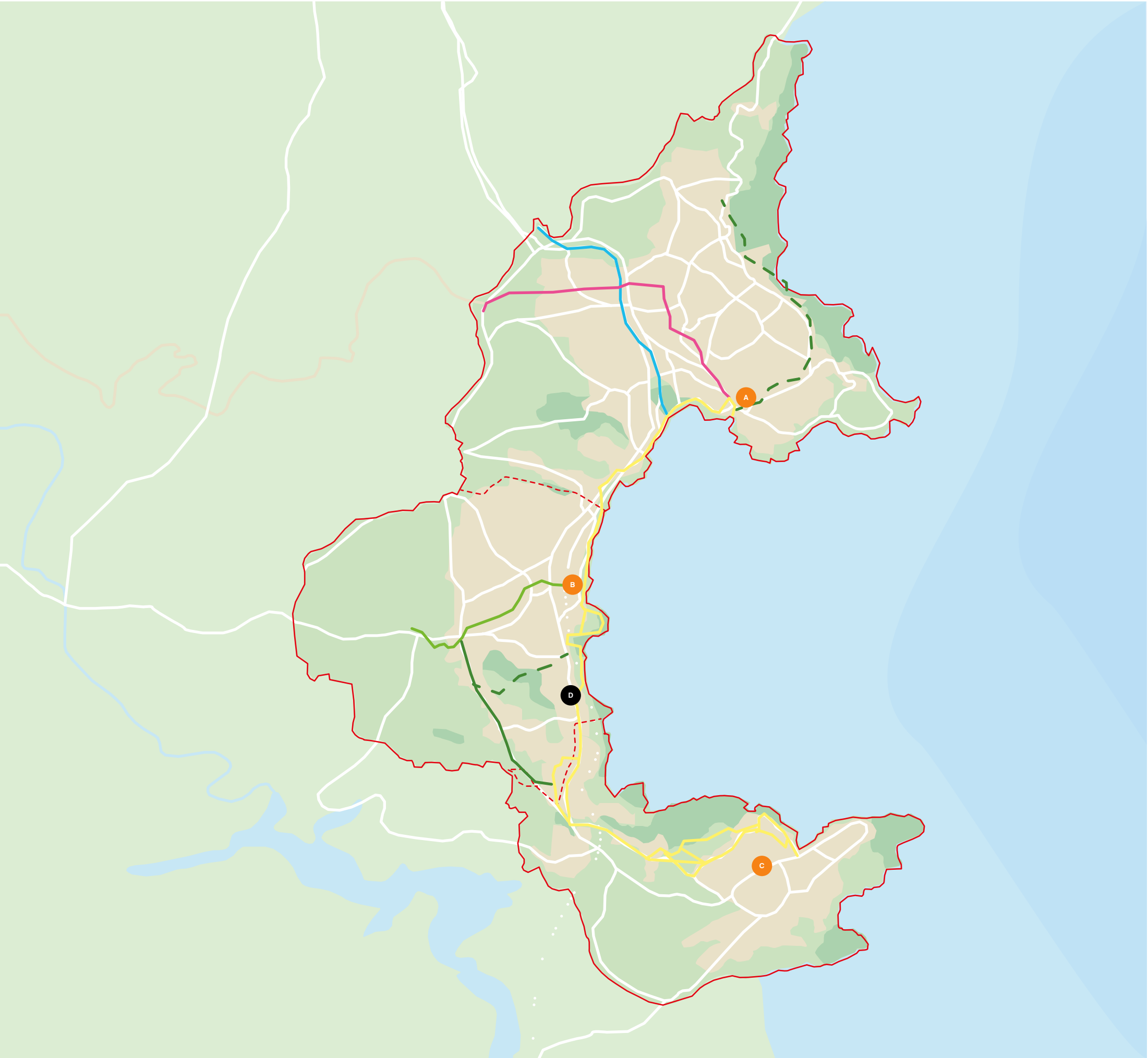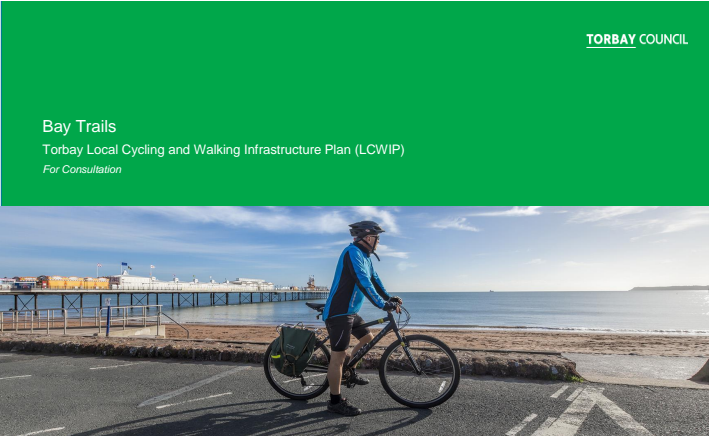
A Torquay centre
B Paignton centre
C Brixham centre
D Pinch point in cycle path

——— Beaches Trail
——— Hospital Trail
——— Town Trail
——— Zoo Trail
——— Brixham Road
— — — Other Future Cycle Routes

Bay Trails
Torbay Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)
For Consultation

TORBAY COUNCIL
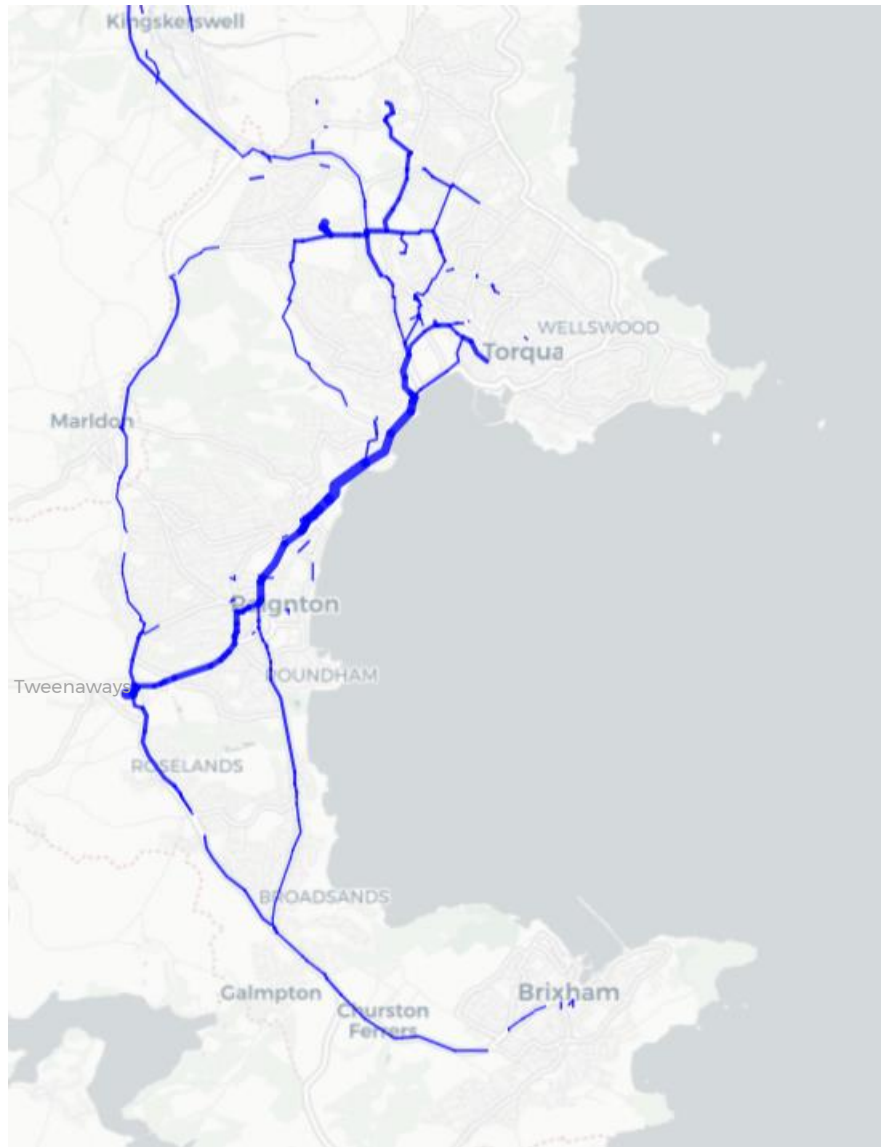
Data from the Torbay LCWIP Document (Dec. 2020)

TORBAY
Cycling Data

Data from the LCWIP also illustrates cycle usage
across the bay, outlined here:

Commuter cycle flows:
Increased width = increased usage.
(Source: Propensity to cycle tool)

The estimated routes taken by people cycling to work in Torbay in
2011 for the top 30% of cycle routes only. Teenaways to Paignton
along Totnes Road and on to Torquay is by far the most popular
route.

School cycle flows:
Increased width = increased usage.
(Source: Propensity to cycle tool)

Estimated cycle-to-school trips based on the 2011 census
data highlight Totnes Road around Paignton community &
Sports Academy as an important route.
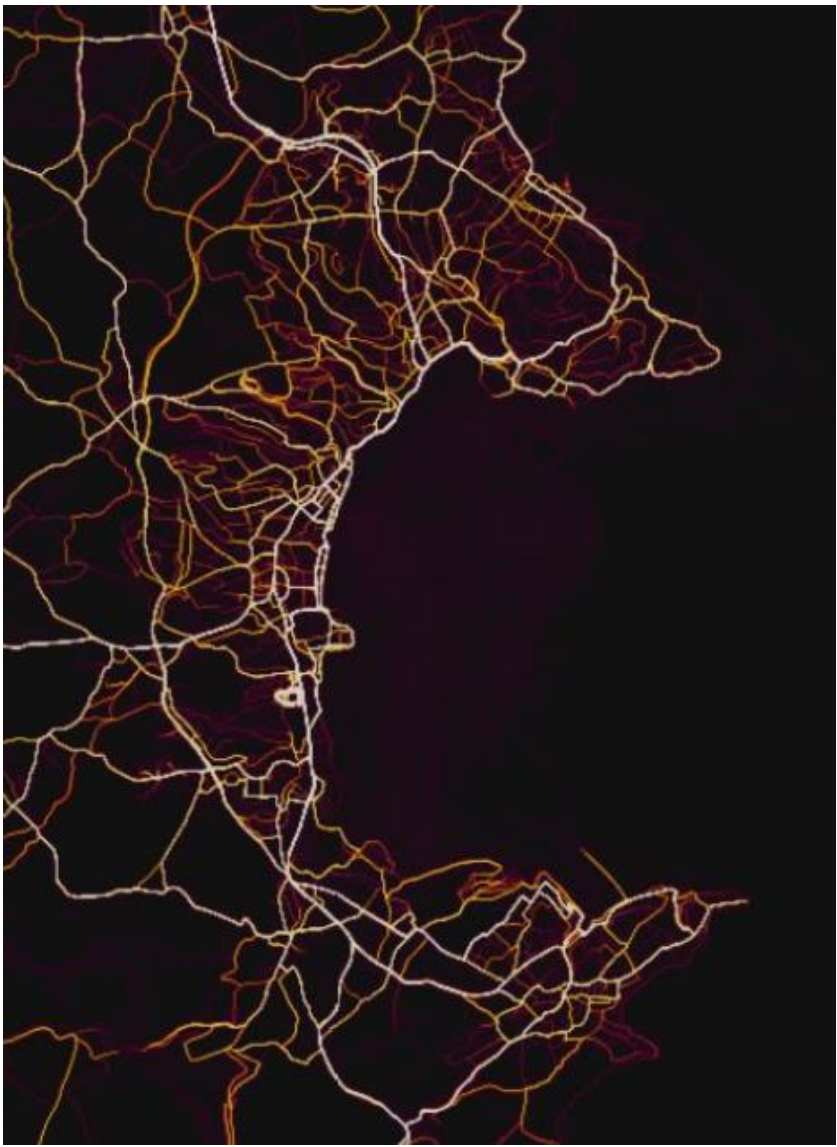
Strava cycle flows:
Brighter colours = increased usage.
(Source: Strava)

The strava heatmap tends towards confident sports/leisure
cyclists and shows the coastal route between Paignton and
Torquay and on towards Newton Abbot is a popular route.

TORBAY
Active Travel Fund
Phase 1

Torbay has received £41K from the Government's Emergency Active Travel Fund to deliver six experimental "pop-up" schemes. These were delivered in two phases and aimed to create safer walking and cycling environments, support social distancing, and reduce reliance on public transport as the economy reopened after lockdown.

A Torquay centre
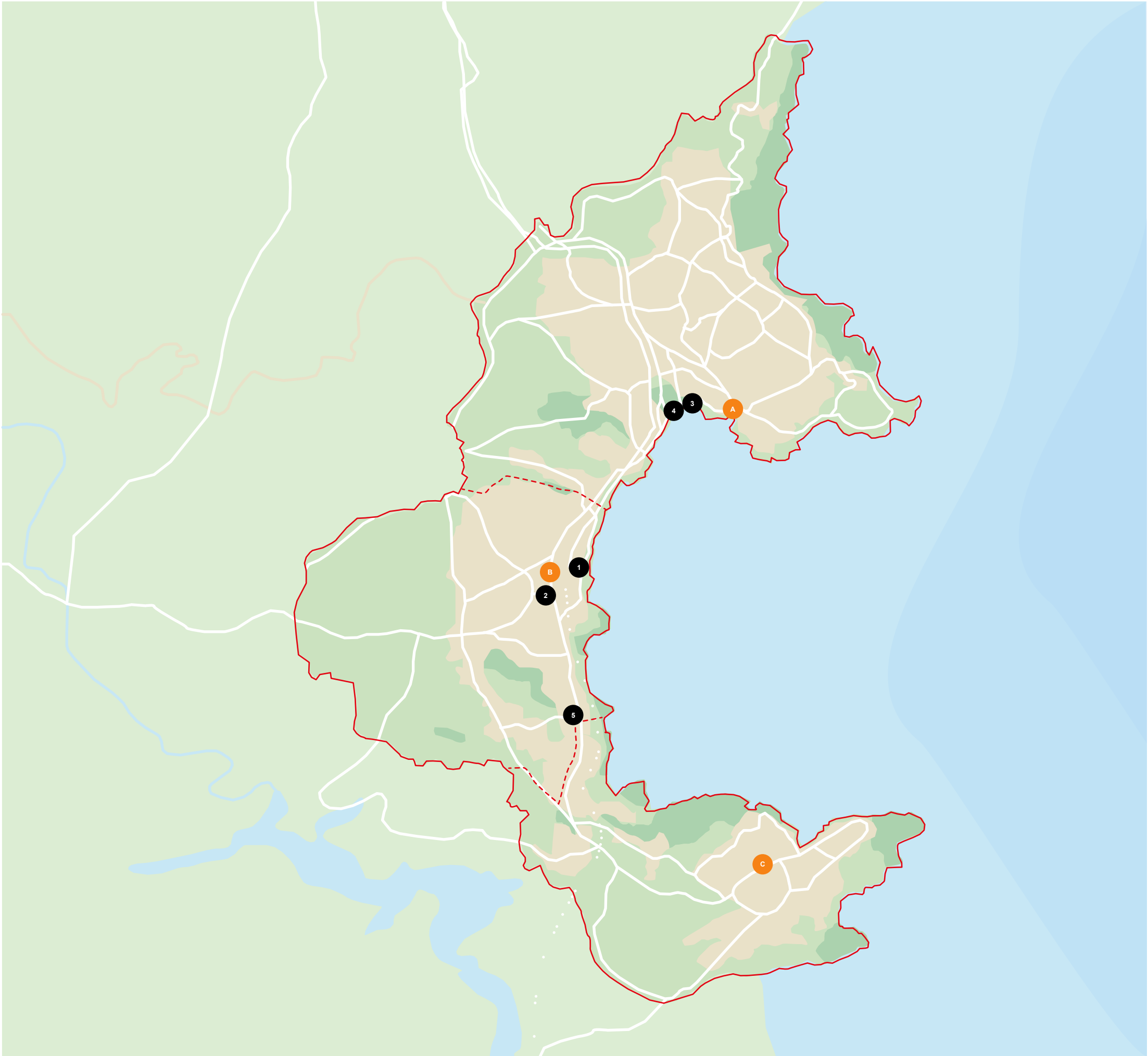**B** Paignton centre
C Brixham centre

1 Marine Drive, Paignton
Temporary widening of high footfall footpath in seafront location to aid social distancing

2 Station Square, Paignton
Closure of the traffic lane to provide extended footpath in town centre location to aid social distancing

3 Torre Abbey Seafront and Meadows
Conversion of existing wide footpaths to shared footpath/cycleways to link into existing cycle provision

4 Torbay Road, Torquay
Temporary widening of high footfall footpath in seafront location to aid social distancing

5 Dartmouth Road, Paignton
Temporary arrangement to provide shared footpath/cycleway to link to existing cycle provision.

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TORBAY
Connections
Summary

When overlaying the routes for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles there are clear points of conflict along the route.

A Torquay centre
B Paignton centre
C Brixham centre

1 Torbay Road is the most direct route between Torquay and Paignton. It is a two lane road, with cycle lanes painted on the road surface from the junction with Rathmore Road South, however these are not consistent along the route. The traffic light junction with Cockington Lane can get very congested, especially during the summer months.

2 The road is constrained on both sides with houses and the cliff so improvements to the street itself would be limited.

3 At Paignton you can either dive through the town along Hyde Road or via Esplanade Road along the coast. There is more choice and routes for walkers and cyclists away from these main vehicular routes.

4 At Goodrington the Road is wider to more easily accommodate traffic going to the beach and car parks.

5 When carrying on to Brixham the main vehicular and cycling route is again along a constrained 2 lane road.

6 Experienced walkers can hike between Brixham and Paignton along the South West Coast Path.

P+R There are a number of opportunities for Park and Ride, as identified in the LCWIP.

TORBAY COUNCIL   WILLMOTT DIXON   Milligan   leonard design
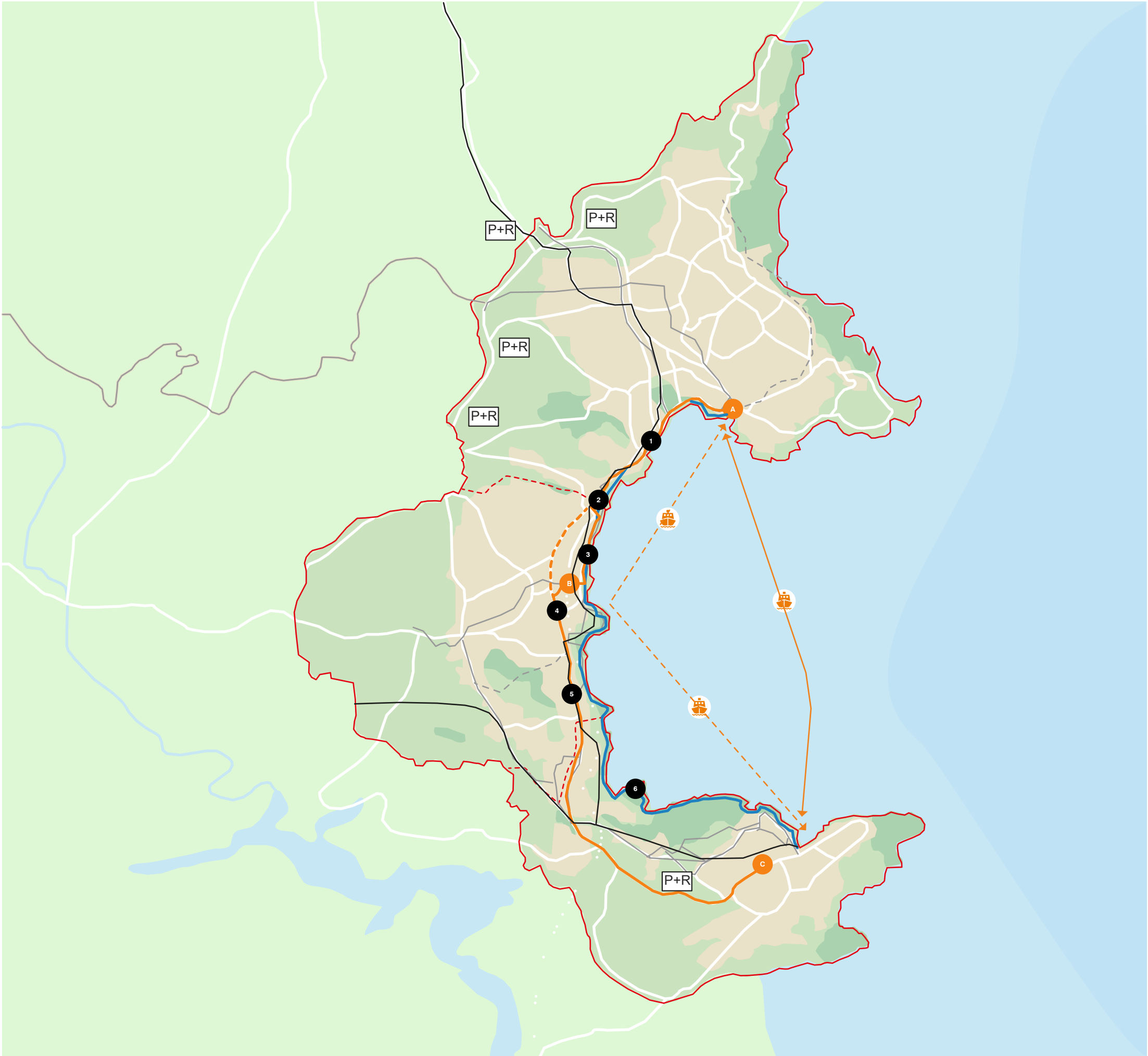
TORBAY
Connections
Summary

The coastal linking road provides the spine for movement across the bay. There are a number of pinch points at junctions which cause significant congestion during the busy summer months. These include within the town centres themselves.

- **A** Torquay centre
- **B** Paignton centre
- **C** Brixham centre

In Torquay, Torbay Road leads to Fleet Walk Car Park, as well as the bus stops at the Marina. The Strand, with newly delivered pedestrian improvements, provides access to Beacon Quay car park and on to Babbacombe. This is a busy area for visitors which causes some conflict.

Paignton acts as the link between the three towns, and the gyratory system circles the retail core of the town, cutting it off from its surroundings and is commonly congested to the detriment of the town. The coastal route acts as an additional route through the town, however cuts off the attractions of the beach from Torbay Road and the high street.

The large capacity car parks at Goodrington could be used to capture traffic arriving at the south of the town to avoid excessive numbers of cars in the town centre.

Brixham Central car park is well located to capture visitors within easy access to the high street and harbour. There is a series of awkward turns for vehicles to do if they want to pass through the town centre, disconnecting the high street from the harbour, but considerably slowing down traffic.

→ Major Road (A)
→ Distributor Road (B)
— One Way town centre through routes
— Pedestrianised (shared space)
— Rail Lines
● Car park

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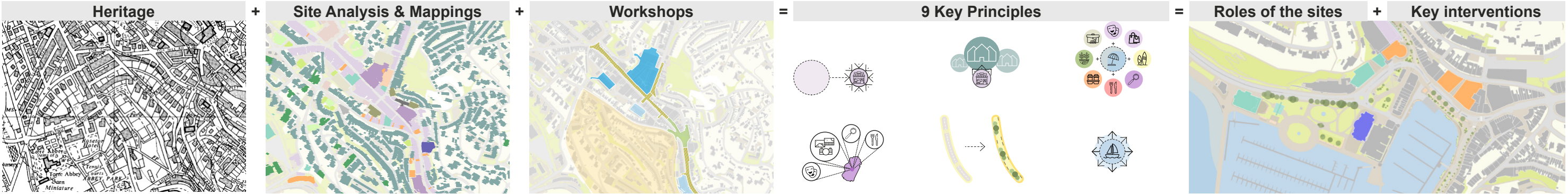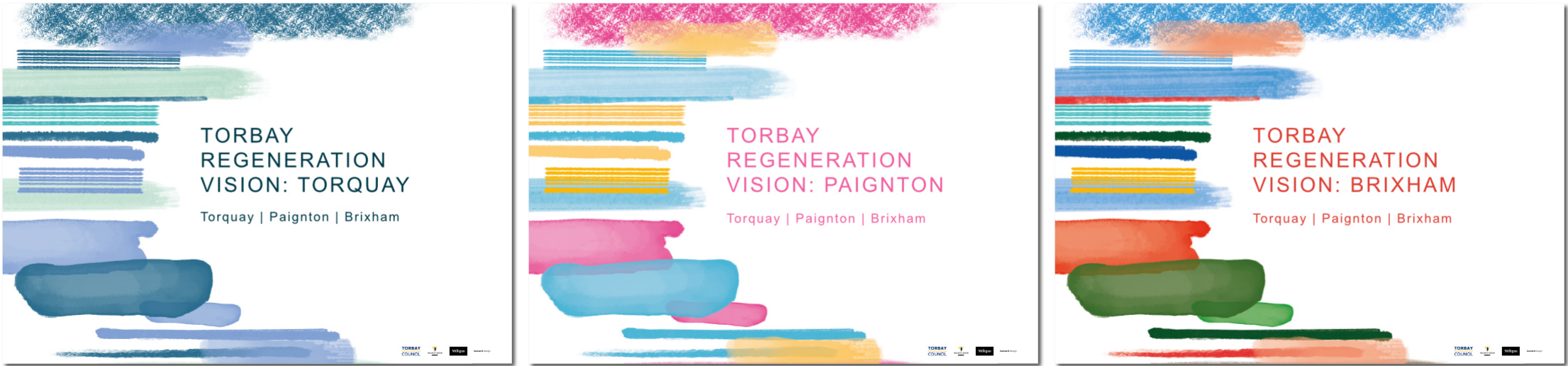# THE THREE TOWNS
Torquay | Paignton | Brixham

TORBAY
The Three Towns

Alongside this summary report are three 'Regeneration Vision' documents that detail the vision for the three towns.

The following pages summarise the physical mapping exercise and the heritage of the towns, before looking at the opportunities and key principles that have been drawn out in each report.

This chapter looks at this process, outlined below:

TORBAY
REGENERATION
VISION: TORQUAY

Torquay | Paignton | Brixham

TORBAY
REGENERATION
VISION: PAIGNTON

Torquay | Paignton | Brixham

TORBAY
REGENERATION
VISION: BRIXHAM

Torquay | Paignton | Brixham

| Heritage | + | Site Analysis & Mappings | + | Workshops | = | 9 Key Principles | = | Roles of the sites | + | Key interventions |

TORBAY
Heritage

TORQUAY

Prehistoric and Roman Era

Evidence of human activity in Torquay suggest that early humans inhabited the area around 40,000 years ago.

During the Roman era, the region that includes modern-day Torquay was part of the Dumnonii territory.

Medieval Period

In the medieval period, Torquay was a small fishing hamlet. Torre Abbey, founded in 1196, played a crucial role in the area's development. The abbey became one of the most influential religious establishments in Devon, contributing to the local economy and community.

18th and 19th Century: Growth and Prosperity

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries Torquay started gaining popularity as a health resort, enjoyed by naval officers during the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815).

The advent of the railway in 1848 made Torquay more accessible to tourists. This period saw significant development, to cater to the influx of visitors. The town's architecture reflects its Victorian prosperity.

20th Century

Torquay established itself as one of Britain's premier seaside resorts.

The post-war period saw a resurgence in tourism, although the latter half of the 20th century brought challenges as the rise of overseas travel impacted traditional British seaside resorts.

Today

In recent years, Torquay has revitalised its tourism industry by promoting its heritage, natural beauty, and cultural events. The town is part of the English Riviera UNESCO Global Geopark, recognised for its geological significance and stunning landscapes.

PAIGNTON

Origins

The town's name is derived from "Paega's town," and by the time of the Domesday Book in 1086, Paignton, recorded as "Pagentone," was primarily a fishing and farming village.

The Middle Ages

In the 14th century, Paignton Parish Church, dedicated to St. John the Baptist, was constructed and became a focal point of the town.

Paignton developed as a small yet thriving settlement, known for agriculture and its maritime economy.

18th and 19th Century: Growth and Prosperity

The arrival of the South Devon Railway in 1859 connected Paignton to the broader region, making it easily accessible to visitors from all over the country. Paignton quickly grew into a popular seaside destination for Victorians. This era saw significant urban and infrastructural development, including hotels, guesthouses, and the construction of Paignton Pier in 1879.

20th Century to Present

As part of the "English Riviera" alongside Torquay and Brixham, Paignton has since become a beloved resort town, known for its family-friendly beaches, vibrant esplanade, and attractions like Paignton Zoo, which opened in 1923.

Present

Modern Paignton is a blend of historical charm and contemporary tourism, maintaining its place as one of Devon's key holiday destinations while retaining traces of its ancient and medieval past.

BRIXHAM

Prehistoric Beginnings (Paleolithic to Iron Age)

Brixham's origins trace back to prehistoric times, with evidence of early human habitation found at Berry Head. The natural limestone caves provided shelter and resources, making the area a vital hub for early communities.

Roman and Saxon Influence

During the Roman period, Brixham's strategic coastal location fostered minor trade and settlement activity.

By the Saxon era, Brixham had begun to emerge as a small fishing village, eventually being mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086.

12th Century to 16th Century

In the medieval period, Brixham grew as a fishing and trading port. The construction of St. Mary's Church in the 14th century became central to the community.

The town's seafaring culture expanded, with its fishermen venturing further afield, marking the start of its reputation as a hub for maritime activity.

18th to 19th Century

Brixham became renowned for its trawling techniques, cementing its status as a leading fishing port.

The Napoleonic Wars brought fortifications to Berry Head highlighting the town's strategic importance.

The harbour area expanded, with traditional cottages and maritime infrastructure shaping the town's distinctive character.

Tourism and Modern Identity

The 20th century saw Brixham adapt to the challenges of industrial decline by embracing tourism.

Today, Brixham balances its rich fishing heritage with modern attractions, drawing visitors to its picturesque harbour, annual Pirate Festival, and preserved architectural landmarks.

TORBAY COUNCIL   WILLMOTT DIXON   Milligan   leonard design

TORBAY
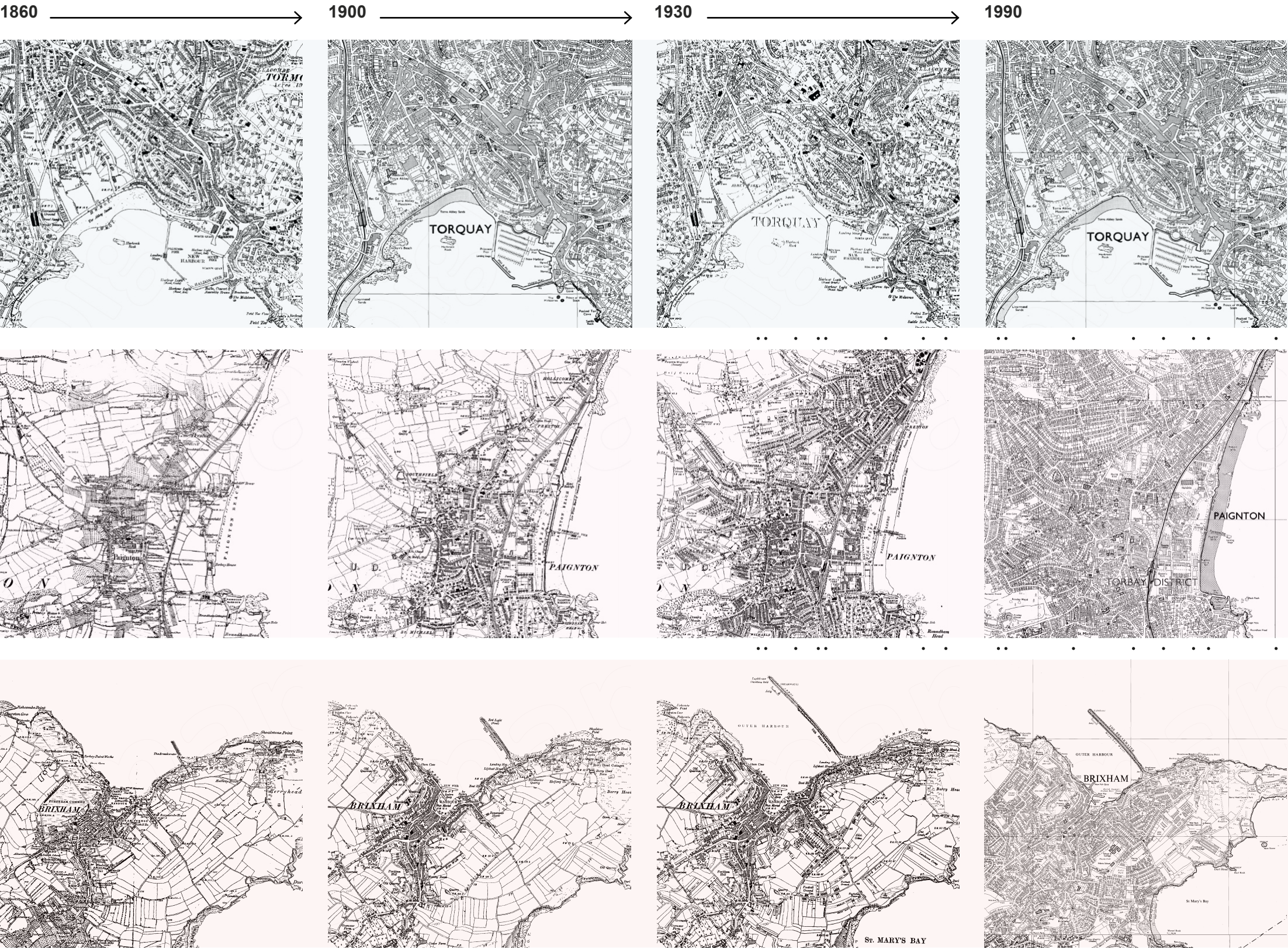## Heritage Mapping

1860 → 1900 → 1930 → 1990

TORQUAY

Torquay transformed from a small seaside village into a popular resort over two centuries. It rose to prominence between 1860 and 1900 as a top Victorian destination with grand villas, hotels, and improved infrastructure. Growth continued in the early 20th century, despite the World Wars. After WWII, Torquay modernised and embraced domestic tourism. From the 1960s, new attractions and better accessibility sustained its appeal. Since 1990, revitalisation efforts, eco-tourism, cultural events, and its UNESCO Geopark status have helped maintain its vibrancy as a diverse and attractive destination.

PAIGNTON

Since 1860, Paignton has evolved from a small fishing village into a popular seaside resort on the English Riviera. The railway's arrival in 1859 and the pier's construction in 1879 sparked a tourism boom, with hotels and attractions developing rapidly. The 1920s were a golden age, marked by major additions like the Zoo and Picture House. After WWII, domestic tourism thrived with holiday camps and family attractions. From the 1960s, modernisation responded to overseas competition, and recent efforts have emphasised sustainable, family-focused tourism while preserving Paignton's traditional charm.

BRIXHAM

From 1860 onward, Brixham grew from a small fishing village into a key maritime hub, driven by its fishing industry, shipbuilding, and infrastructure like the 1867 Breakwater. Between 1900 and 1930, it became both a prosperous fishing port and a growing tourist destination, aided by steam trawlers and railway access. By the late 1930s, tourism and maritime heritage coexisted successfully. Post-WWII, the 1960s brought more leisure travel, holiday camps, and cultural events. By the 1980s, Brixham balanced its fishing legacy with tourism and heritage preservation. Today, it remains a vibrant mix of working port and seaside destination.

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TORBAY
Heritage

How Torbay has developed over time, through the lens of aerial photography.

Brixham in 1928

Paignton in 1947

Torquay in 1947

Torquay in 1928

Paignton in 1928

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TORQUAY
Mapping Summary

The mapping exercise included a number of different analysis, including:
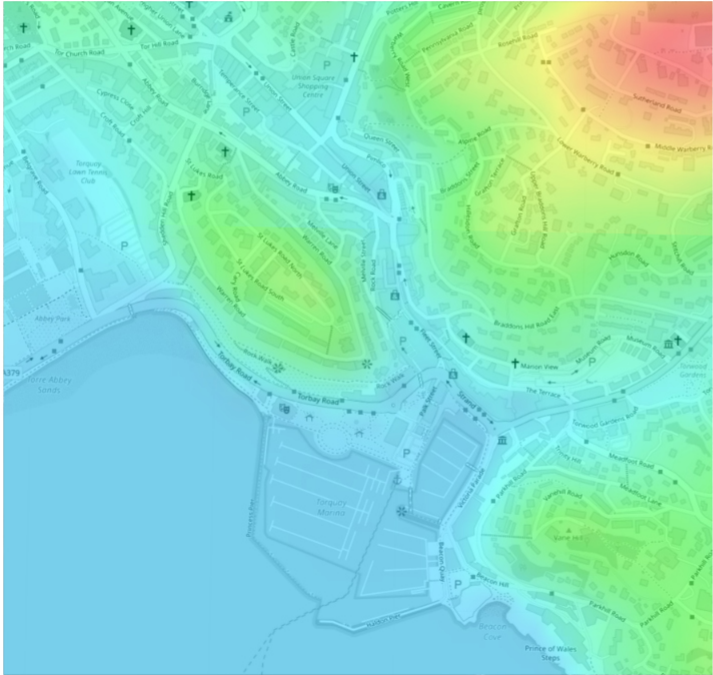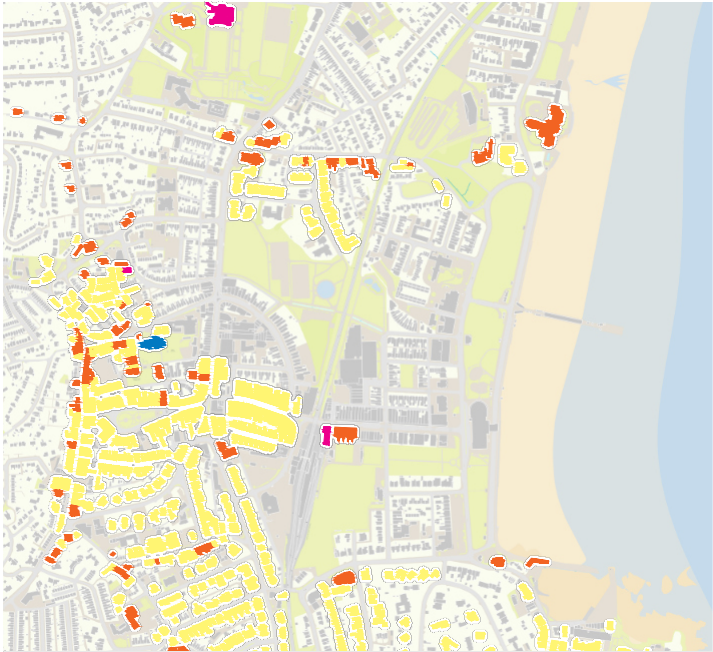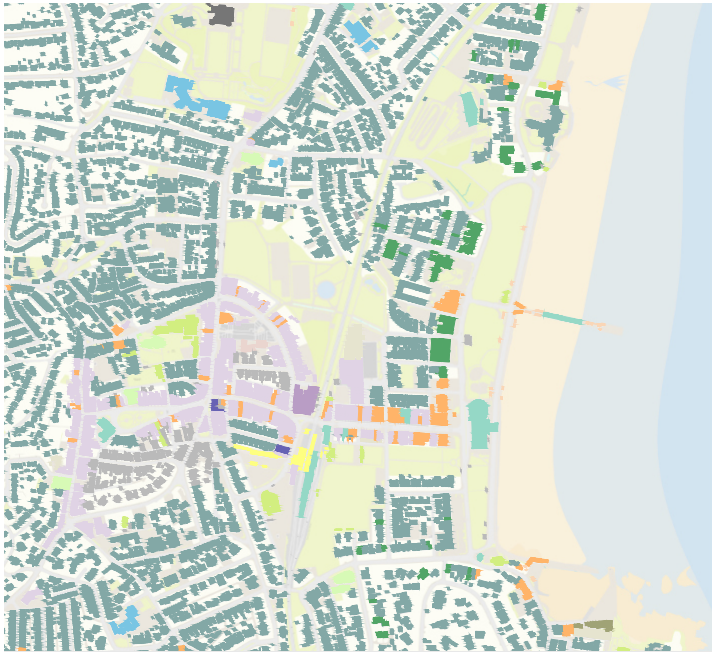

Zones

Listed Buildings
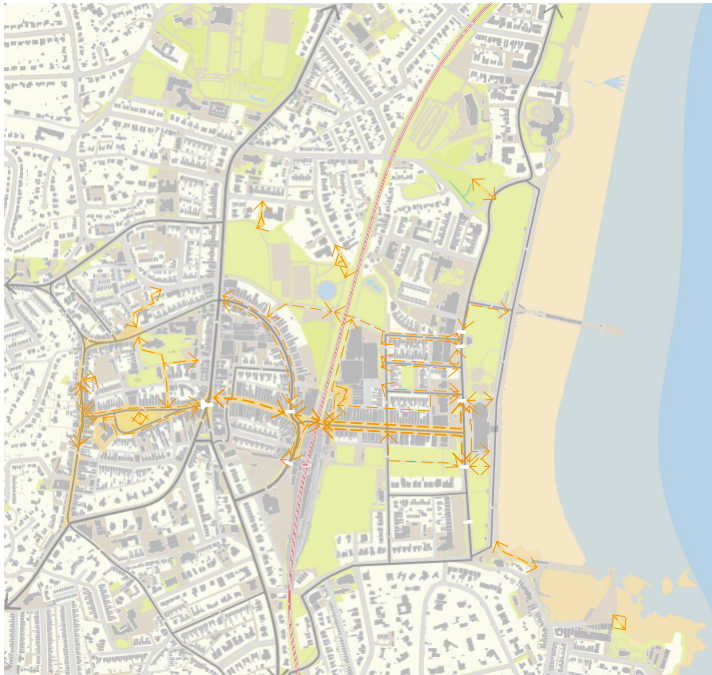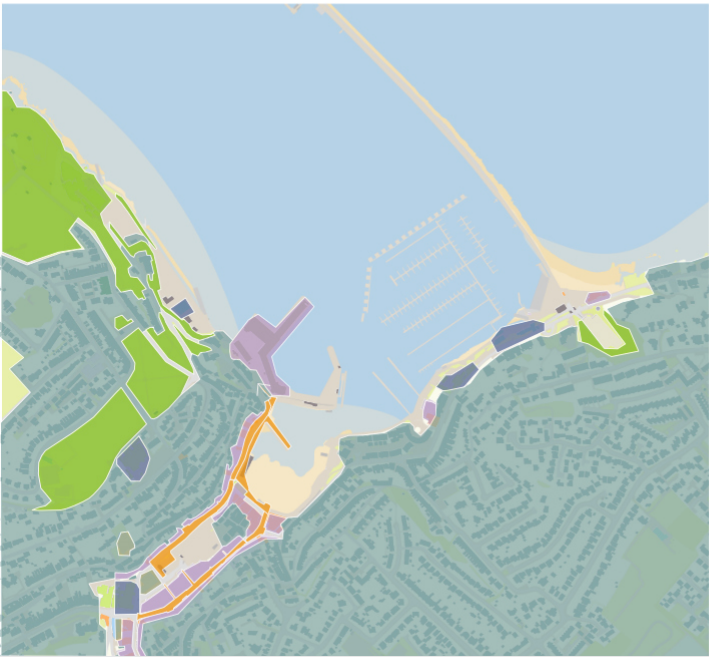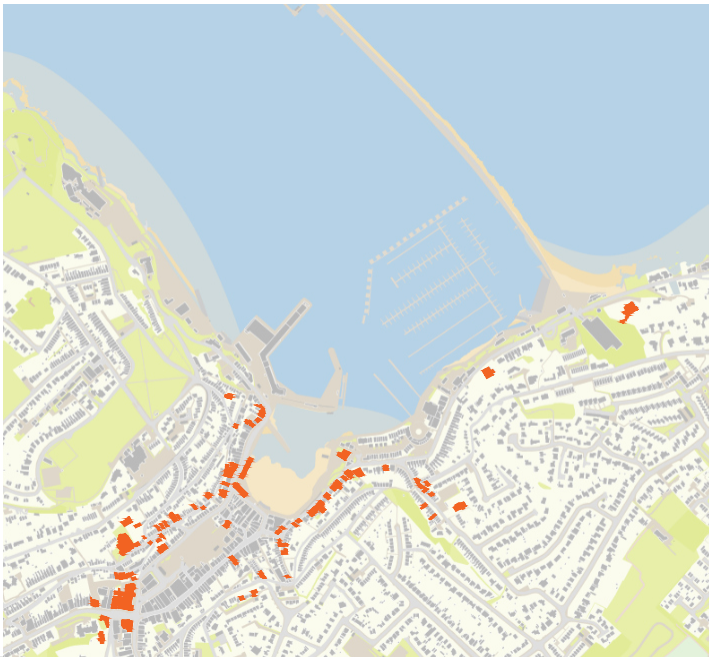

Uses

Movement

Flood Zones

Topography

Green Space

Parking

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PAIGNTON
Mapping Summary

The mapping exercise included a number of different analysis, including:

Zones

Listed Buildings

Uses

Vehicle Movement
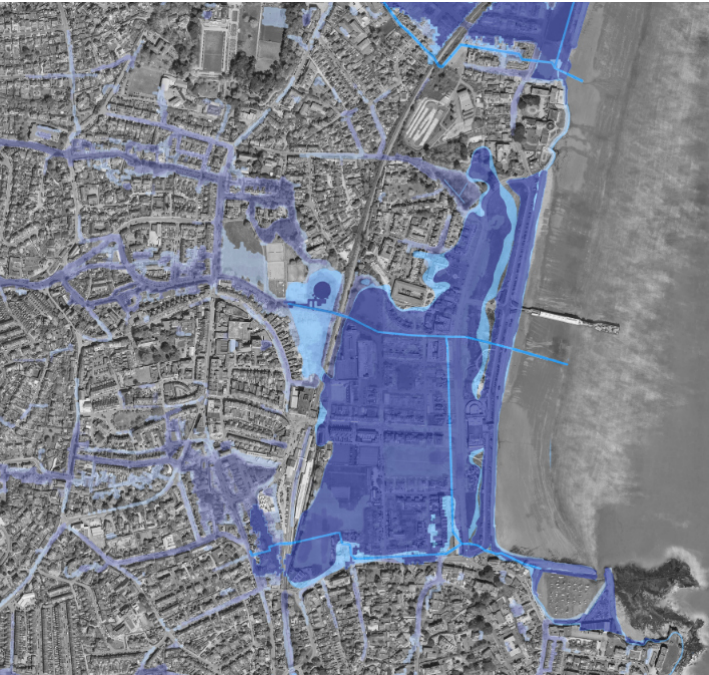
Flood Zones

Topography

Green Space

Pedestrian Movement

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BRIXHAM
Mapping Summary

The mapping exercise included a number of different analysis, including:
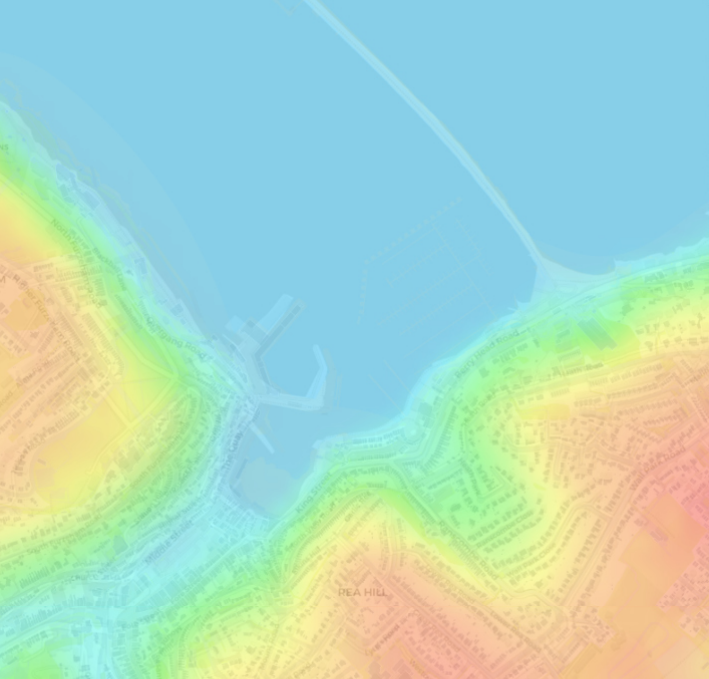

Zones

Listed Buildings
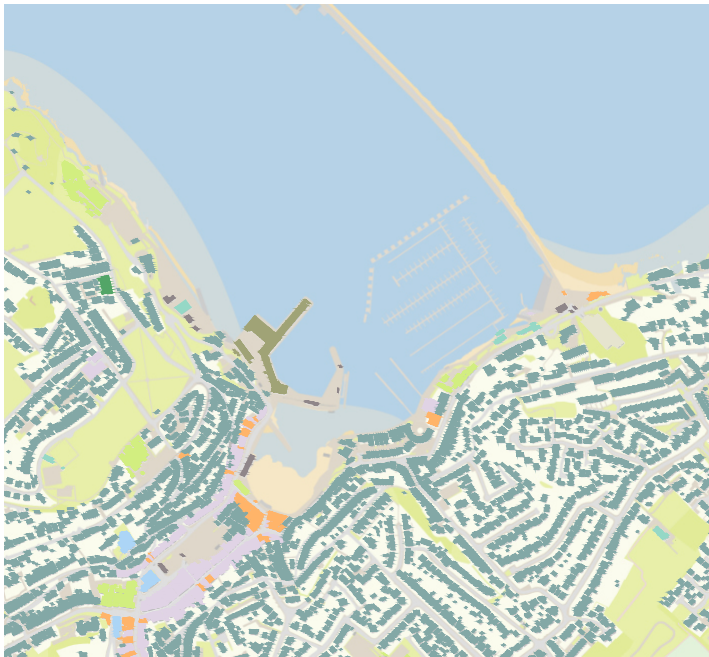
Uses

Movement

Flood Zones

Topography

Green Space

Car Parks
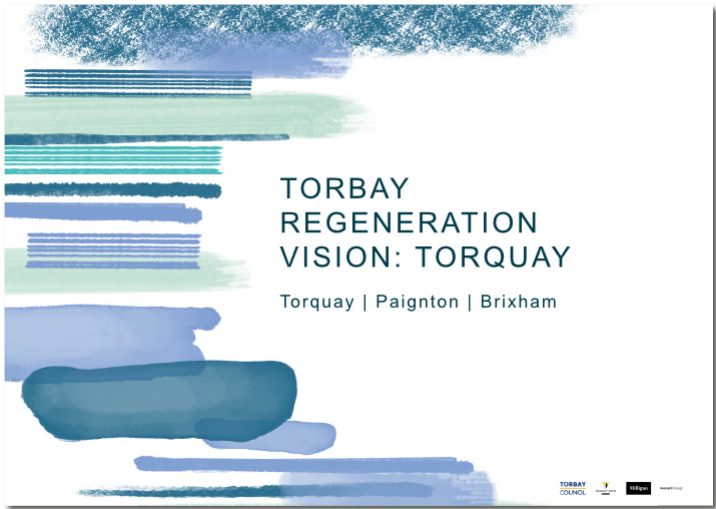
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TORBAY
Opportunities

Looking at the heritage of the three towns, the planning context, and the mapping exercise has resulted in a number of opportunities being identified for each of the towns. Shown here.

This exercise also identified a series of opportunity sites across the three towns. The following pages illustrate these sites.

TORBAY
REGENERATION
VISION: TORQUAY

Torquay | Paignton | Brixham

TORBAY
REGENERATION
VISION: PAIGNTON

Torquay | Paignton | Brixham

TORBAY
REGENERATION
VISION: BRIXHAM

Torquay | Paignton | Brixham

Opportunities

1. Re-balance the holiday market to higher quality hotels, self catered apartments and shorter year-round breaks to take advantage of this growing market.

2. Change Torquay's perception from a 'Seaside Destination to a 'Vibrant Coastal Town'.

3. Reduce the size of the retail core. Strengthen retail south of the GPO roundabout.

4. Encourage a mix of uses to the north of the GPO roundabout. Potentially a mixed-use, residential neighbourhood targeted at local residents.

5. Fix the issues around Castle Circus..

6. Restore the Pavilion to a cultural destination.

7. Better connect across Torbay via roads, cycling and public transport.

8. Improve the public realm.

9. Improve the public ream of Fleet Street.

10. Encourage more street activations, including a market, street food, entertainment and events.

Opportunities

1. Support and enhance the popular leisure attractions of the town.

2. Provide new leisure offers and attractions to bring in a wider variety of visitors and extend the season beyond the summer months.

3. A number of regeneration opportunity sites currently exist across the town centre which could support its vitality going forwards.

4. Diversify the economy beyond tourism, through initiatives such as supporting local businesses and attracting new industries.

5. Implement a signage and wayfinding strategy to better connect across the town.

6. Simplify the road system to ease congestion across the town centre.

7. Alongside wayfinding, signage and simplifying the roads network, rationalise the parking strategy for the town.

8. Concentrate the retail of the town in the centre.

9. Better connect the town centre and Torbay Road to the seafront.

10. Create a safer environment along the seafront and promenade.
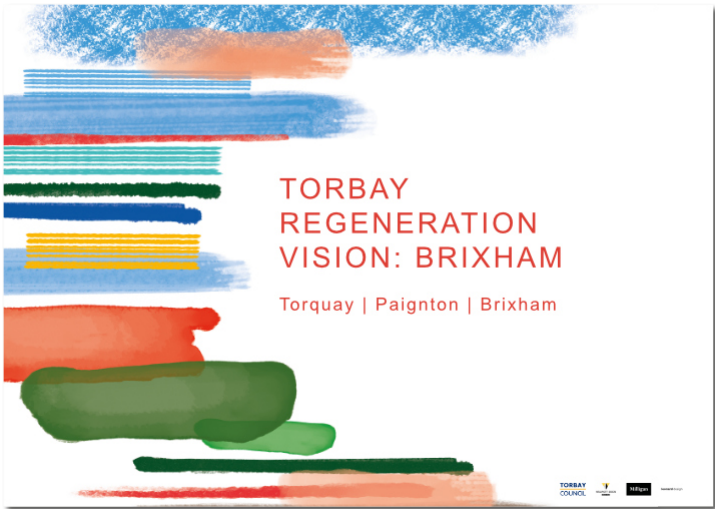
Opportunities

1. The link between Central Car Park and the harbour along Paradise Pl. and Pump Street.

2. Refurbishment or replacement of the market structure.

3. Improved provision of benches and planters along the harbour.

4. Activation of the South Quay Car Park for pedestrians, such as creating a proper 'Brixham backdrop' for photos and visitors, e.g. murals or a green wall.

5. Turn the space into a family friendly zone, with more street food offers and space to sit and children to play (e.g.. crabbing along the wall). There is potential to extend a pontoon to create additional space for crabbing & waterfront activities.

6. Potential to complete the loop around the harbour with a bridge linking South Quay to New Pier and the Fish-market.

7. Away from the harbour, the bus shelter and surrounding area of Town Square could be improved to create a better gateway into the town.

8. The Western End of Fore Street should be the gateway into the town, however suffers because of its distance from the harbour and disconnection from the loop with Middle Street, leading to vacant units.

9. Integrate parking access to the main attractions and amenities.

TORQUAY
Key Focus Areas

This map was provided as a starter for 10 to assess the potential opportunities within the town. The timeline of key sites in the town is illustrated in different colours, from already delivered to future opportunities.

● **Delivered Sites**
1 Hilton
2 Premier Inn Torquay Harbour

● **Sites In Progress**
3 Harbour Public Realm

● **Proposed Sites**
4 The Pavilion
5 Debenhams
6 Union Square
7 Lower Union Lane

● **Opportunity Sites**
8 Living Coast
9 Fleet Walk
10 The Arcades
11 BT Building
12 Princess Theatre

● **Public Realm Opportunities**
13 Princess Gardens
14 GPO Roundabout Public Realm
15 Fleet Street Public Realm
16 Union Street
17 Market Street

● **Other Opportunities**
18 Making Melville Marvellous

● **Other Public Realm Opportunities**
19 Beacon Quay
20 Victoria Parade
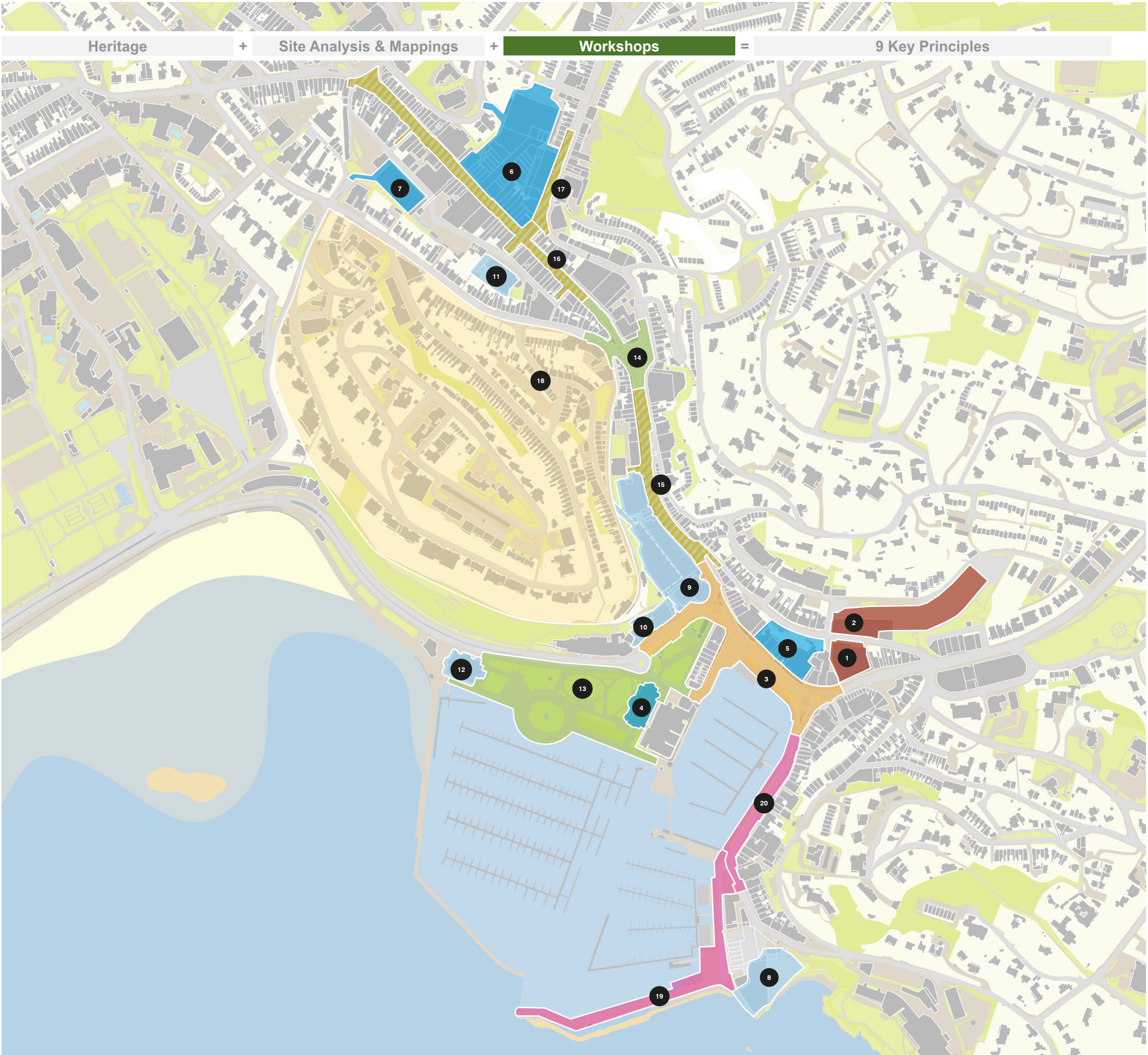
PAIGNTON
Key Focus Areas

The same exercise was compiled for Paignton.

● **Delivered Sites**
1 Mercure Hotel
2 Ibis Styles Hotel

● **Sites In Progress**
3 Paignton Picture House
4 Station Square Public Realm
5 Flood Defences

● **Proposed Sites**
6 Victoria Centre
7 Crossways

● **Opportunity Sites**
8 Cinema
9 Bus Station
10 Library and Car Park
11 Pier
12 Oldway Mansion
13 Harbour Area

● **Streetscape Opportunities**
14 Torbay Road Public Realm
15 Victoria Street Public Realm
16 Palace Avenue Public Realm
17 Winner Street Public Realm
18 19 Esplanade Road Public Realm

● **Green Space Opportunities**
20 Paignton South
21 Paignton Green & Geopark
22 23 Victoria Park

Other Opportunities
24 Goodrington Car Parks
25 Paignton Zoo

Torbay Business Park:
26 EPIC
27 The Electronics and Photonics Production Park
28 South Devon College

● **Additional opportunities identified in the engagement session:**
29 Parkfield Torbay Skatepark & BMX track
30 Parkfield House CIC
31 Palace Theatre
32 Palace Avenue Methodist Church Community
33 The Paignton Club, Paignton Vista & Harbour Light
34 Inn on the Green Site (recently sold)

BRIXHAM
Key Focus Areas

The same exercise was also compiled for Brixham, which provides significant opportunities for public realm enhancements to enhance its town centre. Sites where proposals have been put forward previously are highlighted as 'proposed'. Opportunity sites are also identified.

● Proposed
1 Car Park
2 Fish Market
3 Oxen Cove Car Park South
4 Oxen Cove Car Park North
5 Brixham Laboratory
6 Brixham Marina Car Park
7 Breakwater Beach Car Park

● Opportunities
8 Town Square
9 Fore Street
10 Inner Harbour
11 Market
12 South Quay Car Park
13 Bridge & Quay
14 Shoalstone Seawater Pool

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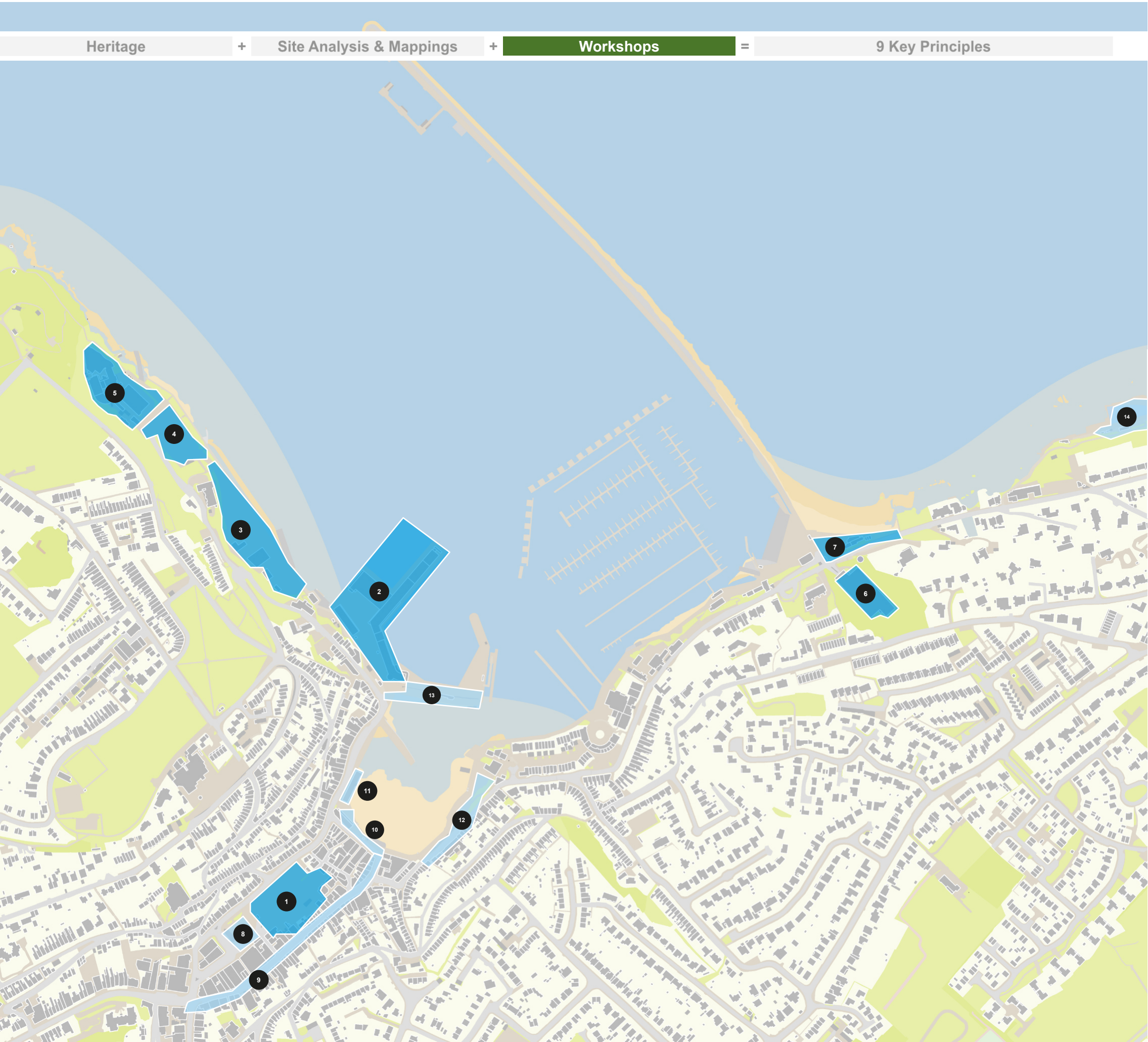
TORBAY
Timeline

These sites form a timeline illustrating how Torbay can be regenerated in the years to come.

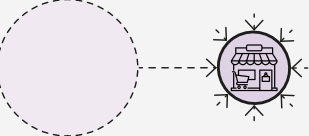|	Delivered sites	Sites in-progress	Proposed sites	Opportunity sites	Public realm opportunities	Other opportunities
TORQUAY	The Hilton Premier Inn Torquay Harbour	Harbour Public Realm	The Pavilion Debenhams Union Square Lower Union Lane	Living Coast Fleet Walk The Arcades BT Building Princess Theatre	Princess Gardens GPO Roundabout Public Realm Fleet Street Public Realm Union Street Market Street	Beacon Quay Victoria Parade Making Melville Marvellous
PAIGNTON	Mercure Hotel Ibis Styles Hotel	Paignton Picture House Station Square Public Realm Flood Defences	Victoria Centre Crossways	Cinema Bus Station Pier Oldway Mansion Harbour Area	Torbay Road Public Realm Victoria Street Public Realm Palace Avenue Public Realm Winner Street Public Realm Esplanade Road Public Realm Paignton South Paignton Green & Geopark Victoria Park	Goodrington Car Parks Paignton Zoo Torbay Business Park: EPIC, The Electronics and Photonics Production Park, South Devon College
BRIXHAM			Car Park Fish Market Oxen Cove Car Park South Oxen Cove Car Park North Brixham Laboratory Brixham Marina Car Park Breakwater Beach Car Park	Town Square Fore Street Inner Harbour Market South Quay Car Park Bridge & Quay Shoalstone Seawater Pool		

TORBAY
Key Principles
Summary

Key principles inform the overall strategy for the each of the towns, and have been created by combining the knowledge gained through the site analysis and mapping, heritage assessment, planning documentation and the individual town's identity.

TORQUAY

- Encourage mixed-use, residential neighbourhoods to the north of the GPO roundabout.
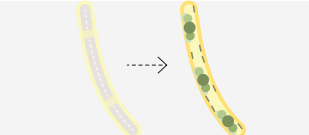- Reduce the size of, and strengthen the Retail Core.
- Change the perception of Torquay from a 'Seaside destination' to 'Vibrant Coastal Town'.
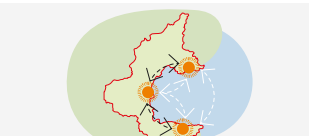- Restore the Pavilion into a cultural destination.
- Encourage more street activations: A market, street food, entertainment and events.
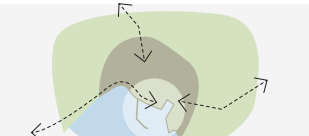- Improve the public realm of Fleet Street.
- Focus on the Harbour area and work outwards.
- Better connect across Torbay.
- Improve the arrival experience into Torquay.

PAIGNTON

- Reduce the size of the Retail Core to support Torbay Road as the primary retail and leisure boulevard.
- Opportunity to reconnect the centre of town with the seafront along Torbay Road.
- Improve signage and wayfinding to Paignton's car parks.
- Provide space for events and festivals to enliven the town, and extend the visitor season.
- Increase the perception of safety in the town, particularly around Victoria Park, Victoria Street, Palace Avenue and Gerston Road.
- Extend an support the Harbour Market to create a destinational experience.
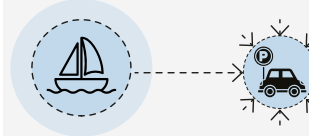- Protect and support key assets such as Paignton Zoo, Oldway Mansion and the Pier.
- Better connect across Torbay.
- Provide space and activities for younger residents, such as theatres, watersports and an improved cinema offer.

BRIXHAM

- Enhance connectivity between the harbour and central car park by strengthening the pedestrian link to improve access and flow.
- Refurbish or replace the market building to create a vibrant and functional community and visitor hub.
- Activate public spaces along the harbour to create a welcoming environment for locals and visitors.
- Transform South Quay car park into a visitor attraction, incorporating murals, green walls, and a signature 'Brixham backdrop'.
- Create family-friendly zones for family-oriented activities, on the waterfront.
- Complete the harbour loop with a bridge connecting South Quay to New Pier and the Fish Market, creating a seamless walking route.
- Upgrade the Town Square and bus shelter area to provide a more inviting first impression.
- Revitalize the western end of Fore Street by enhancing its visual appeal and accessibility.
- Integrate parking with key attractions by ensuring clear wayfinding and convenient parking access for visitors to key amenities.
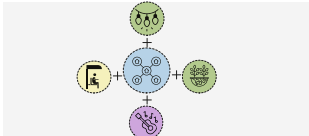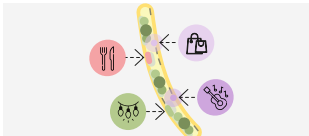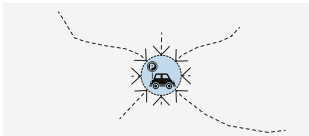
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TORBAY
Key Principles
Across the three towns

While there are notable crossovers in the key principles shared among the three towns, each also has distinct principles that apply specifically to its unique context and needs.

The three towns share several key principles:
- Activating waterfronts,
- Enhancing public spaces,
- Boosting the economy, and
- Improving dining and leisure options.

Paignton and Brixham prioritize upgrading shopping boulevards to improve accessibility and appeal.

Torquay focuses on reducing its retail core and emphasising street entertainment to create a lively atmosphere.

TORQUAY

PAIGNTON

BRIXHAM

Reduce the size of and strengthen the retail core

Mixed use residential neighbourhoods

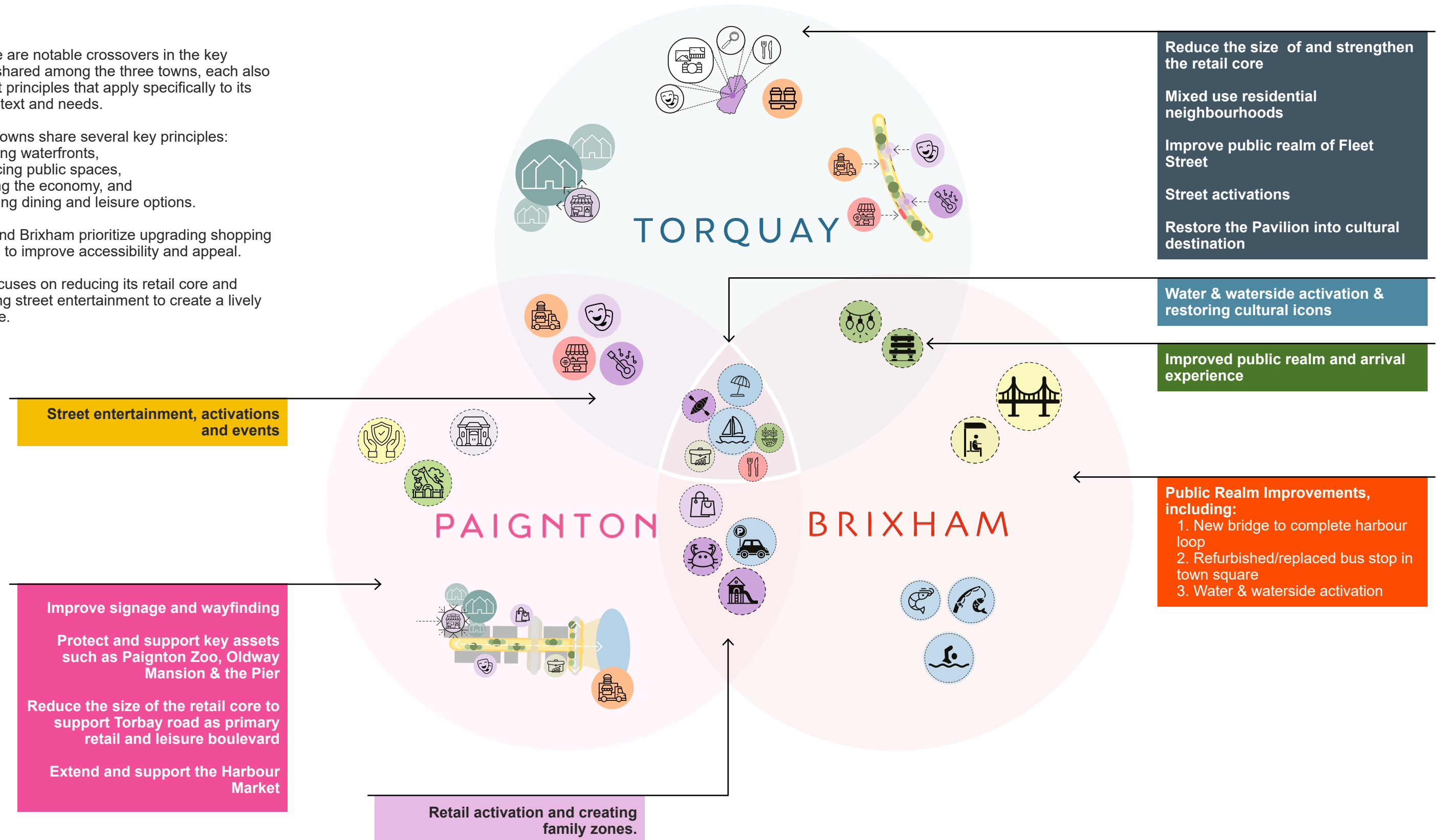**Improve public realm of Fleet Street**

Street activations

Restore the Pavilion into cultural destination

Water & waterside activation & restoring cultural icons

Improved public realm and arrival experience

Public Realm Improvements, including:
1. New bridge to complete harbour loop
2. Refurbished/replaced bus stop in town square
3. Water & waterside activation

Street entertainment, activations and events

Improve signage and wayfinding

Protect and support key assets such as Paignton Zoo, Oldway Mansion & the Pier

Reduce the size of the retail core to support Torbay road as primary retail and leisure boulevard

Extend and support the Harbour Market

Retail activation and creating family zones.

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TORBAY
Common Key
Principles

Consistent across all three towns are a number of principles focusing on activating the waterfront, taking advantage of Torbay's stunning coastline as an attraction for visitors and residents alike.

Also consistent across the three towns is the restoration of iconic buildings to safeguard Torbay's heritage and reflect the cultural value of the three towns.

Water & waterside activation & restoring cultural icons

TORBAY
Common Key Principles

Also common between the towns is the desire to activate existing streets with events, festivals and activities. To strengthen the retail offers of the towns and creating family-friendly town centres, as well as improving the public realm and arrival experience into the towns.

Street entertainment, activations and events

Retail activation and creating family zones.

Improved public realm and arrival experience

TORBAY
Key Principles

Specific points to the three towns are outlined below, and reflect their individual identity and character. Reinforcing the values from the Torbay Story .

TORQUAY

Reduce the size of and strengthen the retail core

Mixed use residential neighbourhoods

Improve public realm of Fleet Street

Street activations

Restore the Pavilion into cultural destination

PAIGNTON

Improve signage and wayfinding

Protect and support key assets such as Paignton Zoo, Oldway Mansion & the Pier

Reduce the size of the retail core to support Torbay road as primary retail and leisure boulevard

Extend and support the Harbour Market

BRIXHAM

Public Realm Improvements, including:
1. New bridge to complete harbour loop
2. Refurbished/replaced bus stop in town square
3. Water & waterside activations.

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TORBAY
Conclusion

The three regeneration visions for Torquay, Paignton and Brixham outline key principles, a network of sites categorised at different stages of development and a series of key interventions which can be phased over time.

These regeneration visions have been created with a comprehensive evidence base, including, a heritage assessment and mappings of social demographics, policy, town centre zones (in policy), uses, conservation areas, vehicular routes, car parks, pedestrian routes, green spaces, topography, flood zones, peacemaking & circulation. These aspects all came together into a SWOT analysis.

Comments were canvassed from key stakeholders in each of the towns. Questions included what the towns strengths and weaknesses are, what issues they currently suffer from and what opportunities there are.

This evidence base resulted in nine key principles for development, guiding the aspirations for the sites for the future.

These three regeneration visions are linked by this report, which highlights how the three towns are linked, and provide complementary offers to visitors, residents and workers.

TORBAY COUNCIL

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