

This written evidence reflects the impact we have documented on the cultural and creative sectors in the Torbay local government area. It includes information about the impact on Torbay Culture itself as the local sector voice for culture including heritage and creativity in the bay.

**Introduction and background** as requested by the Committee: Torbay Culture was established in 2015 to lead the delivery of *'Enjoy, Talk, Do, Be' – a cultural strategy for Torbay and its communities 2014-24*. Our mission is:

*'To enable the cultural and creative development of Torbay through collaboration, making our home, the English Riviera UNESCO Global Geopark, a better place in which to live, work, learn and visit'.*

The strategy, formally adopted by Torbay Council, is aligned with the Council's Corporate Plan, the English Riviera Destination Management Plan and Torbay's Economic Strategy, as well as strategic priorities for health and wellbeing. Published jointly by Arts Council England, Torbay Council and TDA, *'Enjoy, Talk, Do, Be'* reflects the needs of communities and the desire to generate better opportunities for the cultural ecology of Torbay. The strategy has three aims:

- To increase engagement and participation in cultural opportunities in Torbay
- To maximise the distinctive natural and built cultural assets of Torbay
- To ensure cultural development is a key contributor to economic, social and environmental development

Torbay Culture is supported by TDA (Torbay Economic Development Company Limited), which employs the small team of two full time members of staff. The **Board of Torbay Culture** is an independent advisory group which acts as the strategy guardian, overseeing its delivery, and championing the work of Torbay Culture and culture in general. Over the last three years Torbay Culture has managed and coordinated the delivery of Torbay's **Great Place Scheme**, one of 16 national pathfinders co-sponsored by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Arts Council England and Historic England. The Scheme's programmes deliver *'Enjoy, Talk, Do, Be'* and are themed around shaping place, changing lives, engaging audiences and building resilience in the local culture sector. We have a significant record of achievements which can be seen online at <https://www.torbayculture.org>

The Parliamentary Committee invites written evidence on the impact of Covid-19 on any sectors under the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's remit (including, but not limited to, culture and the creative industries; civil society; sport; tourism; heritage; publishing, media and journalism; telecoms). In particular, the Committee is interested in finding out the following:

1. **What has been the immediate impact of Covid-19 on the sector?**
2. **How effectively has the support provided by DCMS, other Government departments and arms-length bodies addressed the sector's needs?**
3. **What will the likely long-term impacts of Covid-19 be on the sector, and what support is needed to deal with those?**

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4. **What lessons can be learnt from how DCMS, arms-length bodies and the sector have dealt with Covid-19?**
  5. **How might the sector evolve after Covid-19, and how can DCMS support such innovation to deal with future challenges?**

### 1. What has been the immediate impact of Covid-19 on the sector?

Major impacts have been loss of income for cultural and creative organisations and in some cases their staff (where not eligible for furlough, or other assistance); loss of work for individuals working in the culture and creative sectors; and an inability to spend money in the locality (e.g. cultural organisations support other local businesses who rely on them to purchase locally for supplies, cafes, shops, services). The measure of the impact is not yet fully quantified – we do not have the resources to gather the detailed data on this across the Torbay area. Other, larger organisations are gathering knowledge and sharing it with us. Examples of the **scope of the impacts** are given below:

- Individual artists and creative practitioners have lost all income (e.g. music therapists who had an immediate 100% fall in income as they deliver work in care homes, and were unable to access state assistance for several weeks due to rules relating to universal credit or self employment)
- Organisations projected the loss of the majority or all of their income, for up to six months, as access to clients ceased, and cultural spaces and venues were closed.
- Delays introducing self employment assistance measures (SEISS) have seriously impacted individual workers, including artists, musicians and other freelance practitioners. They report feeling alone and unsupported.
- The cancellation of community events has a ripple effect impact on neighbourhoods: (e.g. the cancelled Dance festival in Paignton impacts not only the Palace Theatre as host venue, but hundreds of young people and parents, schools and associated partners).
- A lack of capacity or resources, especially in smaller organisations has resulted in uneven practice. Impacts have flowed from that. One very concerning example was a music leader working for a local arts organisation whose work is funded by a national grant. He raised concerns about safe practice in that work setting (one of his children is Type-1 diabetic and therefore higher risk). He found his employment terminated because he questioned the employer's procedures including a failure to provide warm water for hand washing.

The impact on **Torbay Culture** specifically is significant:

- Our record of achievement in recent years has been possible thanks to grants from agencies like the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Arts Council England. This support has helped redress the low investment in what is the most deprived local government area in south west England. Future limitations on funding for strategic development or longer term programmes of work will reduce our ability to build local capacity - at exactly the time that we are needed more than ever.
- We have built **confidence and trust** in a location which has well documented social and economic challenges, supporting cultural development, the visitor economy, and improving the quality of life for people in Torbay. Our progress is placed in jeopardy as we and our partners face reduced income; there is also a longer term impact resulting from lost momentum in effecting

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change to improve our places (i.e. community partnerships, culture and wellbeing projects, public realm developments, improving resilience of cultural organisations, investing in skills and talent).

Several anchor **cultural organisations** face major hardship and a very real risk of not being able to recover at all. A few culture examples (from many) are below:

- Torquay Museum is Devon's oldest museum and celebrates its 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. It cares for hundreds of thousands of objects, including a nationally Designated collection and is facing significant financial loss projected at £175,000 of lost income. This will have a longer term impact on staff retention, opening hours and future programmes beyond 2021. (Loss of income during the normally busier visitor months has a legacy impact on following years' budgets which cannot be 'made up on reopening').
- Kents Cavern has operated since 1903. These prehistoric caves are a Scheduled Ancient Monument, SSSI, and gateway site to the English Riviera UNESCO Global Geopark. Kents Cavern is modelling worst case scenarios which may include the site selling off parts of the land in order to ease financial burden, and resorting to the very minimum access to the caves. The site is of international significance and its loss would be significant to the tourism economy and cultural morale of the bay.
- The Princess Theatre, Devon's largest at 1,497 seats, faces significant challenges as it looks to re-open. Its revenue comes almost entirely from a share of ticket sales, and from the sale of ancillary products to audiences such as drinks and food. Due to the geography of the site, it may not be possible to offer social distancing at all, meaning the venue will not be able to generate any income. If social distancing were achievable, it would require additional resources to fund physical alterations, or to subsidise operating at a vastly reduced capacity. Either scenario only adds to the financial jeopardy faced by the theatre. In addition, there will be a further challenge to build confidence amongst a traditionally older audience demographic, so being able to demonstrate safeguarding measures will be essential to the re-opening plan. Attracting younger audiences who may feel more inclined to visit the theatre in the coming months is an opportunity, but one which will also require resource to develop new ways of reaching these non-attenders.

There are also other impacts on the **cultural and creative life** of Torbay:

- Long planned cultural developments have been postponed and may struggle to re-start. Examples include: Torre Abbey Museum and the *Vigilance* historic sailing vessel, both of which had been green lit through an initial expression of interest phase to the NLHF; plans for a Devon and Torbay cultural education partnership application; and Torbay's *Creative People & Places* consortium application. The cumulative total of these advanced proposals is in the millions of pounds.
- The International Agatha Christie Festival, supported by the Arts Council among others, was cancelled for 2020, and moved to 2021. The loss of programme has impacted local business engagement, international and local audiences, and participants at a crucial time for IACF. This is one example of cancelled cultural activity which has a direct financial hit to the tourism economy.

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- We know from representatives of the faith communities that churches are losing over £250,000 per month across Torbay from lost income. At a time when volunteer and faith communities have played an important role in helping vulnerable people this is especially concerning.
  - As well as tangible financial losses, there are detrimental impacts on community cohesion and general wellbeing. So not only the cessation of all physical creative and cultural activities, but much of the coordinating work undertaken to close gaps, build networks and engage those on the margins is at risk of being undone, as funding becomes restricted to pandemic response only.

## **2. How effectively has the support provided by DCMS, other Government departments and arms-length bodies addressed the sector's needs?**

Organisations like Arts Council England (ACE), the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), National Lottery Community Fund, and Sport England responded effectively to the crisis, and demonstrated sector leadership. Grants and loans to tackle the immediate impact have been beneficial. Bounce Back loans available to qualifying businesses have been appreciated. The Self Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) has been straightforward to use, though commentators have stressed it would have helped if this had been actioned earlier.

ACE was swift in responding which was very welcome. It was speedy in sharing information and re-purposing grants to help the cultural sector. Advice on how to make applications was clear and where additional clarifications were needed this was provided. Torbay Culture was able to apply and secure an ACE emergency grant, 2/3 of which is aimed at supporting external partners (local culture sector recovery) and one third to help with lost income, meaning we can continue employing staff to December. NLHF has likewise reached out and engaged with grant recipients to keep them updated. Its flexibility in respect of our work (the Fund is lead sponsor of Great Place Scheme) has been much appreciated.

Some **collateral impact** has been the sudden postponing or closing of existing funding programmes as referred to earlier, specifically, *Creative People & Places* (ACE) and NLHF grants. Decisions were communicated to us, and the urgency and unprecedented nature of the crisis meant this was understandable. The resulting impact is that work which had been done over a period of many months, with multiple partners, has been put on hold. The opportunity may not arise again for some time, or be delayed by 12 months or more, and the partnerships may not be sustained. If arms length bodies are not resourced in the recovery period, then the likely loss to localities like Torbay may be quantified in the millions of pounds over several years.

In regard to government and DCMS specifically, in the early weeks of the emergency, messaging was less visible than the messaging from sector bodies (e.g. ACE, NLHF, Sport England, Creative Industries Federation). The DCMS decision on 20 May to appoint a Commissioner for Cultural Recovery & Renewal (Neil Mendoza) to lead a taskforce was welcome. The proposal to include representation from the regions and arms length bodies is positive. We and local partners would very much like to be involved in this, informing the task force's planning, and helping to ensure relevance to coastal areas and the south west cultural ecology.

In general it feels as though government has become less clear as the crisis has evolved (e.g. the decision to avoid comparisons with other nations which appear to have managed the crisis more competently is unfortunate – it erodes confidence in government). Some strong views came through to us that *‘the government had been too slow to prepare’* and engage with the threat of COVID-19, and this relaxed approach had left others (including arms length bodies) having to work much harder to respond. There are local voices feeling that the cultural sector, which is so essential to help the economy of the UK, and tourism especially, has been neglected in the government’s emergency response.

### **3. What will the likely long-term impacts of Covid-19 be on the sector, and what support is needed to deal with those?**

Whilst the question asks that we focus on longer term, there is an immediate request: **Understanding ‘unlocking’ guidance is important.** What do the measures look like in a theatre or in a museum? As well as tackling this collectively locally (so we can reassure audiences through a consistent approach) DCMS should be providing interpretation of the general guidance specific to the respective sectors. In the short term, guidance on how venues may be permitted to work flexibly before any ‘official dates’ for their sector reopening later in the year would be valuable (e.g. a venue could open for specific production activity or alternative community use if supported and guided).

Longer-term, one major, though as yet indeterminate, impact is the **loss of confidence in the public** to attend, participate in, and enjoy culture. The resulting economic impact will be easier to measure over time, however the loss of cultural capital for the UK may be harder and take longer to appreciate.

Linked to this is the risk that the **duration of the recovery period** is underestimated. Given the value to ‘UK plc’ of arts, heritage, creative industries, and cultural tourism, the impact looks likely to extend over time: Future projects and plans will be cancelled; audiences will lack confidence, or money, to participate; guidance will be fragmented and harder to implement; and cultural organisations in the regions will be unable to weather the financial loss until the economy, and nation, recovers.

**Travel restrictions** will decimate those visitor economies that rely on international audiences, and possibly erode confidence among the public. The potential immediate confidence that the government is in once sense ‘seen to be acting’ (e.g. proposing 14 day quarantine at the frontier), will be offset by a question of ‘then how safe are large gatherings’, public events and larger venues.

Other observations reflected to us are concerns that there will be a **‘de-prioritisation of culture’**, locally or nationally. The language of the merits of ‘arts subsidy’ may be resurrected, instead of the progressive approach which is about cultural investment in people, places and quality of life, including sustainable development which helps communities come together.

There will be major **repair and maintenance bills** coming in which impact cultural organisations. For example, CICs which manage Council owned assets and run them as public cultural spaces will find the

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lost income from the pandemic means they will not be able to meet the repairs that they are expected to undertake on buildings which in many cases are historic. This deferred impact needs to be understood and mitigated; it will be happening across regions. Another deferred impact is the **time** it takes organisations to create, curate and originate content. Exhibitions, performances and events need planning and development. This may in some cases be possible during the social distancing, but often this cannot take place under these circumstances.

**Employment concerns, community confidence, and insecurity** are considerable: There is a profound sense of insecurity in large parts of the creative and cultural sector. Many people work portfolio careers, with a mixture of employed (PAYE), self employed and / or zero hours work. A majority of roles in the local culture sector are occupied by women, who also are more likely to be care givers. This situation gives rise to those people being especially vulnerable to economic and social impacts of the pandemic: lack of employment security = reduced household income and therefore = adverse impact on households.

Early indications are that creatives who are impacted in such a way will seek to work outside the cultural and creative sectors, accepting other work if it is available in the hope it may be less exposed to adverse events. With a lack of work opportunities in coastal towns (as other flexible jobs which often can accommodate care-giving are also adversely impact in a tourism area like Torbay) means there is a greater risk of unemployment, and a rise in negative social impacts. This gives rise to a **depletion of the creative talent** and cultural activity as people leave the sector to seek less precarious employment.

The damage to the local cultural sector will have a related impact on neighbourhoods, where culture and heritage has played an important cohesive role. The place of culture in volunteering, inter-generational activities, encouraging child-friendly places and spaces, building trust and respect with different communities is extensive. Having government recognise this and commit to help local areas is important.

The fact that many culture sector organisations are further down the unlocking 'chain' is an issue; this means longer periods of no income, increasing the risk to their survival. Major cultural assets like Shakespeare's Globe face the possibility of not reopening and established theatres like Southampton Nuffield have gone into administration. There is a real shudder of anxiety running throughout smaller organisations in the regions when these notable losses are felt.

There are concerns about future **skills retention and talent** attraction: Cultural life of the area plays an important role in encouraging people to return to the area, viewing Torbay as somewhere that you can build a career in creative industries and innovation (through opportunities like the South Devon College Hi-Tech & Digital Centre). The ability to retain talent in the locality will be reduced, as the historic perception of having to leave the south west to seek creative career opportunities 'up country' is revived.

The **economic impact** on visitor economy is a major impact, perhaps the largest. The arts, heritage, natural and built environment all play a central role in the area's appeal. In recent years great strides have been made to challenge and change perceptions, improve the cultural offer, and strengthen the Torbay Culture – evidence to the *Parliamentary Inquiry into the Impact of COVID-19 on the DCMS sectors, May 2020*

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resilience of the cultural sector. The COVID-19 crisis has set this back a great deal, and the recovery period is likely to be protracted. The two main reasons are lack of confidence in visitors and locals in feeling safe and secure; and the lack of capacity in businesses (large and small) in the culture sector and beyond to provide the same range of offer as before (i.e. gradual rebuilding and repositioning of services, organisations and business).

#### **4. What lessons can be learnt from how DCMS, arms-length bodies and the sector have dealt with Covid-19?**

There are several observations made which we ask the Committee to examine during this inquiry and where possible to explore with government:

- Individual creatives and arts organisations have shown themselves to be incredibly versatile and resilient throughout this period. Understanding how these groups can be utilised in other areas of the recovery effort should be carefully assessed, and how they may be supported to play these vital community roles.
- Given local government resources remain constricted, cultural organisations and individuals should be enabled and supported to contribute to areas such as education, health and social wellbeing. Help for people to enact the good practice during recovery is needed. (e.g. help for organisers of events, which can build local confidence, to deliver those activities. This is needed because local government may not have the capacity to help as much as it had before).
- The proposals for ‘arts on prescription’, and social prescribing have been discussed extensively since the Secretary of State for Health & Social Care announced the national academy in October 2019. The lack of funding for actually delivering this means patients can only benefit if artistic, cultural and community organisations give this support for free. Investment in this is required, and the COVID-19 crisis has illustrated this is needed more than ever. The benefit ratio to cost can be quantified (several existing pieces of research are available across the nation) and this can help with the social and community recovery from the pandemic.
- During the first days of the lockdown we know that businesses were delaying employment (stalling seasonal contract recruitment, not calling in zero hours staff), and in some cases terminating temporary employment. The furlough scheme introduced shortly after lockdown has been a life line for many businesses and employees, though the exit strategy is not yet clear to people on the ground. Ministers and MPs are not consistent in their messaging and this is creating avoidable confusion, and erodes trust. We urge the government to remain flexible and responsive as the ‘unlocking’ evolves and to be clear in its messages.
- The ‘domino effect’ resulting in a lost future: There is anxiety in the cultural sector that arms length bodies (like the Arts Council) which have endeavoured to move swiftly and react to need, may have to manage with reduced funding in future to mitigate the costs associated with managing the emergency. That would have a tail, resulting in less future investment in areas of greatest need.

The **value of smaller organisations** (charities, CICs, CIOs etc) during the pandemic has been illustrated. Community spaces, theatres, libraries and museums as gathering places for people have been

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undervalued and underappreciated. The closure of these (completely understandable during the lockdown) has exacerbated isolation, loneliness, and a lack of community cohesion. As they all searched for new ways to operate during the lockdown, and reposition themselves during the ‘unlocking’ phase, the need for government to ensure they can continue to operate during *recovery* is essential. They bring people together across demographics and this must not be lost which is a risk if they close permanently because they have been starved of resources to function. One quote we received from a local arts and theatre society said:

*‘It is vital that arts and cultural activities are allowed to flourish... They will be greatly needed for mental health and physical activities to help people recover from the virus crisis. The cultural industries also generate vast amounts of revenue for governments and the pull of culture has been well established in tourism areas. If the arts sector is not supported and encouraged then there will be huge knock on effects, both on local lives and the tourism industry’*

### **5. How might the sector evolve after Covid-19, and how can DCMS support such innovation to deal with future challenges?**

Commentators have expressed a desire that government, DCMS and arms length bodies support the **enabling infrastructure**. Supporting organisations like Torbay Culture and others to convene networks, connect with the bigger picture developments, and support a shared recovery system is very important. The value of these ‘coordinating voices’ to advocate and assist has been evidenced during the crisis.

Commentators have said they need **specific support** – the theatre and performance industry for example requires clarity from insurance companies relating to touring productions. A healthy touring economy will play its role in recovery, and building public confidence in using venues. DCMS could take a lead on this nationally. There is a need to remember that the cultural sector is different in the regions to London. Whilst places like Torbay are reliant on visitors, the cultural sector audiences are not as visitor driven as in London (e.g. theatre, museum, gallery attendance remains predominantly residents).

Across organisations large and small a key message has been a call for **clarity of advice, guidance and protocols** (e.g. implementing ‘COVID-19 secure’ kite marks). This is essential and within the government control. Lack of clarity sows doubt and there has been a lack of consistency in how sectors/industries are treated (e.g. cinemas vs. theatres). Being clear about this in the recovery phase is vital.

Support for **non-traditional venues** (village halls, libraries, community spaces, grassroots model) should be continued. Arms length bodies have been moving to this position (ACE new Let’s Create Strategy, the NLHF strategic funding framework etc). DCMS should enable this to continue, and accelerate.

Evidence gathering:

- Torbay Culture emailed key contacts across the culture and creative sector on 19 March 2020 asking for information which would illustrate the early impact – this was shared with colleagues in TDA’s economic development team to inform the local picture, and relayed to Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund to help inform their emergency response



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planning. Individuals have continued to share their experience over the subsequent weeks as the pandemic has unfolded.

- Torbay Community Development Trust conducted a survey throughout with voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors during April and this included some culture sector responses.
- Torbay Culture has convened weekly zoom calls throughout the crisis with culture sector individuals and organisational leads, and invited information from those contacts who contributed to this narrative. The zoom call on 13 May was dedicated to discussing this inquiry.
- Board members of Torbay Culture have been asked to comment and inform this response, as have partners in the Torbay Together strategic partnership.
- Organisations operating in Torbay - including TDA itself and Active Devon - will be submitting evidence relating to their areas of expertise and where they are better placed to comment.

Thank you for considering this contribution.

Martin Thomas

Executive Director, Torbay Culture

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[martin.thomas@tda.uk.net](mailto:martin.thomas@tda.uk.net)

Torbay Culture,

TDA, Tor Hill House

Union Street

TORQUAY TQ2 5QW