

TORBAY CULTURE - SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

October 2022 – October 2023



Torbay Culture was established in 2015 to progress [Enjoy, Talk, Do, Be - the ten-year cultural strategy](#) for Torbay and its communities. The strategy is focused on people and place-shaping, with a mission to enable *the cultural and creative development of our home, designated as the English Riviera UNESCO Global Geopark; and make Torbay a better place in which to live, work, learn and visit.*

The independent advisory Board of Torbay Culture works with Torbay Council and partners across the bay, to implement the strategy to transform cultural provision and engagement in the area. www.torbayculture.org The executive role was transferred to Torbay Council in December 2021; prior to this Torbay Culture was hosted in TDA. Torbay Culture Board members attend the Place Leadership Board, the Destination Management Group, and the Geopark Management Group, among other fora.

The cultural strategy has three aims:

1: increase engagement and participation in cultural opportunities in Torbay

- Build from the community as well as bringing in new and diverse experiences
- Support creative and cultural learning
- Harness the health and well-being benefits of culture

2: maximise the distinctive natural and built cultural assets of Torbay

- Protect and enhance cultural places and spaces for culture
- Develop a year-round season-based rhythm of cultural provision
- Contribute to safe and sustainable living, working and visiting

3: ensure joined-up cultural development is a key contributor to economic, social and environmental development in Torbay

- Strengthen support for the creative and cultural economy and the advantages it brings
- Share knowledge, skills and resources to diversify and grow the income base
- Make links with and culture proof other policies, strategies and plans

During 2022 - 2023 we remained focused on developing strategic partnerships, whilst ensuring progress of specific programmes such as the government's **Cultural Development Fund** centred on Paignton Picture House. Strengthening Torbay's working relationships and partnerships with national lead bodies for culture and heritage – including the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Arts Council England and Historic England – has been a priority. Torbay Culture and Torbay Council applied for and secured dedicated funding from the Heritage Fund to initiate a bespoke **local heritage grant scheme** which was confirmed in 2023. This is enabling grassroots activity to be supported in Brixham, Paignton and Torquay through an open grant scheme. The first round of Torbay local heritage grant projects is now underway. The aim of the scheme is to encourage more people to access and participate in local heritage and raise awareness of the bay's **UNESCO** Global Geopark designation.

In September 2023 the Board and Executive team of the National Lottery Heritage Fund spent time in Torbay visiting locations and meeting people. The landmark **Heritage Places** strategic initiative was announced by the Heritage Fund in October, and Torbay is among the first nine places in the UK to be supported. Torbay Culture and the Council worked closely with the Heritage Fund in the months preceding the announcement, and much of the national news coverage focused on Torbay. Press coverage included The Observer, BBC Radio 4 Front Row, Museums + Heritage, and Arts Professional, as well as local media. During 2023, we actively supported the revalidation process for the UNESCO Global Geopark. This was successfully secured following the quadrennial visit and inspection over the summer. We have also been participating in the resilience work looking at audience development by The Audience Agency for the UK National Commission for UNESCO.

During 2024 our focus will be to:

- Deliver the development phase of Heritage Places – this will involve local partners and the public being involved in the process for deciding investments as part of the new 10-year partnership.
- Updating the cultural strategy and vision to reflect the opportunities available through Heritage Places and the Levelling Up Partnership.
- Continue delivery of the Cultural Development Fund (CDF2) investment at the Paignton Picture House and close working relationships with Arts Council England.
- Continuing to work closely with the Heritage Fund, Arts Council, and others to consolidate achievements, and strengthen future opportunities for Torbay’s culture, creative, and heritage sectors.

A summary of Torbay Culture’s actions during the 12 months between October 2022 and October 2023

Examples of actions are given by way of illustration. The five **Priorities**, in capitals, were agreed by the Board of Torbay Culture

KEEP GROWING - CULTURAL AND CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT FOR OUR HOME

Encouraging more place-based cultural programmes, including local and invited artists, and a range of cultural and community organisations. This needs to be **popular and accessible, as well as new and diverse**.

ACTIONS:

- Delivery of the supporting programme for the **Cultural Development Fund** (CDF) in and around Paignton includes *Wide Open* (coordinated by Filament Works) and skills development opportunities through South Devon College. The College is also leading on digital engagement, which will link to the Torbay Story vision.
 - The artwork celebrating **Agatha Christie** commissioned for Torquay harbourside will be completed during 2024. The location has been decided, and it will be the centrepiece of the wider public works taking place there. [Elisabeth Hadley](#) was selected by popular vote in 2022; a further public vote during the Agatha Christie Festival in September 2023 chose the book – *And Then There Were None* - which Dame Agatha will be holding in her hands as part of the finished bronze.
 - As part of the national **CDF Learning Network**, we actively participated in knowledge sharing and evaluation, including *Re-imagining Place* (Worcester, March 2023), and as host for the CDF Network visit in September 2023. Case-studies about our work in cultural development and place-shaping are to be published on [Cultural Placemaking](#).
 - Completion of Hospital Rooms’ [Torbay Project](#) - transformation of three mental health units at Torbay Hospital, supported by Healthwatch, Torbay Culture and partners.
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LIVING WELL - SHAPING A BETTER FUTURE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Supporting creative interventions which improve social outcomes and opportunities for young people. This supports young peoples’ health and wellbeing, specifically mental health and be devised through a forum of interested parties. It **builds on the ‘test and learn’ projects for culture, health & wellbeing**.

ACTIONS:

- Young people are an important part of the CDF supporting programme, and this is an area that has been sustained through collaboration with Sound Communities, South Devon College, and others.
 - We continued to advocate to local government, NHS, public health and others, using the Torbay Culture evidence of [impact](#), and supported the [National Centre for Creative Health's](#) continuing call for evidence by providing examples and evaluation from pilot projects completed in Torbay (2023). Lack of funding for culture, health and wellbeing activity has restricted capacity to initiate new work.
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ENCOURAGING A RENAISSANCE FOR OUR HISTORIC BUILDINGS, VENUES AND SPACES

Developing cultural community spaces - including innovative thinking about historic assets - working with Torbay Council and other partners. This complements the town centre improvement plans, and connects to the [Torbay Heritage Strategy](#) and action plan.

ACTIONS:

- The new 10-year [Heritage Places](#) partnership with the National Lottery Heritage Fund is a step change in supporting Torbay's natural, built and intangible heritage. Torbay Culture worked closely with the Heritage Fund throughout 2023 to inform the Fund's decision to include Torbay among the first 9 places.
 - The **CDF** investment in [Torbay's Cultural Development – Paignton Picture House](#) is aligned with investment from Future High Streets, Historic England and other funders. The Council and Torbay Culture view this as an important part of improving the bay's cultural offer and historic assets, and contributing to Torbay Story.
 - The **Torbay local heritage grant scheme** opened in June 2023 for the first round of applications. A local decision panel met to decide grant awards measured against the published criteria and offered the first 12 awards in August 2023.
 - We supported the development and appointment of a new role in Planning – Principal Historic Environment Officer, an important post for Torbay.
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THE ENVIRONMENT – CELEBRATING AND RESPECTING OUR UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARK

We want to maximise the opportunities of the English Riviera UNESCO Global Geopark through creativity and innovation. It is the **canvas on which we all live our lives**, and the bay's unique and distinctive offer to visitors. This builds on Torbay Culture's earlier work (Eyeview, the cultural tourism development and regeneration-supported projects); as well as Geopark initiatives like The Rock Connects Us and the annual Geopark Festival.

ACTIONS:

- The Board of Torbay Culture and executive role proactively supported the successful **UNESCO** visit and revalidation process
 - We continue to champion the UNESCO designation through strategic fora, with local and external partners including Arts Council England, Heritage Fund and others, and in the English Riviera Destination Management Plan, and have proactively ensured the UNESCO designation is included in key programmes (like the local heritage grant scheme), and in discussions with external funders
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CULTURAL TOURISM ON THE ENGLISH RIVIERA

Working with partners including English Riviera Business Improvement District (ERBIDCo) and Council to support activity which **underpins the visitor economy for the area**. This builds on our cultural tourism product development; and the English Riviera Destination Management Plan.

ACTIONS:

- We continued to support ambitions by engaging with the **Destination Management Group** and in the delivery of the Destination Management Plan.
- Worked with the **Agatha Christie Festival** to plan longer term, including advocating for increased investment – Torbay Council is supporting festivals in 2023/24, and ERBID and Arts Council supported the 2023 festival. Securing the long-term sustainability is the next step. The Executive Director joined the Festival Board in August 2023.

During 2022/23 Torbay Culture's activities and programmes were supported with investment from the following:

- Torbay Council funds and employs the Executive Director Torbay Culture.
- The Heritage Fund communities grant administered via the National Lottery Heritage Fund (2023-25) enables the Torbay local heritage grant scheme to operate, including advice, evaluation, and support for grant recipients.
- The Cultural Development Fund (CDF) is a Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) fund, administered by Arts Council England (during 2022-25) and resources the capital works and some resource activity, including the supporting programme.
- Since 2020, we have directly applied for and been awarded £3.5m for culture, and supported bids securing a further £2m; the new Heritage Places will see a share of £200m come to Torbay as one of 20 places during 2024-33.

We are grateful to those who have supported and collaborated with us during the past year.

Jacob Brandon, Chair of Torbay Culture and Martin Thomas, Executive Director

<https://www.torbayculture.org/news>

<https://twitter.com/TorbayCulture>

Images (from left to right): Agatha Christie artwork by Elisabeth Hadley takes shape (Torbay Culture) / "Heritage Places" (Heritage Fund) / Visit by Stuart McLeod, Director, England, London & South, Heritage Fund and Lord Parkinson, DCMS Minister (Sam Swann/Torbay Council) / Picture House façade (PPHT) / Playing in the Streets (Tonic Creatives & Appleton Event photography)

