

English Riviera Destination Management Group

Meeting Notes

Wednesday 2nd December 2020, 10.30am-12pm

Agenda

1. Welcome & apologies

RD welcomed all to the meeting, introduction made for Simon Pinder, Beach Services and Coastline Manager, Torbay Council.

Attendees: Rebecca Davies, TDA; Lynn Stephens, SDC (Chair); Martin Thomas, Torbay Culture; Nick Powe, English Riviera UNESCO Global Geopark; Steve Reynolds, TBF; Nicky Harding, Meet Devon; Cllr Swithin Long, Torbay Council; Jim Parker, Torbay Together; Gary Calland, National Trust; Damian Offer, TCCT; Alan Denby, TDA.

Apologies: Carolyn Custerson, ERBIDCo; Adam Luscombe, Torbay Council.

Absent: Kevin Mowat, Torbay Council.

2. Minutes & actions from last meeting

RD went through the actions of the last meeting;

- p1, 4a, completed – NH gave an update on the conversations and feedback given to the Torbay Council Events Strategy and hopes to work in close partnership with Phil Black moving forward, there are lots of opportunities for Torbay.
- p2, 4b, update needed KM/AD/NP – AD updated: Local Motion doesn't support projects like the National Stoneage Centre, but could be for the Town Investment Plan. MT confirmed Torbay Community Development Trust is leading on a community engagement call, for Jan/Feb creative engagement which is more aligned with Local Motion.
Conversations followed regarding DMG involvement in future 'asks'; aligning to the Torbay administration priorities and pipeline, including 'premier destination' ambition which also feeds into the DMP review (later on the agenda). 'Big ticket' asks could be a national centre or skills etc. Moving forward there needs to be a Bay-wide approach, strategically joined up. SR agreed for this approach and giving the group a focus for projects. LS also agreed and for this to be a future agenda item. **Action LS**
- p2, 4d, updated needed KM – SP to give in the agenda
- p3, 5, completed

3. Partner Updates

- RD shared the partner updates report in advance with the agenda and asked if there were any key updates to give in the meeting.
- RD updated the group on an item in the report; we have been successful with the EOI submitted to VisitEngland for the domestic marketing campaign 'Escape the Everyday' and invited to full application stage, £75-£100k. The deadline is midnight tonight. RD is supporting tourism partners for a Devon bid, in partnership with English Riviera BID, Visit Devon and Destination Plymouth.

4. Discussion Points

a) Simon Pinder, Torbay Council

- RD asked SP to the meeting to give an update on Blue Flag and Seaside Awards sponsorship and also Goodrington water quality.

Firstly the awards:

- SP gave a background update on the awards, accredited by Keep Britain Tidy. There are two awards Blue Flag, Seaside Awards, (a combined award is also available). Torbay has held the awards for some time and Oddicombe has held the award for the longest time, (33 years, since the awards began in 1987).
- The awards have complex and set criteria, 33 items including quality of water, environmental, amenities, first aid and education.
- Costs of applications are c£750 per beach (prices vary on award type or combined).
- The accreditation period covers May-Sept or can be less with school holidays July-Sept.
- Audit and compliance takes place including secret shopper. No formal audit has taken place in three years, one was due this year but Covid stopped this taking place, so we are due.
- For past context, beach services used to be provided by Council staff, but these are now informally provided by businesses on site, verbal agreements only no contracts in place, which presents some risks.
- RD asked SP to summarise the plan for 2021 including sponsorship:
- SP: At the moment 10 seaside awards and 4 Blue Flag awards will be submitted, a like for like on last year. There may be opportunities for two additional awards at Preston and Meadfoot. The application deadline is 18.1.2021. Previously awards have been sponsored by Paignton Zoo/Living Coasts.
- ERBID has kindly stepped in to sponsor 2021 (agreed at last week's Board meeting); there was a funding gap and is also building into the next business plan for ERBID2 for the next five years from 2022. In addition, ERBID is looking to commission a consumer survey in early 2021 to identify the value of the awards, as we don't know how important these awards are to visitors when choosing a holiday destination.
- RD asked partners for any questions:
- LS asked why the ERBID stepped into sponsor this year's awards and also why they are included in the next business plan without knowing the evidence first. South Devon College would be interested in supporting in some way. RD commented this would need to be answered by CC. **Action CC/LS**
- SP also added Torbay Council is concerned with the risk of negative feedback and public pushback if the awards applications didn't go ahead. The time is right however for a survey to gather the evidence and decisions taken from the data.
- LS agreed, we need the evidence and feedback to make the decisions moving forward.

Goodrington Water Quality:

- SP confirmed Blue Flag awards water quality needs to be 'excellent', and gave some additional context: all bathing waters have legal requirements to be tested May-Sept with outcomes of 'excellent', 'good', 'sufficient', 'poor'. Torbay has four 'excellent', two 'good', one 'sufficient' (Goodrington) and zero 'poor'; annual ratings are then used for a set period of four years. This therefore presents any immediate high risk for Goodrington which currently sufficient and heading towards poor.
- Tests taken early this year showed increased readings from faecal matter which is mainly associated with dogs. It's likely this year's readings will be eliminated from the system so we have some time to make changes and improve the situation.

- The new task group which SP has formed has an actions matrix in place across 12 areas, including the stream which has a large catchment area. The team includes Torbay Council, Environment Agency and South West Water all supportive to help and all parties agree we don't want a poor rating - which would mean legally we have to erect signs and close the beach for four years. This would be extremely damaging to the destination.
- Cllr SL asked if it is likely to dog waste flowing into the catchment area? SP confirmed dog waste is the most likely cause, as faecal matter is highest in dog mess. Education – new bins, signs etc is needed and can easily be done.
- AT asked is the zoo a likely cause? SP confirmed the zoo is an area on the action plan to review and tests are taking place, in the past however it has been contamination free.
- RD asked SP to clarify next steps and what happens now: SP confirmed the team are working on the action plan and he is compiling a report by end of January. 12 areas have been identified and immediate improvements include new signs and bins to encourage people to pick up and bin dog waste. RD asked SP to stay in touch and to give an update for next meeting. **Action SP**

b) Year of the Coast – Martin Thomas

- MT referenced a national project Year of the Coast, which has been restructured due to the impacts of Covid, <https://englandscoast.com/en/lp/EnglishCoast2021>. The project is now 2021-2023, 2022 theme includes culture and we are having early thinking this could present an opportunity for Torbay to engage.
- For additional context 2022 is the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, Festival UK a collaborative of culture and creative events, plus the Commonwealth Games.
- RD has also contacted the project team and has a meeting scheduled next week to find out more about the project. Lead project partners are NCTA (National Coastal Tourism Academy) and the CCA (Coastal Communities Alliance) who we have connections with, opportunities could be promotions, content and building up recovery. This could be a project for the DMG and form part of the DMP review. RD will feedback for next meeting. **Action RD**
- AD added this supports place making and it's hard to know now what the opportunities are. Coast features on APPG and LGA interest groups, as well as NCTA CCA and VisitEngland VisitBritain.

c) DMP Review– Rebecca Davies

RD referred to the update given in the progress report:

DMP Evaluation – RD and Carl Wyard are discussing how best to review the DMP, in alignment with the HotSWLEP Recovery Plan and also Torbay's Reposition Plan. We recognise we need to streamline the Plan and associated actions, giving priorities, clear focus for the DMG. This process will commence in January, which will include the updated NCTA Resilience report – to include the impacts of Covid-19 and opportunities for growth, as well as alignment to the Gov's Tourism Sector Deal and Tourism Zone. Working with LS, it may be we create a DMG sub working group to help us with this process, anyone interested please contact me. **Action: All**

LS confirmed this was the right approach and that any suggested projects/opportunities will align.

RD asked partners if they were happy with this approach, **all partners agreed.**

5. A.O.B

- NH – suggested Torbay Council’s Events Strategy to be referenced in the DMP review, aligning with events, conferences and incentives market; opportunity for Torbay to host, aligning with growth in market and also Agatha Christie Festival.
- SR – commented it’s hard to know what comes first, applying for funding or shaping up a project, don’t want to miss out. Also commented on understanding the Town Deal and what it means to the DMG/P, what comes next with the process and when we will see things changing;
- Cllr SL – clarified some points on the Town Deal, focussing on ‘bringing the area up’ and addressing long term issues. Work includes Rock Walk and Pavilion repairs, plus new events base (near Riviera Wheel), Upton Park and town centre improvements. Handing over to AD;
- AD – will share project link in the minutes and urges all partners to read and refresh on the details of the Town Deal and Town Investment Plan, **Action AD/RD**>
<https://www.torbay.gov.uk/leisure-sports-and-community/regeneration/torquay-towns-fund/>
The process can be lengthy and takes time to see development and improvements, however three projects are underway. The next steps for the Town Deal is submitting the business cases which will start from Q1 next year and into next 2-3 years. In the short term progress may not be obvious and may take three-five years+ for completion, a challenge in the public realm. Conversations are being had now about how these projects require additional maintenance and how this can be afforded in increasingly difficult times and budget restrictions. It may be corporate sponsorship is needed in the future and a partnership approach is adopted. AD added that Torquay harbour improvements may come forward quickly for winter 21/22. There are opportunities and coherent alignment with the DMP review and the Council’s ambition of a ‘premier resort’, the wider challenge is how to make this happen.
- SR – further added, what can we, the DMG to champion, there is an opportunity here for focus. Torbay is a great place for investment right now. AD confirmed the Town Deal is fixed with a project plan in place. SR elaborated on the idea suggested at this week’s TBF Breakfast Bites, a Centre for Watersports is a great one which could be worth exploring and one which DMG could support;
- LS –Partners should send any ideas through to RD whilst fresh on their minds and for inclusion in the DMP review. **Action ALL**
- MT –these conversations echo that of Torbay Culture. Agree to sharing ideas for future thinking and encouraged all to look at the details of the Town Investment Plan.

6. Date of Next Meeting

- RD asked partners if they were happy with the current frequency and structure, **all agreed.**
- RD will issue the next meeting approx. 6 weeks’ time> **Action Completed, next meeting Wednesday 3rd February, 10.30am-12pm, via Zoom.**