

REPORT OF Economic Development Manager

To: Full Council

Subject: The Torridge Place Story

Date: 15th July, 2024

Reference:

- **PURPOSE OF REPORT:** To obtain Member approval for the Torridge Place Story

1. INTRODUCTION

In response to the findings in the Levelling Up White Paper, the Levelling Up Secretary of State established a new place-based approach to policy making. Levelling Up Partnerships were introduced in March 2023 and at the Spring Budget, the Government committed to rolling out the £400m programme to provide bespoke place-based regeneration in an initial twenty of England's areas most in need of levelling up over 2023-24 and 2024-25.

As part of the preparation phase for the [Levelling Up Partnership](#) with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), Torridge District Council was asked to prepare a strong "Place Story" for Torridge. The focus for this was to demonstrate how Torridge can capitalise on its emerging strengths in opportunity sectors such as clean maritime and green energy, balanced against the ongoing needs, challenges and growth needed in bedrock sectors such as tourism, agriculture and manufacturing. And through this process therefore address the significant challenges that have hindered the fortunes of the District and the communities within it.

This report therefore outlines the nature of the Place Story for adoption by Torridge District Council.

The General Election timing forced a pause in progress with the Levelling Up Partnership. However, a strong, adopted Place Story will enable the Torridge Place Board to lobby for an improved delivery approach to ensure true long-term impact of the funding without any short-term political-cycle-related timing constraints.

2. REPORT

A core objective for the Place Story is to clearly demonstrate through data and evidence how sustainable and inclusive growth in Torridge can make a positive impact on the four metrics of the Levelling Up Partnership, benefit our communities and also UK Plc as part of the Levelling Up Agenda.

The Place Story is therefore designed to sit alongside and supplement core documents such as the North Devon and Torridge Economic Strategy (2024 – 2029) and the North Devon and Torridge Local Plan (2014 – 2031), whilst also supporting the development of the next Local Plan. It will also act to inform external partners and to raise awareness of



investment and support requirements needed to set an ambitious pathway for long-term change towards a more sustainable and prosperous future.

Significant consultation has been undertaken as part of the Place Story development, which has been overseen by the Torridge Place Board but managed by Torridge District Council's Chief Executive, Head of Communities and Place and Economic Development team. The Place Board contains representation from key regional and national stakeholders, including North Devon Council, Devon County Council, The Crown Estate, Department for Work and Pensions, North Devon Biosphere, Northern Devon Futures, Devon and Cornwall Police Royal Devon University Healthcare Foundation Trust and also key employers across the district. Engagement has also been undertaken with Mayors and Town Clerks as well as directly with DLUHC. The Place Board is Chaired by Paul Coles from South West Business Council.

The outputs of the work will be used in funding discussions with the government, engagement with potential investors, and also as the basis of the district's Levelling Up Partnership negotiations, thus serving as a framework for cooperation between national government, local leadership and the private sector in Torridge.

3. IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

None at this point.

Financial Implications

None at this point.

Human Resources Implications

Delivery of the Place Story's ambitions will primarily be resourced by the Economic Development, Major Projects and Estates teams. This will also require significant input from the Chief Executive and Head of Communities and Place as well as from other departments where required, including Legal, Finance, Communications, Human Resources and Planning.

Sustainability/Biodiversity Implications

Where proposed capital developments require Planning there will be a requirement to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain.

Equality/Diversity

Strategy delivery will need to ensure that it takes into consideration a range of social groupings and demographics in order to further equality and diversity, and creating opportunities for all. It also aligns with the ambition stated in the Economic Strategy to deliver a Just Transition, with benefits being felt across the community rather than widening divides.



Risk Management

- Full implications and risk will be dependent upon the detailed funding settlement provided as part of the Levelling Up Partnership.
- The Torridge Place Story does not commit Torridge District Council to any specific actions.
- Communication with key stakeholders and communities will be key to managing risk, along with a clear set of objectives to deliver wider economic, social and environmental benefits.

Compliance with Policies and Strategies

This project delivers upon a significant range of local and national strategies:

- **The North Devon and Torridge Local Plan, 2018 - 2031** stipulates:
 - “Within northern Devon, high-value jobs in business, education and research, those supporting a low carbon economy and other key growth sectors will be encouraged in sustainable locations”.
- Laying early foundations for a **new North Devon and Torridge Local Plan** in order to enable delivery of the opportunities and needs to unlock growth and collective impact.
- The **Torridge District Council Strategic Plan, 2024-29**, supporting the advancement of the “Local Economy” aspects of the Plan.
- The **North Devon and Torridge Economic Strategy 2024 - 2029** which includes Clean Maritime and Green Energy as a key cluster for development.
- Crucially these proposals seek to further the ambitions and local profile of the **Torridge District Climate Emergency declaration (2019)**, with the drive to further the Net Zero ambition locally, regionally and internationally at the heart of the ambition.
- The **Devon Carbon Plan**
- **Clean Maritime Plan 2050**
- **North Devon and Torridge Clean Maritime Growth Vision**
- The **Great South West Energy Prospectus**

Data Protection (GDPR) Implications

No personal data has been collated / collected.

Climate Change

Torridge District Council's Climate Emergency declaration and the government's Net Zero agenda are at the forefront of consideration when developing these proposals, with jobs created, GVA impacts, skill improvements and also carbon savings all being key metrics moving forward.



Ward Member Views

n/a as across all of Torridge. Members were consulted as part of a Place Story workshop on 11th March, 2024.

Leader of the Council Views

“The Levelling Up Partnership has been a process of working with a range of key stakeholders locally and with government. I feel that this document now captures our sense of place really well, balancing the known challenges with the potential for good growth ahead, whilst also making it clear that we cannot achieve that potential without real partnership working moving forward.” Councillor Ken James.

Chair of the Torridge Place Board Views

“The Place Story is a crucial piece of work for Torridge and the wider northern Devon economy. It speaks to both our heritage and our future. It gives us much to be proud of and even more to be excited by. My hope is that it plays a core role in providing both inspiration and aspiration for those living in Torridge. As Chair of the Torridge Place Board, I wish to extend my thanks to those that sit on the Torridge Place Board; to Ken James for his leadership of the council and to Steve Hearse and his team whose work on economic development is being hugely well received by key external stakeholders. Finally, a “thank you” to Nicola Murphy-Evans at Inner Circle for helping us to pull together widespread insight as part of the Place Story realisation”. Paul Coles, Chair of the Torridge Place Board.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The Torridge Place Story clearly outlines a range of opportunities whilst also demonstrating potential constraints and challenges which need to be addressed through both investment and partnership working. This includes a requirement to continue to work with partners to progress the level of detail within the district’s investable project propositions in order to be able to attract inward investment, both within the public and private sectors.

This will include the strengthening and improvement of inward investment processes, including both how these investable opportunities are presented to potential investors and both pipelines and policies for those investments to ensure that we can foster the right growth for the good of the local economy, community and environment.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members:

- Adopt the Torridge Place Story



