

REPORT OF Economic Development Manager
To: Full Council
Subject: North Devon and Torridge Clean Maritime Growth Vision
Date: 15th July, 2024 **Reference:**

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

- To obtain Member approval for the North Devon and Torridge Clean Maritime Growth Vision

1. INTRODUCTION

The Clean Maritime and Green Energy sectors have been specifically identified as a key growth cluster as part of the North Devon and Torridge Economy Strategy. The emerging Clean Maritime Growth vision and development programme for North Devon and Torridge.

The objective for this Growth Vision is to provide a more detailed overview of the opportunity that will enable the Councils to present the core reasons and purpose for investment in the region in the clean maritime sector and its linkages to green energy such as FLOW and green hydrogen, and as such to move beyond discussion of potential and to position the region as investment-ready, both from public and private sources.

2. REPORT

The £15.6m Levelling Up Fund award to the [Appledore Clean Maritime Innovation Centre](#) (January 2023) has provided a clear catalyst to the region's ambitions within the maritime sector. The project has opened further doors for the wider North Devon and Torridge areas, which it is now crucial to capitalise upon.

The Crown Estate's [Celtic Sea Floating Offshore Wind](#) programme will take place in waters between the coastline off Torridge, North Devon, North Cornwall and South Wales. With leasing round 5 now underway, expected to complete in 2025, it is essential that potential opportunities are maximised for the good of the local economy and community within North Devon and Torridge, as well as to protect and enhance the local environment. Connected to this, the production and offtake use of green hydrogen (created using certified green electricity) also presents a major opportunity for use of excess green energy being on-shored to sub-stations within Torridge and North Devon. The northern Devon region is currently considered one of the key growth areas in this sector as a result of the potential volume of green energy to be cabled into district over the next 10 years.

Significant work is also underway in the region with regards to nationally-significant seaweed cultivation. The [Algapelago](#) seaweed farm has the largest MMO approved

farm area in the UK and early-stage investigations have also been undertaken into the feasibility of the creation of an Aquaculture Enterprise Zone in North Devon and Torridge waters. This not only provides cultivation opportunities but also opens up R&D avenues and the local development of a seaweed bi-product industry, including around agri-feeds and for pharmaceutical purposes. However, work from the Torridge Place Story emphasised the local ambition to not only produce raw materials but then to add value. As such, it has been important to see the sector not simply as one which grows, but also one which is able to support Research and Development / value-add processes locally to create higher-salaried, higher-skilled employment opportunities for our local communities.

It was also considered essential that this report explore the art of the realistically possible, especially ahead of the Celtic Sea FLOW leasing round and the requirement for developers to deliver upon social value obligations, including for diversity and skills. But that realism needed to consider the natural constraints of our region, reducing the appropriateness of any larger-scale involvement, such as with the turbines, due to the lack of space, lack of deep water port and also the limited infrastructure and inevitable impact on the community that it would have had, creating a clearer focus on innovation opportunities and ongoing Operations and Maintenance (O&M).

The Clean Maritime Growth Vision therefore has a series of key audiences which needed to be balanced, between attracting external investment and inward-migration of job creation alongside the need to benefit existing businesses within the region who have the potential to expand and capitalise on these forthcoming opportunities

3. IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

None at this point.

Financial Implications

None at this point.

Human Resources Implications

Delivery of the Clean Maritime Growth Vision will primarily be resourced by the Clean Maritime and Green Energy Officer, appointed through North Devon+ to work across North Devon and Torridge and funded by the Shared Prosperity Fund. This Officer will work closely with the two Economic Development teams, as well as with other departments where required, including Legal, Finance, Major Projects, Estates, Communications, Human Resources and Planning.

The Clean Maritime and Green Energy Officer will also liaise with public and private sector stakeholders to ensure ongoing growth in regional activity.

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

- The Clean Maritime Growth Vision 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”.
- 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**
- 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.

Lead Member Views

Consulted- 28.6.2024

Council Leader Views

Date of Consultation- 28.6.2024

“The blue economy is a major opportunity for both Torrington and North Devon, working collectively with government and the private sector. Our region has a unique moment in time to be real leaders in these fields and it’s now hugely important that we not only act boldly now but also ensure real benefits are felt for our economy, community and the wellbeing of our environment- onshore and offshore.” Councillor Ken James

4. CONCLUSIONS

The Clean Maritime Growth Vision aims to position North Devon and Torrington within a wider regional and national picture in order to achieve investment, job creation and local benefit. However, the vision also lays out the wider challenges in order to further develop proposals, along with the requirement for further development funding to secure larger-scale investment. This will form a central part of the role of the Clean Maritime and Green Energy Officer, with the development of a subsequent Action Plan to progress this cluster strand of the Economic Strategy.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members:

- Adopt the Clean Maritime and Green Energy Growth Vision

