

REPORT OF **Cultural Development Officer**
To: **Community and Resources**
Subject: **Bideford Cultural Investment Plan**
Date: **16th September, 2024**

Reference:

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

For C & R committee to note and support the new Bideford Cultural Investment Plan

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2022 Full Council adopted Flourishing Culture: The Northern Devon Culture Strategy 2022-2027. Cultural Investment Plans for the market towns in Torridge and North Devon are one of the deliverables under the strategy. This report aims to outline the first step in delivering those plans through the Bideford Cultural Investment Plan.

A Cultural Investment Plan was commissioned from consultants Rising Arts Agency working with Counterculture LLP, funded using the Shared Prosperity Fund budget priority SPF E6.

2. REPORT

The Bideford Cultural Investment Plan is informed by local consultation carried out by Rising Arts Agency, which included engagement with people who live, work and are growing up in the town, as well as with key local stakeholders and cultural organisations. Rising Arts Agency is a young person led agency selected to ensure that a balanced investment plan was developed which also included a key strand around young people, reflecting the need to engage more young people and families in the town's cultural life and to feel a greater sense of engagement with Bideford.

The plan is informed by national research and policy insight from Counterculture LLP. Findings from the research fed into four priority themes, each with accompanying recommendations:

- Collaboration and Coordination
- Cultural Spaces
- Pride in Place
- Ambition, Skills and Innovation

As stated in the Executive Summary;

“Bideford is a beautiful waterfront town with a rich maritime history and thriving artist community in need of investment into creative and cultural activity that benefits all the local people and visitors that love it.

With an exciting future as a hub of green innovation and increasing regional investment initiatives such as the UK government's Levelling Up strategy, this is the time to invest and nurture a thriving cultural scene that supports the life cycle of all citizens and visitors of Bideford to stay, study and create meaningful careers and lives – providing both joy and jobs.”

The plan provides a framework for seeking external investment into the town centre, with a focus on culture and creative industries. This aligns with the ambitions of the Bideford Regeneration Board,



who have been involved in the development of the cultural investment plan, and the ambitions outlined in the Bideford Regeneration Strategy.

3. IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

None.

Financial Implications

The plan provides a framework for securing external investment. There are no direct financial implications for TDC.

As stated within the cultural investment plan, “Bideford, like many other places in the UK, now requires a long-term investment plan with short, medium and long-term interventions to attract diverse income streams and avoid an over dependence on the local authority” (pg 8), reflecting the need for wider support for the sector rather than relying on Torridge District Council. With uncertainty over future funding sources, such as the Shared Prosperity Fund, this is therefore an imperative.

Human Resources Implications

Delivery of the Bideford Cultural Investment Plan will primarily be resourced by the Cultural Development Officer, funded by the Shared Prosperity Fund, alongside sector partners including the Culture, Heritage and Arts sub-group of the Bideford Regeneration Board.

Human Resources requirements moving forward to be met through securing external investment using the provided framework.

Sustainability/Biodiversity Implications

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

Equality/Diversity

The plan aims to improve opportunities for local people from all backgrounds. 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 Bideford Cultural Investment Plan 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.



- Recommendations will be pursued only where they are financially viable through external investment.

Compliance with Policies and Strategies

- The **Torridge District Council Strategic Plan**, 2024-29, supporting the advancement of the “Local Economy” aspects of the Plan.
- **North Devon and Torridge Economic Strategy** (2024 – 2029) reflecting the ambitions of Cluster 4, Creative Industries and the need for culture to play a strong role in shaping town centres and a stronger way of life.
- **Flourishing Culture: The Northern Devon Cultural Strategy** (2022-2027)
- **Bideford Regeneration Strategy** with a vision for “Culture and the creative arts are thriving with the Burton at Bideford at the heart of activity, contributing to the town being an attractive locality”.

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 will need to be strongly considered when developing these proposals, with jobs created, GVA impacts, skill improvements and also carbon savings all being key metrics moving forward. The overarching Flourishing Culture Strategy places a strong emphasis on celebrating our natural wonders, which will continue into delivery of this investment plan.

Lead Member Views

Date of Consultation – May 2024

Lead Member for Culture and Community Engagement:

‘Bideford and Torridge are already home to a huge number of creatives, providing a strong foundation to build from. From gaming to football, fashion to film, pilates to pottery, skateboarding to music, we want local people to decide what culture means to them.

With the Appledore Maritime Innovation Centre two miles downstream, new investment in clean offshore energy and greener food production, this historic waterfront town is on the way to becoming a centre for creative thinking, future skills and entrepreneurship.

It is important that we plan now for the upcoming opportunities. By taking with our communities and thinking about the long term, we can ensure that when new openings arise we have a clear sense of who we are as a town, where we are going and the most efficient and impactful options for getting there’

Cllr Cheryl Cottle-Hunkin

3. CONCLUSIONS

Bideford has one of the lowest cultural participation levels in Devon. It experiences a net outflow of young people seeking opportunities elsewhere.



The Cultural Investment Plan sets out a researched and coherent strategy for enhancing opportunity and aspiration in the town through culture and creativity as well as to secure investment through a range of avenues which should underpin future economic growth and place-making in the town, aligning with the need for Bideford to play a key role as a local centre given anticipated growth in other sectors, such as in Clean Maritime and Green Energy, in line with the North Devon and Torridge Clean Maritime Growth Vision.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members:

- note and support the Bideford Cultural Investment Plan

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Consultations: Date of Consultation – May 2024

Officers Consulted –
Chris Fuller – Economic Development Manager
Adrian Avery – Community Engagement Officer
Kirsty Defranceski – Town Centre Project Officer

Contact Officer:
Claire Gulliver –
Cultural Development
Officer

Background Papers: Bideford Cultural Investment Plan

